



A Student Guide to

Personal Health Journals

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1. Introduction

Welcome to this brief guide on keeping a Personal Health Journal. This guide has been prepared to help you keep a journal for your health education classes, health-related projects and community-service learning activities. A Personal Health Journal is also a great idea for recording your thoughts and reports when you participate in online student webquests related to health.

There is nothing unusual or very different about keeping a Personal Health Journal. We all benefit from keeping track of our ideas, insights and assignments. A journal is simply an easy way to keep all of your notes together in one spot.

There are two parts of this journal. The public part, which will include copies of your assigned work and activities, is simply a collection of the assignments that you normally undertake for your health education classes. The private part, which you keep to yourself, is a place for you to write down personal thoughts and ideas.

You can keep this journal in two formats: on your computer and/or in a three ring binder. The binder may be more useful, as you can use it to retain copies of your assignments and the comments you receive from your teacher or classmates. Simply print the pages in this guide and you are ready to go. (We have not numbered the pages, so you can print more than one copy for different assignments.)

The purposes of journal writing are very practical:

1. Saving your thoughts in writing for future use.
2. Being able to read out your responses to choices presented in different homework and project assignments in your group. This will help you be ready to participate or lead in class discussions.
3. Writing your own observations or summaries about what occurred in assigned readings, interviews, project activities, webquests, plays, movies, videos, music and art.
4. Identifying and developing a theme, position or opinion in your work and using your notes to support your choice with references to what you have read, observed or experienced.
5. For your own personal reflection and thinking about your life, aspirations and plans.

By the way, when we refer to “health” in this journal, we are actually using that word to describe and discuss a variety of personal and social developments in our lives. We see our health and wellness as a personal and practical resource for living. All aspects of our health affect us, including the physical, social, cultural, psychological and environmental aspects.

As you read through this guide, you will find that we have included tips on how to keep your journal up to date and how to meet the criteria for various assignments that will be part of the journaling process. Check with your teacher to make sure that those are the procedures and criteria that she/he would like you to use.

Good luck with your journalling.

2. Types of Journal Activities and Reporting Formats

The following types of journal activities and reporting formats are suggested for your Personal Health Journal. In this section of the guide, we explain how the public parts of your journal will be assessed when you submit assignments. We also provide some ideas for the private sections of your journal. Later in this guide we provide some sample pages for taking notes and for presenting your ideas in journal-related assignments.

The public parts of your journal could include these items. Check with your teacher for the ones that you will use.

Summarizing and Commenting on Assigned Readings	You summarize the assigned readings (not simply repeating them) and then provide a personal response to that content.
Recording and Commenting on Project & Webquest Activities	You keep a log (record) of project or webquest activities, then go back and add your reactions and thoughts.
Assessing Participation in Group Work and WebQuests	You should keep notes on how well your group functions and the contributions made by everyone, including your self.
Preparing/Reflecting on Class/Group Discussions	You should note your personal reactions, reflect on your work, make an effort and be attentive, state your opinion and try to generalize on what you learn.
Preparing/Reflecting on Interviews with Experts, Celebrities, Advocates, Volunteers, Parents, Peers and Others	Your interviews with experts, celebrities, parents, peers or others can help you and others understand the impact and consequences of health topics
Reflecting on Health & the Arts (Movies, Videos, TV Shows, Stories, Plays, Art, Music, Poetry, Literature, Sculpture, Dance)	You observe a work of art (in one of a variety of forms) to identify how the artist/author has treated a health issue and why this is important or interesting to us.
Advocating for Change/Taking a Position/Writing to Persuade	You take a position on a health or social issue and then advocate for changes such as new rules, policies, conditions, resources etc.
Listing Trusted Sources of Health Information and Support	Keep a list for you and your friends.

The private parts of your journal could include these items. You decide what you want to use.

Preparing & Maintaining a Personal Health Action Plan	Take an area (goals, jobs, relationships, family, fitness, eating, recreation, entertainment etc) of your life that you want to improve, check out what is possible, set a goal and have some fun.
Keeping a Diary of Health-Related Events	Record what happened and how you felt
Keeping a Space for Ideas, Thoughts, Hopes, Feelings	Be creative. No limits, no structure here.

3.1 Summarizing and Commenting on Assigned Readings

In this type of journal writing, you should be summarizing the content of the assigned readings (not simply repeating them) and then providing a personal response to that content. You should explain why you think the authors have been effective or ineffective and how the readings have made you more aware of yourself, your health or various health, social, economic, cultural or political factors.

Facts/Points Made in Reading(s) (State in your own words)	Your Reactions (Agree/disagree? Connections to your health? Is this of interest to you? What can you do about it?)	So What? (Why is this important? What can you or others do? Why is there a problem? What are the economic, social or other factors causing this problem? What can be done?)
Reading #1 1. 2. etc		
Reading #2 1. 2.		
Reading #3 1.		
Reading #4		

3.2 Recording and Commenting on Projects & Webquests

In this journal activity, you first keep a log (recorded notes) and then you comment on those notes after you review and reflect on those notes. This section of your journal should look like this:

Project or Webquest Activities (List them in detail. Purpose, who was present, task etc)	Notes taken during Activity (Record findings, reactions from participants, your own reactions, factual observations etc)	Notes Reflecting Your Learning (Describe what this means to you, what is new, different, meaningful, troubling to you and how this could affect your health.)
Activity #1		
Activity #2		
Activity #3		
Activity #4		
Activity#5		
Activity #6		

3.3 Assessing Participation in Group Work and Webquests

As well as recording your reactions to the specific group or webquest activities, you should also keep track of how well your group/team participates and cooperates. Use these items to keep your notes about the group and your own participation. Be specific; provide dates and specific examples. (You can name people in your notes, but consider their privacy/reputation when you submit any written reports.)

	Notes on Group	Notes on My Participation/Contribution
1. All members participated in the group activities.		
2. Members listened to others in the group.		
3. Members helped and encouraged others in the group.		
4. Group members stayed on the task assigned.		
5. Group members worked well together.		
6. No one dominated the group discussions.		
7. Group members practiced the cooperative skills.		
8. Group members did not use put-downs.		
9. Group members were able to accept criticism.		
10. Trust developed among group members.		
What I really liked about our group		
Ideas for improvement		

3.4 Preparing/Reflecting on Class/Group Discussions

This section of your journal is where you should keep your notes on your preparation for and participation in class discussions. Use this chart to help you stay focused and organized.

	Notes	Reflections Afterwards
<u>Preparation</u> - complete the assigned readings, viewing etc - identify issues - prepare questions, comments - bring additional info.		
<u>Personal Reactions to Class Discussions</u> - agree/disagree why? - implications for health?		
<u>Grammar, Punctuation, Spelling</u> - be careful in written assignments		
<u>Reflections on own Work</u> - make connections to previous work you have done, things that you have learned		
<u>Attentiveness to Discussion</u> - who said what? - agree/disagree? Why?		
<u>Comprehension, Generalization, Understanding</u> - why is this important? - what does this mean to you?		
<u>State, defend opinions</u> - express your opinion, back up with facts and arguments		
<u>Effort</u> - complete assigned task? - make extra effort?		

3.5 Preparing/Reporting/Reflecting on Interviews with Others

Interviews with health experts, survivors of health problems, advocates, volunteers, celebrities who are committed to prevention, other young people, parents, relatives and others can all help us to understand health and social issues better. In this section of your journal, record what you did and what you found in preparing, doing and reporting on your interview.

Interview Procedures	Notes Taken	Reflections, Thoughts
<u>Selection of subject/health topic-</u> - health topic: what? Why? - person selected who? why? (expertise, experience, appeal, famous, human interest, views		
<u>Research</u> -about person to be interviewed -about health topic		
<u>Set up/Approach for Interview</u> - send request - explain purpose & health topic - arrange time, place, equipment, permit to record - thank person		
<u>Questions and Answers</u> - prepare in advance - cover person's interests - cover health topic		
<u>Vocabulary</u> - research, define key terms		
<u>Delivery</u> -- plan out whole interview		
<u>Reporting</u> - decide on written, audio, video - intro person - intro health topic - highlight key points - summarize impact, interview, - relate to audience interests		
<u>Personal Reflections</u> - connect to own health, others - powerful quotes - perplexing issues - agree/disagree/reflect		

3.6 Reflecting on The Arts & Health (Movies, Videos, TV Shows, Stories, Plays, Art, Music, Literature, Poetry, Sculpture, Dance)

The purpose of this type of journal writing is to show how artists, writers, actors and authors use their artistic works to show how health and social issues affect our lives, our health, our relationships and our society. For example, the HIV/AIDS epidemic has had a profound impact on the lives and status of gay & lesbian people, sexual norms and behaviour, the development of many African nations and families living with AIDS. By analyzing artistic works, we can learn much about health and life. Answer these questions when you undertake this type of journal assignment.

Description, Analysis of Work of Art	Notes on the Connections to Health, Life, Youth Development
1. Provide a description of the work and the role that the health or social issue plays in its presentation or in the life of the artist/performer. Is the health/social issue central to the work? Or does it develop a part of the work, adding depth or character or detail. Describe the features of the work that are used to show the health or social issue.	
2. Describe the dominant features of the work, showing how these features are used to portray the health issue or how the health/social issue affects the development of the character, story, painting etc. (You may need to seek help from your teacher or from art/ drama/ dance/ cinema students to get a list of such features for the type of work you are studying.)	
3. Does the health or social issue play a role in the literal and metaphorical meaning of the work?	
4. How does the issue portrayed in the work of art relate to your own health? Have you experienced or seen this health issue in your life, family, friends, other young people, relatives, community?	
5. Have you seen other works of art that have addressed this health or social issue? Describe them briefly here. How are they similar or different from this work?	
6. Is the artist/author sympathetic to the health or social issue? How is that shown in the work? Does the artist's point of view show in the work? How, when or where?	
7. Is there anything about the work that leaves you wondering about the health or social issue and how it affects health, life or youth development?	

3.7 Advocating for Change/Taking a Position/Writing to Persuade

In this type of journal writing, you are asked to take a position on a health or social issue. You will need to introduce your position, organize and defend your arguments with facts and examples, appeal to your audience and use well-prepared and carefully selected paragraphs, sentences, images and words. Use the chart below to organize your thoughts and arguments.

Key Questions	Your ideas, notes, arguments
1. What is the exact purpose of your presentation? (Write it down in a few words.)	
2. Who is your audience? What do they know already? What are their preferences for style of argument? Words? Images? Examples? References to history? Personal examples? etc.	
3. How will you introduce your presentation? What is the sequence you will follow? Summarize your three best points.	
4. Describe the stand that you are taking. Why is this important? If you are proposing an action, what are the reasons? How much will it cost? How can you reduce the costs and the risks of doing it?	
5. Are your arguments easy to follow? Are they organized in a logical, easy to follow manner?	
6. Support each of your arguments with facts, statistics, and records.	
7. Provide details, examples or anecdotes (brief stories) to illustrate your arguments or to increase the impact with your audience. Select these details, examples or stories carefully. Don't use too many of them.	
8. Refer to the personal experiences of your audience, or yourself to make the arguments more relevant/real or to gain credibility as an expert.	
9. Adapt the terms, words, images, symbols, examples, references to fit with your audience	
10. Conclude your presentation with a review of your key points, then say why this is important, new, different, exciting, interesting etc.	
11. Review these writing tips to ensure your best effort: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Your title clearly expresses your purpose o Your paragraph outline is logical (one point per paragraph, all support purpose of paper) o All sentences in each paragraph support the point of that paragraph o Sentences are brief, clear, uncomplicated. o Grammar, spelling, punctuation are correct 	

3.8 Trusted Sources of Health Information and Support

In this part of your journal, you are asked to list the sources of information, advice and support that you have found to be helpful. Record the contact information and type of help they can provide to you in detail, so that you can refer to those sources again, or you can refer friends to those sources. Include your own comments in note form to help you remember what they were able to do to help.

	Information	Advice/Discussion	Support/Help
Media/The Internet	Web Sites: Radio Talk Shows TV Shows/Documentaries	Email lists/Chat Groups Ask an Expert Sites	Emergency Help/Email Testing Services
Local Community Agencies	Health Clinic Youth Centre Doctor's Office Community Policing Centre Youth Employment Offices	Help Lines Doctor Nurse at Clinic Youth Health Projects Churches/Synagogues	Help Lines
School	Trusted teachers Counsellor Nurse Parent Volunteer Student Activity Advisor Peer Helper Program Teacher	Counsellor Trusted teacher School Activities Youth Health Activities, Projects	Counsellor Nurse
Family	Parents Relatives Older Brother/Sister	Parents Relatives Older Brother/Sister	Parents Relatives Older Brother/Sister
Peers	Trusted Friends Other Young People Peer Helper Groups	Trusted Friends Other Young People Peer Helper Groups	
Adults	Other Trusted Adults Coaches/Leaders/Mentors	Other Trusted Adults Coaches/Leaders/Mentors	Police (Emergency or abuse)

4.1 Your Personal Health Action Plan

Setting goals and implementing action plans is an important part of life and health. So it is important that all of us develop, implement and maintain a personal health action plan. But don't be too hard on your self. Recognize that we are not perfect and it is sometimes difficult to attain our goals. Be patient with your self as you follow this process.

1. Review the areas of your life that are shown in the diagram on the right. Pick out an area and then identify a specific goal that you want to achieve. Don't try to address all areas at once and don't try to set too many goals for your self at once.

For example, you may want to increase your body strength as part of your overall fitness. Or, you may want to find a hobby that relates to your interest in music and that helps you to meet some new people.

2. Having set a goal within an area of your life, you can then identify the information and resources (time, transportation, money, someone to do it with etc) that you will need. Don't be afraid to ask for help from your parents or friends, such as shifting the scheduled time for your chores, trading favours etc.

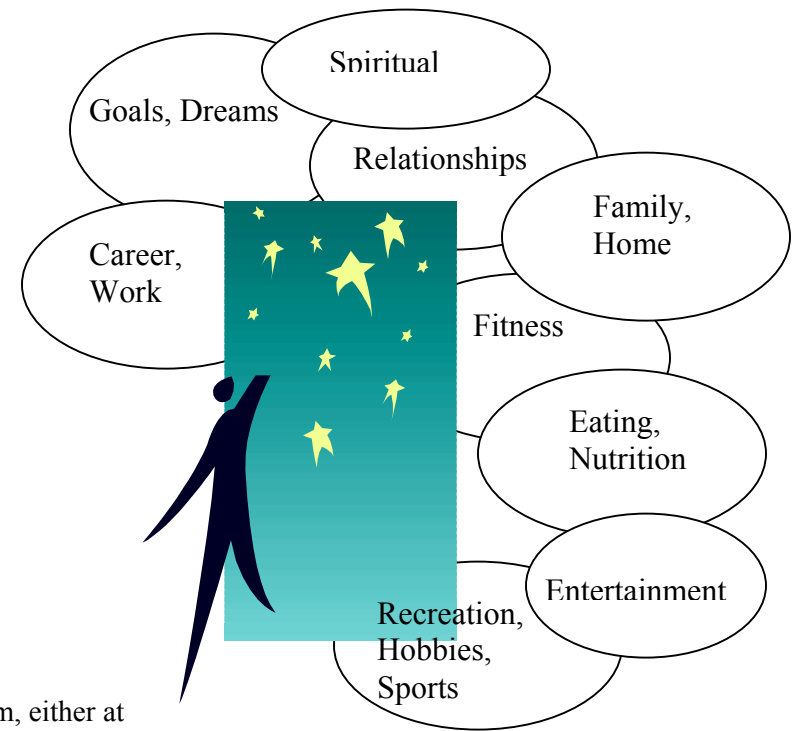
For example, to increase your body strength, you will likely need regular access to a gym, either at school or in the community. If music is your thing, you will need to check out the cost of equipment or joining a band/choir, music group.

3. Next, identify a couple of specific steps that you will need to take towards your goal. And, you should set a timeline for taking those steps. This could be as simple as checking on the times when there is free access to the weight room at school, or where the most convenient gym is in your community.

4. After you have checked things out and it looks like you have the resources to work towards your goal, you may want to set some more specific objectives that you can achieve immediately. For example, you could aim for lifting a certain amount of weights in the gym within a month, or you can aim to learn 10 different chords on the guitar within three months. Or, you could simply list the fun things you want to happen as part of working towards that goal, such as seeing a concert by a band, or going to Venice Beach in California (popular with weightlifters).

5. Next, you can encourage yourself by creating some social situations that will motivate you to continue. These can include announcing your goal to your friends or parents, seeking out a friend at the gym or music group to make it more fun, showing off your progress to parents etc.

6. Finally, make note when you have achieved or come close to your goal. At that point, you can choose to aim for a higher target, or you can select another area of your life for your attention.



Here is a chart to help to help you with your Personal Health Plan

<p>1. Think about it</p> <p>Area of Your Life that You want to Improve</p> <p>Why is this of interest to you?</p> <p>How would this help you/make life better?</p>	<p>2. Set a tentative goal. Check out what you will need.</p> <p>Time:</p> <p>Transportation:</p> <p>Someone to participate with:</p> <p>Money, Equipment:</p>	<p>3. Next steps and deadlines</p> <p>First step (date):</p> <p>Second step (date):</p>	<p>4. Start activity and set specific targets or identify fun things that you really want to do as part of that activity.</p> <p>Tell your friends and family about your new goal and describe the activities.</p>	<p>5. Make note that you are close or have achieved your goal and set new ones.</p>
<p>1. Think about it</p> <p>Area of Your Life that You want to Improve</p> <p>Why is this of interest to you?</p> <p>How would this help you/make life better?</p>	<p>2. Set a tentative goal. Check out what you will need.</p> <p>Time:</p> <p>Transportation:</p> <p>Someone to participate with:</p> <p>Money, Equipment:</p>	<p>3. Next steps and deadlines</p> <p>First step (date):</p> <p>Second step (date):</p>	<p>4. Start activity and set specific targets or identify fun things that you really want to do as part of that activity.</p> <p>Tell your friends and family about your new goal and describe the activities. If this is appropriate, invite them to try it with you.</p>	<p>5. Make note that you are close or have achieved your goal and set new ones.</p>

4.3 Personal Reflections/Ideas

This space is all yours. You can note your ideas, thoughts, hopes, fears, and feelings in any format you like. Draw pictures, cartoons, and doodles. Use ideas maps, whatever you like.