

solve the top 5

journaling

roadblocks

today!

Welcome

Hello, friend! I'm Kristin Renée from Journaling Saves and we're going to tackle some of the most common journaling roadblocks so we can get you writing *today*.

If you're new to the site, welcome. I've been journaling daily for growth, creativity and personal development for over three decades. I have hundreds of handwritten journals filled with my life adventures. I launched journalingsaves.com in 2010 as a resource for people like you who want to connect more deeply with a journaling practice.

Let's have a quick look at what we're going to cover, and then we can roll up our sleeves and dive right in.

Why we get blocked

I'm going to go out on a limb and say that you're likely in one of three camps:

- You've never journaled, but you're interested in trying because everyone is recommending it, from Brené Brown to your mother.
- You journaled in the past, regularly or sporadically - but it's been awhile since you felt connected to the process and you've had a hard time getting back on the horse.
- You currently journal but sometimes run into roadblocks that are keeping you from expressing your true potential on the page.

If you've been journaling for more than, say, a week - you've probably bumped up against one or more blockages. And if you've never journaled... well, those same blockages may be why.

We all get stuck at various times in the process. Sometimes it prevents us from starting. Sometimes it leads us to stop altogether. And sometimes we just get bored with the whole enterprise - even if we keep doing it.

The good news is that we can overcome all of these issues and put pen to paper today.

What I mean by "journaling"

Before we dive in, I want to clarify some terminology.

If you spend any time with Journaling Saves, you'll quickly grasp that when I say "journaling," I mean "writing by hand on paper in some kind of routine."

I do not mean "bullet journaling", which is awesome, but is more akin to planning and habit tracking. I also do not mean "art journaling", which is also awesome, and focuses more on the visual aspect of our experience.

Our goal with journaling here is to engage with the handwritten word in pursuit of growth and personal development.

Okay. Still with me? Now that we've clarified that business, onward and upward.

1. Writing by hand

Journaling longhand on paper delivers the most powerful results for emotional growth, personal development and productive creativity.

When we write by hand, we access a different part of our brain than we do by typing or speaking. In my many years of journaling, I've tested numerous approaches and found nothing compares to the results we get from this format.

But writing by hand delivers a complex range of potential roadblocks. Interestingly, some of these fall under Logistical stuff and some under Emotional stuff.

So you hate your handwriting and/or you're embarrassed of your spelling and grammar. Welcome to the club. Guess what? Nobody cares. Because nobody is going to read this except you. And that includes your 3rd grade teacher who terrorized you over your spelling.

Oh, it takes too long? Well, that depends how you define “too” long. Writing by hand slows you down, yes. The biggest complaint I hear around writing by hand is that you can type faster than you can write. But I’ll let you in on a little secret: it’s not about speed.

Writing by hand is about connecting with your inner self, your inner voice, and dwelling there. You have to train your brain to show up, to hold onto words and thoughts long enough to get them down. That’s part of the growth, part of the process, and frankly - part of the magic.

In order to move past this road block, you’ll need to embrace the fact that you’re not journaling to get it done quickly, easily, legibly and spellchecked.

There is room for error, room for a giant mess on the page.

If you get stuck on your handwriting, spelling and grammar, my advice to you is simple: Don’t re-read your work. Journaling is about the process, not the product. Embrace that and the whole undertaking becomes so much easier. Also, nobody is judging you because you’re not sharing this. Let go.

I’ve even heard of people who prefer to burn their journals once they’re complete. I can’t say that’s every crossed my mind - I’m

too attached to archival integrity. But it's definitely an option, especially if you're worried about these topics - and also privacy, which I cover further down the road.

2. Materials

Having the right journaling materials can make the difference between success and failure.

I recently got a new guitar and it's the most beautiful acoustic instrument I've ever seen. I got a gorgeous strap for it, and lightweight strings that are easy on my neophyte fingertips. I put it on a stand in the room where I spend most of my time. As a result, I pick up that guitar and love on it much more than any other instrument I own. Because it's beautiful and comfortable to play.

Journaling is the same way.

You must identify the best notebook for you, the best writing utensil, and your favorite tools as desired.

Notebook choice

If you are new to journaling or you've gotten stuck and bailed in the past, I caution against getting a journal that sets the bar

too high. A notebook that is attractive and comfortable and doesn't feel intimidating is what you're after.

If you're afraid to "mess it up," or its ornate perfection pressures you into feeling like you need to go Deep and Poignant every time, save it for the bookshelf. I have dozens of unused journals that are beautiful and I will never write in any of them.

Instead, I used a composition notebook with a solid black cover and 200 lined pages. I've been using that size and brand for 20 years. They cost \$9 and I buy them by the case. I can decorate the covers if I feel like it, although a lot of them are blank. I recently got a fabric journal cover on Etsy that I can switch between journals with. It has a placeholder ribbon, an elastic closure and a pen loop, all of which make my journaling process more attractive and comfortable.

You can experiment with different notebooks until you find one that works for you and makes you *want* to write in it, because it's attractive and comfortable.

Writing utensil

Also keep in mind the type of writing utensil you prefer, what's easiest on your hands and feels the most natural. This could

influence the type of paper you require which could impact the type of notebook you choose.

For example, I write with a fountain pen, which tends to be inky and bleed through paper not created for it. Writing with a fountain pen is my priority, so my chosen notebook needs to accommodate that.

If you choose your writing utensil based on the journal you have, you risk not feeling comfortable on the page - and your hand may hurt.

Writing location

Lastly, think about where you'll be writing as you pick your materials. Do you write in bed and need a hardcover with a spiral to set up comfortably? Do you mainly write at your home desk so you can invest in a giant hardcover volume for the duration? Or do you travel to cafes and other locations so you need a smaller softcover notebook to fit the bill?

Experiment until you find exactly what you need to feel inspired... and *comfortable*.

3. Time

Ahh... time. The universal resource that cannot be created (although, I've frequently seen it destroyed).

We are all strapped for time, and that makes journaling feel like yet another To Do to cross off your list - or to Not Do, and feel guilty about it. Let's stop that ASAP, please.

While I recommend journaling daily, the reality is that not everyone has the space in their schedule to commit to a sit-down session every morning. We just don't. We have jobs, we have families, we have responsibilities. Even if you just have demanding pets and grocery delivery, some days that feels like quite enough, thank you.

Consistency is more important than duration in developing a journaling practice. This means you'll get better results from journaling most days for 20 minutes, as opposed to carving out a large swath of time once a week.

It's also easier to build a habit you do regularly.

Regular journalings gets you out of "crisis management" mode and into more proactive thinking and processing. You check in. It's easier to manage, to hit that expectation. It's less

intimidating if you know you only have to show up on the page for 15 minutes and not dedicate an afternoon to Writing Deep Thoughts.

If you keep it short but frequent, you can also attach the habit of journaling to other habits you already do. Habit stacking is a powerful approach. And when you start examining your day, you can find little pockets of time to make your journaling time.

Whether it's when you wake up before you get out of bed, while you're waiting for pasta to boil (one of my faves), during lunch break at work, while the little one is napping, or even while you're waiting for the train, you can find a scrap of time to make journaling time.

When you see how easy and fulfilling it is to lower the bar and commit to just 10 - 20 minutes most days, you'll bust through that roadblock quickly.

4. Topics

The curse of the blank page! It's so difficult to begin. What do I write about? Is that interesting enough Do I need to go deeper? What do I write about? Am I allowed to vent? I literally have nothing to say...

You have a few great solutions here.

Prompts

Journaling prompts can be a great way to get started and to dig deep. The best way to choose a prompt is to browse a list and see what resonates with you. Even before we know the answer to what we need to write, our subconscious seems to react to the solution. If you read a prompt and it gives you shivers, that's the one. If you're not getting shivers, just pick any prompt and start writing. If it doesn't feel like a good fit for that session, grab another one. Or try one of the below approaches.

Braindump (timed).

The Braindump is just the act of sitting down, grabbing a pen, and dumping on the page. Whatever comes to mind, get it out. Onto the page. It can be nonsensical, stream of conscious, poetic, narrative, vent, rant or recalibration. Setting a timer and writing without stopping is the way to take this exercise to the next level. Aim for 10 minutes without stopping, for example. Or 5, if that's all you can reasonably sign up for.

Listing (numbered).

If you're having a hard time writing a cohesive narrative, make a

list. Don't worry about the flow of one topic to the next. You're really just trying to free up some head space and capture what's going on at the moment. If you want to challenge yourself, pick a number in advance. Write 20 items in a list. Or 30. Or 5. And... go!

Realtime capture.

The writer and diarist Anaïs Nin asked, "What feels warm or near to me right now?" You can get started by describing the room you're in, the way your body feels, the topic sitting on top of all others. You can take it in a sensory direction, documenting the smells and sounds of your location.

Tools and cards.

There are lots of journaling decks and tools available, from decks of prompts to visual cards that stimulate creativity to Tarot cards. Sometimes I like to randomly pull a Tarot card from a deck and write about how I see that energy expressing in my life today. Or you can use a visual card deck that features a single word, and focus on writing about that word and its energy in your life.

5. Privacy

Privacy is a very real concern for a lot of journalers. Especially

those sharing their home with other humans. Curious humans, small humans, humans that require protection.

One word of caution here: if you are in an unsafe or complicated situation where writing in a journal would be dangerous, counterproductive, or could bring you strife if found and read, please find a solution that works for you. If you need to journal to get right about the situation keeping you stuck, choose a digital journal with a password until you can commit to doing this by hand.

Keep it under wraps

Out of sight, out of mind is often the best approach. Keep your journal tucked away and you won't have to worry about who's digging in. When I'm not writing in my journal, it's in my bag. And I always know where my bag is.

Locked filing cabinets, rooms, safes

If you really need to feel secure, I recommend keeping your journal in a locking file cabinet. If you have a desk, a locking drawer is perfect to tuck away your notebook. It needs to be reasonably accessible though, or you may put off journaling because it's too difficult to get to your notebook. You want it to be just challenging enough to keep the honest people out.

Conversations

Depending on where you are with your relationships, conversations can be a solid approach to privacy. I can leave my journal open on the kitchen table and know my partner won't snoop. Because if I thought he would, I wouldn't have married him.

Honestly saying, "Look - I've started journaling and it's private and I need this space to stay private so I can be a better partner/family member etc. If you have any questions about where I'm at, I'm happy to answer them. But I prefer the conversation be in person and face to face, and not out of context while you're reading my journal."

Not everyone is able to get their needs met this way, but if it's an option, it's a powerful one.

Covers

Get a boring cover for your journal so it doesn't look like a juicy piece of writing. It can be a fake bookcover or just a blank "padfolio" style. If no one knows that's your journal, they won't know to go digging.

Well, my friends, we have reached the end of the program. I'm so glad you found the time and space to learn about how to get past these 5 roadblocks and move on with your journaling.

Here are some related resources from the website you might find helpful:

- [Journal Prompts](#) extravaganza at Journaling Saves
- [20 Ways to Find 20 Minutes to Journal](#)
- [8 Reasons to Journal Daily](#)

And as always, drop me a line with your thoughts or questions! I am here to be of service: k@journalingsaves.com

Light and love on your journey.

Yours in journaling,

Kristin Renée