

Journals

A journal is a teacher's or a student teacher's written response to teaching events. Keeping a journal serves two purposes:

1. Events and ideas are recorded for the purpose of later reflection.
 2. The process of writing itself helps trigger insights about teaching.
- Writing in this sense serves as a discovery process.

Many different topics from classroom experiences can be explored through journal writing, for example:

Personal reactions to things that happen in the classroom or in the school.

Questions or observations about problems that occur in teaching.

Descriptions of significant aspects of lessons or school events.

Ideas for future analysis or reminders of things to take action on.

Some teachers prefer to audiotape their responses to teaching, keeping an "audio journal" rather than a written journal.

Bartlett (1990: 209–10) gives the following suggestions for what to write about (or record).

Our writing will be about our routine and conscious actions in the classroom; conversations with pupils; critical incidents in a lesson; our personal lives as teachers; our beliefs about teaching; events outside the classroom that we think influence our teaching; our views about language teaching and learning.

Appendix 1 at the end of this chapter contains a list of reflection questions that can be used to provide a focus for journal writing. Readers should review these questions as they read the book.

The following procedures are recommended for keeping a journal (Bailey 1990; Porter et al. 1990; Walker 1985).

1. Make entries on a regular basis, such as once or twice a week, or even daily if possible. It may be useful to spend five or ten minutes after a lesson to write about it or record it.
2. Review your journal entries regularly. What might not have been obvious when written or recorded may later become apparent. As you review your journals, ask yourself questions like these:

What do I do as a teacher?

What principles and beliefs inform my teaching?

Why do I teach the way I do?

What roles do learners play in my classes?

Should I teach differently?