1. Keep it Simple

Journal writing at its core is [simple](http://www.journalingsaves.com/how-to-journal/keep-journal-writing-simple%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank). You get some paper and a pen, you write a few pages about what’s going on. You do it again tomorrow. And the next day. We humans are a curious bunch — we make things needlessly complicated. So if you feel yourself getting mired in whether or not you’re [doing it right](http://www.journalingsaves.com/how-to-journal/journal-writing-perfectionism%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank), what kind of journal to use, when you “should” write, or if the color of your pen will affect the outcome, take a breath and get back to basics.

Words, on a page. It’s really that simple.

2. Keep it Private

Don’t share your journal and shelve it out of reach. Your [journaling privacy](http://www.journalingsaves.com/how-to-journal/keeping-a-journal-private%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) is essential to the process. Your journal is a safe place for you to explore whatever is on your mind without worrying about how it will affect anyone else. If you fear it will be read, you’ll censor yourself and the benefits of journaling will be lost.

3. Do it Frequently

Writing frequently supports the habit part of journaling. It allows you to witness the ebb and flow of your life. It gives you perspective that you won’t always feel this way — after all, you didn’t feel this way yesterday. [Daily journaling](http://www.journalingsaves.com/how-to-journal/benefits-of-daily-journal-writing%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) provides the most benefits and the best results. If you only write when you “need to,” you will forever be in crisis management. Your journal will be filled with dire consequences and high stakes. And you’ll continue to live in reactionary mode. The beauty of frequent journaling is that it helps you grow as a person, helps you recognize patterns in your life, and helps you gain perspective and control over your environment.

4. Banish the Grammar Police

Surprisingly, one of the top reasons people cite for not journaling is that they can’t spell or their grammar ain’t perfect. Since you’re journaling for *you* (see #2 above), it doesn’t really matter if you dangle your participles or misspell “conjunctivitis.” Journaling is not grade school and nobody’s going to hit your knuckles with a ruler.

5. Write What You Know

When starting your journal, just date the entry and note your location. Start by describing your surroundings if you need to get warmed up. Write a little bit about your day. What’s on your mind? Think of your journal like an old friend you’re sitting down to coffee with. Just answer, “What’s up? What’s new? What’s going on?”

7. Write for quantity, not quality

Don’t get caught up in how “good” your journal writing is. Nobody cares. Just get it done. Set goals based on effort — say, 3 pages or 20 minutes of journaling. Then even if you’re convinced your journaling is terrible, you’re still successful because you got it done. Writing quickly for a set period of time is also a way to keep your inner critic at bay, and to banish any negative voices telling you that what you’re doing is stupid or that you can’t write. Just get the words down and don’t worry about how good they are. The power and beauty of journaling lies in the process, not the product.

8. Try writing by hand

[Journaling by hand](http://www.journalingsaves.com/how-to-journal/journal-writing-by-hand%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) in a paper notebook moves a different part of your brain than typing does. And before you argue that you can write faster on the computer, journaling is not about speed, efficiency, or volume. It’s about dedicating a few minutes each day to honor yourself, your thoughts and your feelings. Writing by hand helps you get in touch with all of that better than a keyboard. So slow down and savor the process. It builds your brain synapses to hold thoughts in your head long enough to write them down. Journaling by hand will make you smarter. (Did I mention it will also make you better looking?)

9. Keep the stakes low

Don’t make any grand announcements before you start journaling. Set yourself up for success by keeping the stakes low. You don’t need to proclaim to everyone in your life that you’re now a Writer. Don’t promise yourself you’ll write for one hour every day for rest of your life. Don’t expect yourself to churn out the Deepest and Moist Poignant Journal Ever. The higher we make the stakes, the more intimidating the process becomes. And the less likely we are to do it, or feel satisfied with the results.

10. Enjoy yourself!

Remember that journaling should be enjoyable (most of the time). If you take the task too seriously or put too much pressure on yourself, journaling will become a burden instead of a gift. Keep a spirit of play, and infuse your journal with a little humor. Adding [art](http://www.journalingsaves.com/category/creative-journal-ideas/art-journal%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank), [creativity](http://www.journalingsaves.com/category/creative-journal-ideas%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank), color or [heart](http://www.journalingsaves.com/journal-writing-with-heart%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) to your journal keeps the process fresh and inviting.

You’ll likely feel awkward and self-conscious when you first start journaling. That’s totally fine — you’re allowed. Most people are a little awkward and self-conscious when they begin something new, unless they’re a freak of nature. It’s okay to poke fun at yourself, or to keep the prose light-hearted.