



Welcome to the World of Five-Year Journaling

How might I use my new five-year journal?

How you use your five-year journal is limited only by your imagination. I've heard of people using these journals in so many unique and inventive ways, which convinces me that there is no right or wrong way to do it. Make it serve your purpose and your needs. If you start one way and find that idea no longer works for you, then change your approach.

Just don't quit writing. Write through the good days and the bad, and this book will become a comfort to you, a friend ready to receive whatever you have to say without judgment. Once you are on the other side of difficult times, reading back through those days will reinforce your strength and confidence in your abilities and the goodness of our universe.

How do I use my five-year journal?

- **General journal** – a record of the day's events, thoughts, memories, feelings, experiences, anything you want to include
- **Themed journal** - journal used for a particular purpose, with an intention in mind where all entries revolve around that theme

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What might I include in my general five-year journal?

- **Weather** - references to weather—extremes of temperature, storms, unusual conditions, ordinary days
- **Observances** - remembrances of special events and occasions—anniversaries of weddings, births, deaths, moves, jobs, significant events, purchases, and so on
- **News** - news of the day, the headlines of newspapers, magazines, and television leads, items trending on the internet

- **Gratitude** - people, places, things, and circumstances you are grateful for in your life
- **Daily tasks** - what you did, where you went, who you saw—all the ordinary moments that fill our days. One day they may not be so ordinary.
- **Highs and lows** - record the best and the not-so-great aspects of the day
- **Lessons** - something clicked, a lightbulb went on, something made sense, a hard lesson learned
- **Successes** - did you achieve some sought-after goal, win a prize, get recognized for any reason
- **Moments** - special shared moments between partners, mother and child, siblings, close friends
- **Funny experiences** - don't forget the humor, add in funny experiences even if they are at your own expense
- **Painful times** - as difficult as it might be, don't leave out the pain - a pain spoken is a pain lessened
- **Conversations** - maybe you overheard someone make an interesting statement or say something in a funny way - your journal can be a place to record those precious sayings of a child or grandchild
- **Health issues** - struggles with compromised health, ongoing or acute illnesses, prolonged medical issues
- **Readings** - maybe you love a line from a book you're reading and include it in your journal - possibly record what you are reading at the current time and what you think about it
- **Accidents** - accidents witnessed or experienced
- **Topics** - pick a subject for the day and write what you can remember about that topic, e.g., pets, school, food, chores, fun, etc.
- **Work** - activities of the day from your work world

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What kind of themed five-year journals might I create?

- **Gratitude** - what you are thankful for that day
- **Prayer** - asked and answered prayers
- **New beginnings** - retain moments during pivotal life stages, such as a graduation, during pregnancy, following the birth of a child/grandchild, a marriage, moving to a new home or city, or other major life event
- **Profession** - document a new job/career - track path to success
- **Highs and lows** - record the best and the not-so-great aspects of the day
- **Emotions** - track feelings, moods, and such
- **Food** - record food intake, meals, track weight over time

- **Exercise** – keep track of the training you do, lengths of walks, exercise classes, workouts, personal bests, etc.
- **Dreams** – record your dreams, possible interpretations
- **Memories** – include memories from childhood – write about important people in your life
- **Teaching**– record what happens at school, what kids said

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How do I write in my five-year journal:

- **Write short** – uses shorthand, phrases, incomplete sentences, numbers, abbreviations to maximize the space
- **Be specific** – name what you’re writing because something so vivid now may not be next year
- **Use different colored ink** - write every year in different colored ink - makes it easy to distinguish years
- **Be choosy with your pen** - use pens you enjoy writing with and like the feel of – buy four or five of them to get you through the year
- **Keep your pen with your journal** – use an elasticized pen holder – keeps your journal closed and ensures your pen is right where you need it – one option is a notebook pen holder, available on Amazon by Diodrio
- **Keep your journal in one place** – keep in the place where you write so you don’t have to go looking for your pen/journal every day
- **Create a routine** – write at approximately the same time each day, e.g., first thing in the morning, right before you go to bed – establish a habit of writing in your journal
- **Keep it simple** – don’t overcomplicate writing in your journal – don’t make it a chore – let it be a relaxing part of your day
- **Don’t censor yourself** - write for your eyes only, be honest, frank, treat your journal as a confidante
- **Don’t worry if you miss a day or two** - don’t worry about it – you can go back and fill in the missed days or leave them blank
- **Hang in there through the first year** – the first year is the most difficult, and you may have trouble getting into a routine – once you get to the second year when you can read what happened the year before, you’re hooked

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After year one, your journal might look like this:

January 1

2011 Saturday - good day - the start of a brand new year, full of possibilities - I took a little time at this morning to write some goals for 2011 both business and personal - I have a good feeling about this year - called a vocational adviser - college for money and black-eyed peas for luck - Yum!

2012 Sunday - beautiful day in paradise to start the new year - it's warm and sunny, a perfect Florida day - cooked both roasted quon and collard baby - to do something I want to do with a little extra green - had friends over for dinner and we all said one thing we hoped for in the new year - very buxxy - I feel so blessed in my life

YEAR _____

YEAR _____

YEAR _____

January 2

2011 Sunday - easy day - ate softest pork butt and more collage - I hope that means I'll get even more money - didn't do much of anything - Bob played a great game of golf with the boys at Zeebwood - in the afternoon we met up with friends and went to see "The Scout" at the screen - pretty good - quiet night - relaxing

2012 Monday - first Monday of 2012 - I'm going to take a crazy month - classes, writing trip to Louisiana and that's just for starters - Yikes! - one day at a time - it will all get done - mostly with a little help - Bob still played golf - no surprise there - he shot a great first round, the hole was good but not great, according to him - talked to my parents today

YEAR _____

YEAR _____

YEAR _____

After you keep your five-year journal for a few years, it can look like this. I credit my husband with the idea to write every year in a different-colored ink.

January 1

2006 Sunday - a brand new year - very happily married and looking forward to a quiet year - cooked black-eyed peas and collage for friends - Anne, Ann Jane, Cindy and Dana - quiet night - just Bob & I - I watched "Beverly Hills Cop" - he slept in the chair - walked for the first time in a month - felt good - I'll be here in the morning - got some

2007 Monday - can't believe it's 2007 and I'm starting my second year of my journal - it's amazing to me that I'm still doing it - wrote all morning on Bob's book - got it all done except for minor revisions - what a project! Bob played golf in the morning - shot a 69? - two are par - he was blessed - saw new Rocky - watching in the Bob's room afterwards

2008 Tuesday - in Louisiana - spent the whole day at my parents' house - had a good time on land - a lot of the opinions Miss Martha gave - had a really nice time - we had a lot of stress, being that a bit - I really do like my cousins - we hung around for the afternoon and then left for the airport - always sad to leave my parents but glad to go back home

2009 Wednesday - fourth year of writing in this journal - amazing - Bob and I have a lot of fun each night during the days - called and got Brian & Ellen and Dana - Bob played golf in the morning - I had a big nap this afternoon - had an incredible New Year's meal - collage, black-eyed peas and sweet pork with onions, garlic, onion, olive, Dave & Bob - we had great fun!

2010 Friday - beginning a brand new decade - new relaxing day - I didn't cook at all - watched the Fox movie - saw LSU game to Penn State - I worked on updating my web site all day - I want to add pictures and I'm close - I'm looking forward to the new year - expected - Bob thinks this year will be an interesting one - we'll see - I'm ready for it - 2010!

January 2

2006 Monday - had the day off for New Year's - mostly of it decorating the bedroom - Bob's great - Bob and I went looking for a weekend for the night - got a set of ideas with Grand - also writing for a new mattress - this one is holding my back - Dave & Linda come over for dinner - we helped them talk through a conflict - who's Bob? - I can help a couple

2007 Tuesday - back to work - had anxiety getting started - figuring out where I left off - had the feeling that we need to decide the type of relationship we want with Bob's family and they will then regardless of what Snokie or anyone else thinks - Jennifer & Brian come over tonight for dinner and a movie - did not have to work today - found a change wardrobe - I really like it - Yes!

2008 Wednesday - took the day off - slept in, cleaned up my junk in the side of the shed, worked with Richard and Jeremy - Bob came home around 2:30 and we went to see "Charlie Wilson's War" - I thought it was okay - not very interesting - oh at 8:00 I enjoyed a little writing - got up my calendar for 2008 - found nothing "better" - very good - I think 2008 will be a good year

2009 Friday - from trying to clean up my side of the shed - Bob not worked yet - worked from home - went today - I got a letter regarding this afternoon with no answer - met Jennifer and Ben for dinner - bought, easy and fun - I love the kids - my new night - Bob worked today all day, lots of appointments - he went tonight tonight with the guys and did, good work - he is such a good father!

2010 Saturday - fun day - back in Louisiana - a relaxing day - Bob with today - I did my usual Saturday with friends - had a picnic with Jennifer & Ben & I took a nap - we celebrated Jennifer's 40th birthday with dinner at Olive and then we danced in the club upstairs - I love dancing with Bob - he is such a good dancer - this year - I'm NOT cleaning up my side of the shed -

Useful items for five-year journaling

- **TUL retractable gel pens** – These pens can be found at any office supply store, [Amazon](#), and many other locations. They come in a wide variety of colors and have several tip sizes.
- **Pen holder/sleeve** – I use this elasticized holder to make sure my pen and journal are always together, and it also keeps my journal closed. I bought my current favorite, Diodrio Pen Holder, on [Amazon](#).
- **[The Red Leather Diary: Reclaiming a Life Through the Pages of a Lost Journal](#)** by Lily Koppel – A great book that shows the transformative power of a five-year journal on the owner and the person who found it.

Pico Iyer in *Why I Write*

I write—though perhaps it sounds pretentious to say so—to make a clearing in the wilderness, to find out what I care about and what exactly to make of it. Every day so many experiences, feelings, incidents, encounters crash in on us, and every morning I retire to my desk to make a kind of sense of them, to put them into a larger frame, to find out what my priorities should be. It's like sifting through the shells you've collected after a walk along the beach, and it makes for a stillness that lends peace and direction to the day that follows.

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Purchase your five-year journal(s) at:
WritingYourLife.org/Shop/Five-Year-Journal

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