



# Handy Handouts®

Free informational handouts for educators, parents, and students

## Journal Writing Across the Curriculum

by Becky L. Spivey, M.Ed.

*Journal writing* is an effective and useful tool for teaching writing to students of all ages and across all subject areas. It also serves as an invaluable and frequent measurement of student progress throughout the school year. Even before young students learn to write, they can draw pictures or cut out photographs from magazines to represent their thoughts about what happened at school that day, at a birthday party, during a math lesson about fractions, or to describe their favorite pizza. Older students may continue journaling long after they graduate as a way of chronicling their personal life experiences.

Journals provide teachers with an excellent source for evaluating students' writing skills as well as their comprehension of a particular subject area. Through frequent journaling, students become more fluent writers and can become more comfortable with expressing their thoughts, whether they are sharing a personal experience, the predictions and results of a science experiment, or their views and opinions of candidates for the next presidential election.

### Ways to Introduce Students to Journal Writing



When introducing students to journal writing, the teacher must set guidelines and standards. Present the students with your expectations for writing and an explanation of when, how, or if their entries will be graded. Post expectations in the classroom or make a checklist on index cards and glue them inside the cover of the journals. If journal entries will be shared with others besides the teacher, students should know before they begin writing. When students are writing on a deeply personal level and do not wish to share their thoughts with anyone else but their teacher, teachers should respect that request or risk the students not participating fully in the exercise. Always store student journals in a secure location.



Once students begin writing in journals frequently and routinely as part of a particular class or school day, they "get into it" and begin pouring out their thoughts



without realizing they're also practicing important writing skills. Teachers may assign particular questions or topics, or the students may simply have "free" time where they may write personal thoughts, feelings, or opinions about everything from music and movies to current events or issues they're currently experiencing at school or at home.

### Other Things to Consider with Journal Writing



Journal writing helps teachers get to know students on a more personal level. If teachers pay attention and read between the lines of their students' writing, they are more apt to understand the needs of the students academically and socially as well as learn more about their family lives and relationships. Some students feel more at ease asking for help or guidance using subtle hints in their journal entries rather than out loud in the presence of their peers. Even though the major goal of journal writing is grooming more fluent writers, teachers should always take their students' writing very seriously. *If a student reveals thoughts of suicide, violence, abusing others, or being abused, it is the teacher's legal responsibility to report this to the principal or lead administrator and the guidance counselor.*

For more FREE Handy Handouts®, go to [www.handyhandouts.com](http://www.handyhandouts.com)