

Academic Journal

We often write for others in our studies—for example, when we write an exam or a final term paper. But writing can also be used to advance and structure our own thinking. Keeping an academic journal—where only you, the writer, are the intended audience—takes advantage of **writing as a thinking tool** and can help you prepare for examinations and papers.

Your journal might be analog or digital, but it should always be with you so that you can record thoughts, observations, and information as soon as they arise. Academic journals look different for everyone, but generally they are written in everyday language and are a mix of personal diary and factual notebook (Lange 2010). In your academic journal you might:

- Ask questions;
- Make plans, writing schedules, and outlines;
- Make stretches and drawings;
- Keep track of and take notes on the academic literature you read;
- Explore creative writing exercises;
- Reflect on your writing process;
- Take note of phrases you like (particularly helpful if you are studying in a second language);
- Record experiences and observations;
- Generate “Zero-Drafts” (very early versions of pieces of text for term papers, etc.);
- Note terms to be looked up and defined.

Further tips for the analog journal

- Journal entries should always be **dated**, and **headings** make it easier to find entries later.
- A **table of contents** can be created on the first few pages of the journal and updated as you write. Number the journal’s pages or buy a journal with page numbers to make this easier.
- **Colored sticky notes** can highlight related topics (i.e., yellow for term paper notes, green for literature references, red for planning, etc.).
- Once you’ve finished a journal, review it so that important notes can be carried over to the next journal.

Recommendations for free digital note-taking applications

- [Microsoft OneNote](#) – as a Goethe University student, you have [free access](#) to the Microsoft Office Suite (iOS, Android, macOS, Windows, Web)
- [Obsidian](#) (Android, iOS, macOS, Windows, Linux)
- [Notion](#) (Android, iOS, macOS, Windows, Web)
- [Apple Notes](#) (iOS, macOS, Web)
- [Google Keep](#) (Android, iOS, Web, Chrome)



Literature:

Bräuer, Gerd: Schreiben als reflexive Praxis. Tagebuch, Arbeitsjournal, Portfolio. Freiburg i. B. 2003.

Girgensohn, Katrin/Sennewald, Nadja: Schreiben lehren, Schreiben lernen. Eine Einführung. Darmstadt 2012, pp. 106 ff.

Lange, Ulrike: „Das autonom geführte akademische Journal – Konzept und Praxisbericht.“ In: Saxalber, Annemarie/Estlerl, Ursula (Hrsg.): Schreibprozesse begleiten. Vom schulischen zum universitären Schreiben. Innsbruck 2010, pp. 229-246.

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