

Keeping a Nature Notebook



Nature journaling is a fun way to keep track of things you see and help you remember your experiences in nature. People have been doing this for centuries as either part of in-depth scientific research, as a way to pass the time, as an amateur naturalist, or just for fun.

Getting Started – It’s Easy!

Who: all ages

Where: inside or outside, in a city or in a rural town

Materials: Something to write on and to write with: Notebook, plain paper, pencil, crayon, pen, markers, clipboard, etc.

Length of time: 15 minutes or more

Note *You don’t need to know the names of things. It’s your observations, and you can always learn the names and ways to identify things later if you want.*

Let’s Begin:

Grab your writing materials and head out or over to a window. Pick an area you want to observe or place you’d like to walk (start with one area near your home is best for practice). You can even sit and look out a window- nature can be found everywhere. *Make sure the area is safe and you are allowed to be there.

- Take a minute and just observe - look, breathe, smell, listen
- Now settle in a spot and begin your journal or page

Things to include in your observations in your nature journal:

The Basic information -

- Date - help you remember when you were there
- Time - different animals are around at different times
- Location - doesn’t have to be exact but knowing town, road, preserve can help with context
- Habitat - is it a forest, field, pond, beach, parking lot, yard, playground, or more than one
- Weather - I like to include this because it can affect what is around to see. I like to include the basics- sun or clouds, rain, snow, or other, wind, etc - doesn’t have to be exact just to give an idea
- Who is with you?

Record your Observations-Your observations can be about one particular thing or an overall impression of the site. Sometimes I just start openly writing across the page or divide it up into a few blocks or sections, so I don’t feel pressured to fill a page, there are many ways to keep your journal.

- What colors do you see? You can write about this or add the actual colors to your page with crayons, pencil, paint, etc.
- What do the plants look like right now? Can you make a sketch or describe them?
- What do you hear? Make a list or you can sketch or describe
- Do you see any animals? What are they doing? Where are they?
- Try sketching a leaf or plant you see near - by, try sketching it without picking up your pencil and without looking at the paper

Play around with your observations and the format you use each time. If you use the block method, use one block for each observation and keep all the basic information at the top of the page or in one block. There are many options, ways, and reasons to keep notes about nature.

Take the time to observe nature, reflect, learn, and create a connection to nature.