

Language & Learning Skills Unit

Keeping a journal

Why keep a journal?

A journal creates links. It records a history of your

- thoughts
- reflections
- attitudes
- ideas
- imaginings
- responses to what is going on around you.

Writing down and recording encourages the development of your own voice. It gives greater insight and clarity into the processes motivating your artistic practice. The act of recording translates the outer world and recognises the personal. Often, a greater depth of understanding or a new way of perceiving occurs. Keeping a journal offers a way to pursue and take notice of new or alternative pathways.

The relationship between you and your journal requires

- investing time
- making regular visits
- being prepared to reflect on your experiences.

A note about including course material in your journal: when you are reading books or articles containing new ideas, don't be surprised if you don't understand every concept, work or idea. You may need to use a specialist dictionary or ask tutors, friends or peers.

Steps involved in journal writing

Gathering: Take notice of everything; for example, the music you hear, the details of the film you see, the script you read, the crowd you're in, the way you feel about things.

Reading: Acknowledge the idea, work or theme of the artist/writer that you are responding to.

Thinking: Create links through your responses, reflections, interpretations and conversations with the material.

Acting: Note the relationship to your own artistic practice.

Methods of recording

In acknowledging an idea or practice that intrigues, resonates, irritates, or inspires you may

- use your own words
- use quotations
- paraphrase the writing of others.

Learning & Academic Skills Unit is located in the VCA Library

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- sketch or doodle
- jot down phrases and words
- note reflections
- note references and reviews
- make collages.

Develop a glossary – look up words and phrases to build your vocabulary, extend your capacity to use language and broaden your knowledge.

What to note or write about

- Observations of people, places and events from the commonplace to the obscure;
- Questions you have for other writers, artists, and theorists;
- Understandings you gain about the history of your medium, instrument and art form;
- Reflect on the questions – Who has trodden a similar road? What stones have been left unturned?
- Your own feelings towards new material and ideas;
- Investigate voices outside your area, such as scientific theories and architectural sites and not any links;
- Memories – your own or others from childhood or personal experiences that may relate to the senses (sound/sight/touch/taste/smell) or profound experiences;
- Reflect on the questions - How does the past inform the present? Are there any periods in history that intrigue you? What and who occupied this space before the present moment, what is its history?

What skills will this process give you?

Journal keeping develops, hones and heightens the skills used in

- interpretation
- observation
- reflection
- gathering
- reading and writing
- speaking and verbalising
- contemplation
- organising.