

THE NATURE JOURNAL QUICKSTART GUIDE

Want to get started right away but not sure where to begin?
Use this guide to jump-start your nature journaling program.



1 GATHER BASIC SUPPLIES:

- Journals
- Pencils and sharpeners
(See pp. 258–259 for details.)



2 GO OUTSIDE:

- Visit one place repeatedly to build students' familiarity (p. 11)
- Set clear expectations (p. 12)
- Take care of students' physical needs (p. 11)
- Make room for students' backgrounds and experiences (p. 11)



3 LEAD STRUCTURED JOURNALING ACTIVITIES:

Choose a small part of nature to focus on:

- Leaves
- A snail
- A flower
- Cloud patterns
- Stream currents
- A flock of birds
- Cracks in the mud



(See table on pp. 262–268 for more ideas.)

Introduce focused exercises:

- Start with *I Notice, I Wonder, It Reminds Me Of* (pp. 36–38) and then lead foundational journaling activities (pp. 39–47)
- Provide explicit and clear directions (pp. 15–16)
- Support students who have trouble starting (pp. 16–17)
- Mix journaling activities with active exploration (pp. 12–13)

Engage students in discussion after each activity:

- Use general discussion questions and questions from the Crosscutting Concepts categories, found at the end of each activity
- Ask students to explain and build on their journal observations (pp. 17–19)



4 THEN, CONTINUE LEADING JOURNALING ACTIVITIES TO...

...Build students' sense of place, scientific thinking skills, and understanding of key concepts:

- Observation and Natural History chapter (pp. 51–83)
- Inquiry, Investigation, and Scientific Thinking chapter (pp. 85–124)

AND

...Teach students specific journaling approaches:

- Words: Articulated Thought and Storytelling chapter (pp. 127–157)
- Pictures: Drawing and Visual Thinking chapter (pp. 159–193)
- Numbers: Quantification and Mathematical Thinking chapter (pp. 195–223)



Go back



and forth

...Engage students in reflection and give them feedback:

- Support a growth mindset (pp. 9–10)
- Do not praise artwork; notice and affirm accurate observations (pp. 228–229)
- Give appropriate, timely feedback (pp. 228–230)
- Support deliberate practice (pp. 228–229)
- Use rubrics for thoughtful grading (pp. 231–232)



AND INTEGRATE JOURNALING INTO YOUR CURRICULUM:

- Ask students to explain and build on their journal observations (pp. 233–234)
- Embed journaling into longer lessons and units (pp. 234–237)
- Connect journaling to standards and frameworks (pp. 21, 238–246)

