# **The benefits of journaling for kids**

**Source:** [www.verywellfamily.com](http://www.verywellfamily.com)

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Journaling is one of the most important tools a parent has at their disposal for practicing [writing skills](https://www.verywellfamily.com/help-your-child-learn-writing-skills-620623) with their children, especially teenagers. Though a journal can be used to record daily activities, thoughts, and feelings, journaling should not be confused with keeping a diary. Instead, or in addition, journals can be used to track and explore targeted topics of interest.

## **What's journaling used for?**

Journaling is often a good activity for kids who are reluctant to write or, in some cases, reluctant to speak. The beauty of journaling is that it can be tailored to fit the needs and interests of the person writing it. For instance, it can be used to record gratitude, exercise, diet, emotions, sleep, dreams, invention ideas, future plans, areas of study, or schoolwork.

## **Journaling for school success:**

The versatility of journaling means it can be incorporated into many different areas of learning, including [math](https://www.verywellfamily.com/everyday-home-math-activities-621043), science, and social studies. Many teachers use directed journaling with their students. Alternatively, your child can set up a subject-based journal for each of their classes independently.

For example, if your child is having difficulty solving their math problems or tracking how they got their solutions, try putting together a math journal. It can be as simple as a notebook in which they write various facts and formulas as well as providing space to show their work. Going back and looking at their work overtime can help cement their learning and thought process.

A science journal can be used to write about experiments they've tried, hypotheses they have, and observations they make. They can also use it to store newspaper or magazine articles of interesting happenings in the science world. This approach can be replicated for any class or area of interest and provides an organized way to record and explore their work and ideas.

## **Journaling as an outlet:**

Keeping a journal about daily life and their feelings offers an excellent outlet (and writing practice) for tweens and teens. For children who have a hard time expressing their needs verbally or making decisions about things, keeping a journal of their thoughts is a great way to learn emotional organization and processing. Even if all they do is write about an interaction they had during the day, putting it on paper can provide more objective reflection and effective coping.

Remember, your child will only be able to use journaling as an effective outlet if they feel secure that this journal is for their eyes only. If you can't make this promise of a safe, personal space for self-reflection, you can't expect your child to take on this type of journaling.

Journaling also provides the opportunity to have a little drama. For instance, it is okay to explore the details of a friend's character or their thoughts about a recent experience in brutal honesty. Not everything has to be factual, either. They can reimagine a scenario or write a fictionalized account of how they wished something had happened or describe something they hope will occur in the future.

It's okay to write sparsely and to the point—or to rant. Knowing that nobody is going to read their emotive journal without permission gives them the freedom to explore and express their deepest feelings and ideas.

They may decide to share their conclusions with you, but not the whole entry that helped them come to that conclusion. In this way, journaling provides the opportunity for them to:

* Develop [emotional intelligence](https://www.verywellfamily.com/tips-for-raising-an-emotionally-intelligent-child-4157946)
* [Explore and identify emotions](https://www.verywellfamily.com/how-to-help-an-overly-emotional-child-4157594)1
* Examine the pros and cons of something in order to be more decisive
* Express fear and uncertainty
* Feel and process anger, sadness, regret, and other challenging emotions
* Gain insight into their own and other people's feelings, thoughts, patterns, and motives
* Look more carefully at their thoughts about something after the immediate situation has passed
* Plan out difficult conversations ahead of time
* See the positives as well as the negatives
* Track feelings and thoughts over time

## **Guided journaling or using prompts:**

More traditional journaling used for learning—guided journaling—often involves writing to a prompt. It can be a self-provided prompt, a prompt picked from a journal jar or the internet, or a parent-directed prompt. Even though it's still more personal than a math or science journal, this type of journal is not so much a diary as it is a way to practice all the skills of writing in one place.

Guided journaling is a storytelling tool. The journal becomes a place to learn how much information completes a story and what words work well to paint the picture of a story. It's also a way to practice the mechanics of grammar and spelling. This type of journaling can:

* **Improve written communication**: The more your child writes to prompts, the more your child's writing skills will improve.4 They will learn how to answer a question by rephrasing the statement and learn how much information is needed to convey a full thought.
* **Improve spelling and grammar**: Though it's not necessary to hold your child to a perfect spelling standard, expecting them to always spell their [sight words](https://www.verywellfamily.com/ways-to-develop-early-sight-word-skills-at-home-2162246) accurately is one way to help them to [spell key words correctly](https://www.verywellfamily.com/new-ways-practice-spelling-words-at-home-620973). The more they write, the more they will learn what makes a complete sentence and how paragraphs are made up of sentences that all support one topic.
* **Improve reading skills**: Kids imitate what they know. When you first start prompted journal writing with your child, you may find that their writing is structured a lot like their favorite books. They may even use some of the same catchphrases. The more they write, the more likely they are to read in order to discover different voices and styles. Eventually, they'll find one that is uniquely their own.

## **Types of journals to try at home:**

There are many different types of journaling that your child may enjoy and benefit from. Your child may want to experiment with a variety of journals to find the one that works best for them. Here are a few that you can try at home.

* **Daily prompt**: A daily prompt journal is exactly what it sounds like—writing to a daily prompt. Since it's not always easy to think of a prompt every day, it's not a bad idea to make a journal prompt jar, fill it with ideas and pick a new one each day.
* **Feelings journal**: A feelings journal is a great way to help a younger child [build an emotional vocabulary](https://www.verywellfamily.com/teach-your-child-to-deal-with-uncomfortable-emotions-1095028). It can be done in a few ways. Your child can identify their current emotions, draw a picture and label it, choose a feeling from a feeling poster or wheel to write and draw about or learn a new emotion to draw and write about.
* **Nature journals**: A nature journal is a way to keep track of observations about the natural world. There are many different ways to use a nature journal, some of which include drawing pictures of insects, animals, or birds you see. They can also describe the sounds they hear or glue in interesting bits of nature to research.
* **Vacation journal**:A vacation journal can be a family project and it's lots of fun. In a nutshell, this type of journal chronicles your vacation using a combination of writing, pictures, and souvenirs.