

Creating and Using Nature Journals

There are many kinds of nature journals, from fancy purchased ones to sheets of paper stapled together. Use what is best for you. We do suggest that:



- The journal's cover be firm enough to support writing or drawing without a table, or that you use a clipboard.
- The journal includes at least some unlined paper. Drawing and sketching are an important part of nature journals and having a blank page helps.
- The focus is not on *how* a student writes or draws, but on the practice of doing so. Encourage students to focus not on handwriting, spelling, or drawing skills, but on having fun and using the journal to record experiences, observations, ideas, thoughts, and emotions from time spent outside.

A Few Ideas for Using Your Journal

Sit Spots

Find a spot outside where you can sit comfortably and safely. Sit quietly and look around for a few minutes. What do you see? Close your eyes. What do you hear, smell, or feel? Write or draw about these things.

Phenology: Tracking Nature's Changes

Pick something outside that you can visit frequently. Things in your backyard, neighborhood, or a park that you visit a lot are good choices. Every time you visit that object, write what day it is and record what changes you notice. Is the size different? Has its color changed? Does it have new parts? Add drawings if you want.

Zoom Out / Zoom In

Sit outside and look at something that's about 10 feet away from you. Draw and write about it without moving from where you are sitting. Try to include everything around the object too. When you're done, "Zoom In" on your object. Move to sit right next to it and focus on just one part of it to draw. What new details do you notice? Are there patterns or colors on your object that you couldn't see before?

Nature Rubbings

Use a crayon or pencil to make rubbings of different things you find outside. Leaves and grass work well, but what happens if you try rocks or tree bark? What sort of patterns do you notice in the rubbings? What do the rubbings remind you of? Can make the rubbings into a picture?