

gratitude journal

Time Required

15 minutes per day, at least three times per week for at least two weeks.

How to Do It

There's no wrong way to keep a gratitude journal, but here are some guidelines to help you get started.

Write down or type up to five things for which you feel grateful. You can use a notebook, your phone's notes application, a word processor, or whatever works best for you. The physical record is important—don't just do this exercise in your head. The things you list can be relatively small in importance ("The tasty sandwich I had for lunch today") or relatively large ("My sister gave birth to a healthy baby boy"). The goal of the exercise is to remember a good event, experience, person, or thing in your life—then enjoy the good emotions that come with it.

As you write, here are some important tips:

1. **Be as specific as possible.** Being as clear as possible is key to fostering gratitude. "I'm grateful that my coworkers brought me soup when I was sick on Tuesday" will be more effective than "I'm grateful for my coworkers."
2. **Go for depth over breadth.** Going into detail about a particular person or thing for which you're grateful carries more benefits than a surface-level list of many things.
3. **Get personal.** Focusing on people to whom you are grateful has more of an impact than focusing on things for which you are grateful.
4. **Try subtraction, not just addition.** Consider what your life would be like without certain people or things, rather than just tallying up all the good stuff. Be grateful for the negative outcomes you avoided, escaped, prevented, or turned into something positive—try not to take that good fortune for granted.
5. **See good things as "gifts."** Thinking of the good things in your life as gifts helps you avoid taking them for granted. Try to enjoy and savor the gifts you've received.
6. **Savor surprises.** Try to record events that were unexpected or surprising, as these tend to bring up stronger feelings of gratitude.
7. **Aim for variety.** Writing about some of the same people and things is OK, but focus on different details each time you write about them.
8. **Write regularly.** Whether you write daily or every other day, commit to a regular time to journal. Do your best to honor that commitment.