



# Thinking OUTSIDE the BOOK

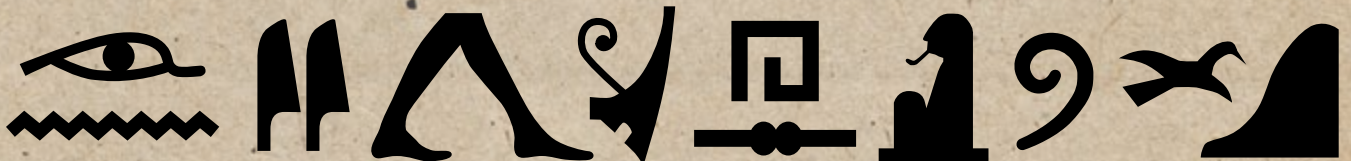
**A**nient Mesopotamian peoples dug up clay and devised styluses. The Chinese of the Shang Dynasty used bones or turtle shells, and Egyptian slaves carved hieroglyphics into stone. For millennia, human beings have been finding ways to keep some record of their lives. Today, we are commanded to do the same.

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) said: “We renew our appeal for the keeping of individual journals. . . . People often use the excuse that their lives are uneventful and nobody would be interested

in what they have done. But I promise you that if you will keep your journals and records they will indeed be a source of great inspiration” (“Hold Fast to the Iron Rod,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, 4).

Keeping a journal in the 21st century doesn’t require as much physical work as it did centuries ago, when prophets carved into metal plates. We are blessed with a variety of options for keeping a journal. If you think the traditional option of putting pen to paper isn’t best for you, or if you just want to add another aspect to that approach, consider these suggestions.

**THERE’S MORE THAN ONE WAY TO KEEP A RECORD OF YOUR LIFE. HAVE FUN WITH ONE OF THESE CREATIVE TWISTS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY.**



## Years at a Glance:

If writing long paragraphs seems intimidating, look for a journal where each day of the year is represented by one page and each page is divided into four or five sections. The first year, write a few lines in the top section each day. The next year, use the second section and so on.



**Scrapbook:** Scrapbooking is certainly a type of journaling. Create a special scrapbook, or just add photos and memorabilia in the pages of your regular journal. (You may want to use an archival spray for some memorabilia to make them acid-free and thus less prone to fade and decay.) Include athletic numbers, music programs, drawings, postcards, and more. Mementos can add variety to a traditional journal.



**Compilation:** Pay attention to the ways you already record parts of your life. Make copies of letters or notes you send to friends. Print out e-mails in which you talk about ideas or experiences. Take screenshots of your social media interactions. Save audio or video recordings of your activities to a DVD. Collect all these items and put them in a 3-ring binder or notebook, adding to it as you go along.



## JOURNAL WRITING IN ACTION

Angela C., a Laurel, has kept a journal since middle school. While she says it's sometimes difficult

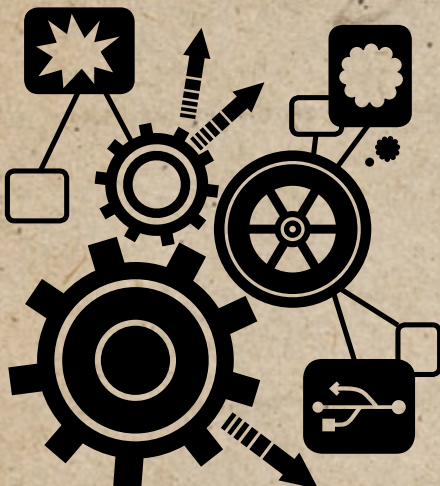


to find the time to do her journal writing justice, the struggle is worth it: "Journaling helps me become a better storyteller. It helps me remember things that happen to me and see how I've grown. Sometimes on days when I feel totally stressed and I feel like I have all these big problems, if I can write them down, they seem more manageable."

Reagan K., a Mia Maid, talks about finding her mother's journal in a hope chest: "She let me read it. It was cool, because I could see how she was at my age."



**Blog:** Take a thought that might have been no more than a status update and turn it into a full-fledged journal entry on a blog that you can post online and share with family and friends who have a password access to your blog; you can also publish posts on a private setting where others can't view them publicly. Just make sure you are careful about the information you share and your privacy settings.





### Why I Write

My first journal was a hardcover white book with wide-ruled lines and a snap to keep the cover shut. I begged my mom for it when we were shopping one day when I was five. She told me she'd buy the book only if I'd promise to write in it.

I'm still keeping that promise 17 journals later.

I won't pretend that I wrote consistently all that time. Life does get busy, and sometimes voice-activated password journals marketed to pre-teen girls refuse to come unlocked for months. But for most of high school, I wrote daily in my journal.

What I love most about journal writing is the work involved in weaving words into a meaningful representation of my feelings. By filtering whatever problem I'm grappling with to the forefront of my consciousness, through my head and heart and out onto paper, I see more clearly the Lord's hand in my life, how I rely on others, and the blessings I've been given.

Writing is a thoughtful process, a way for me to ponder. It's essential in my study of the scriptures, my Personal Progress goals, and in my review of the day and events that have passed. Writing is how I organize and understand my life. It's a gift from Heavenly Father.

*Victoria Ison*



**Typed Record:** If you're quick on the keyboard, consider typing your journal entries. Look into online journal hosting sites where you don't have to share your thoughts with many others, or simply save the files on your computer. Be sure to back up your files and print entries periodically.

### REFLECT AND RECORD

“Daily reflecting upon and recording the impressions that come from the Spirit serve the dual purposes of helping us (1) to recognize our personal encounters with the divine and (2) to preserve them for ourselves and our posterity. Recording them is also a formal recognition and acknowledgment of our gratitude to God.”

Elder Paul B. Pieper of the Seventy, "To Hold Sacred," *Ensign*, May 2012, 109.



**Audio:** For those who prefer to express thoughts vocally, try podcasting or audio recording your journal entries. Talk about what you'd write if you were keeping a traditional journal. When you've done several recordings, you can burn them to a CD to save them for future reference. Make sure to think and speak thoughtfully, record entries in a quiet place, and say what you mean. **NE**



### JOURNAL FOR PERSONAL PROGRESS AND DUTY TO GOD

Journaling after Personal Progress and Duty to God experiences is essential. A number of studies have shown that we retain things longer if we write them down, so recording our spiritual thoughts and impressions during scripture study helps solidify them and allows these feelings to become a part of who we are, accessible to us in every part of our lives.