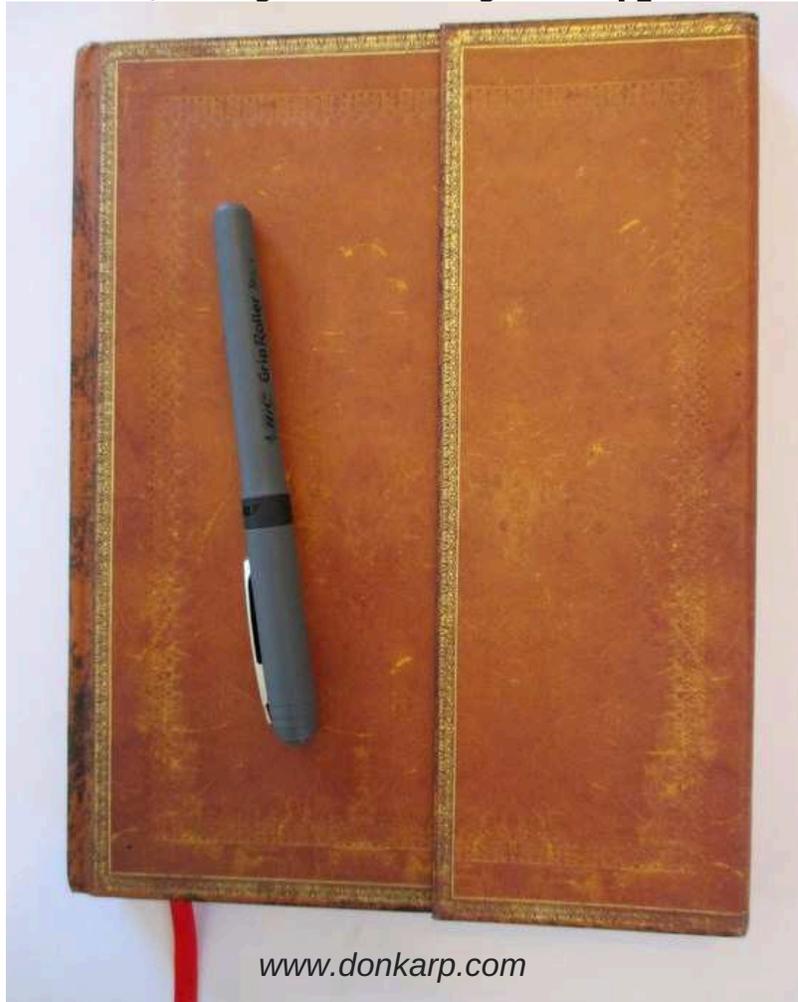


# A Guide to Journal Writing



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# **A Guide To Journal Writing For Recovery and Thriving**

**by Don Karp, 2017**

## **Disclaimer**

The information given in this ebook publication is written by a non-professional who shares knowledge from lived experience. It is in no way intended to be a replacement for treatment by a doctor, psychologist, psychiatrist, or any other professional or professional treatment facility.

My wish is that this information can be constructively used in conjunction with professional care, to augment it.

Note that I am offering it specifically to those in recovery and do not recommend this approach to those in acute situations.

For further information, professional collaboration, or any other matter, please send an email: *don@donkarp.com*



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## Introduction

This is specifically for those of you recovering from schizophrenia who want to move more rapidly in your healing process. It's aimed not just at fully recovering, but to go beyond—to actual thriving in life.

I've provided some of the scientific research backing journal writing as therapeutic and provided references. Besides how to get started (“hardware and software”), I describe when to write and some additional tips on content ideas. You'll find some of my own ideas that I've not seen elsewhere.

The ideas here could be for anybody. Why schizophrenics in recovery then? Because when I was going through my own ordeal as a paranoid schizophrenic, I was very naive. I had no notion of any alternatives and did what the psychiatrist suggested, after a five minute interview: to sign in to the hospital for treatment.

Along [my journey](#), I did find a couple of alternatives that were helpful, but it was not until my fifth hospitalization that I got fed up enough to take on my “revolving door” behavior. My actions were separate, and indeed different from what the hospital suggested.

My hope is that this ebook can help you in ways that I never had available. Although I had already been writing in a journal for several years before this, I did not see the power of it. It took me many years after to develop systems that I could use to advance in my personal growth.

These directions may not completely fit your needs. Please feel free to pick and chose what you can use, and add to and modify as you wish. My only request is that you give me some feedback, so that I can see what's not working and change it. Email: [don@bumpyroadwork.com](mailto:don@bumpyroadwork.com). Distribute this, but please cite me as author and give the web site:

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## Scientific Studies

Scientific studies show the benefits of journal writing in recovery and thriving.

Dr. James W. Pennebaker, of the University of Texas, in Austin, has published research showing how short-term focused writing can have a beneficial effect on everybody. He wrote the book:

*Writing to Heal: A Guided Journal for Recovering from Trauma and Emotional Upheaval.*

Writing helps organize our thinking about experiences. Translating an experience into language makes experience graspable. This allows us to step back for a moment and evaluate our lives, making course corrections when needed.

Kathleen Adams, LPC, Director of [The Center For Journal Therapy](#), wrote an ebook, *J is for Journal: A short guide to healing, growth, change through writing*. It's available free from her site. She wrote the book, *Journal to the Self*.

“Writing is a powerful tool for personal growth, life management, mind/body/heart/spirit health.”

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## Hardware

-**Handwriting is preferred** over using the computer or a mobile device. The choice is a personal one. I love the feel of ink from my gel pen flowing onto the paper.

-Notebook.

Expensive—hard bound, leather cover, lined numbered pages. Cheaper—hard bound preferred as spiral bound pages tend to loosen and detach. There is no problem using the cheaper variety, but stick with hard bound.

Use lined pages for writing, or one with blank pages if you do a lot of drawing.

Portable is best, so that you can easily carry it with you.

-Pen: I like the gel type as the ink flows nicely onto the page.



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## Software, or Setting It Up

-Number the pages: If the notebook doesn't have numbered pages, then number them (every other page—even pages only), leaving a few pages at the beginning for the *Table of Contents*.

-Label the type of entry: As you go, label the type of entry, where applicable, with circled, capital letters to represent that type. I.E.: **T** = trigger; **D** = dream; **B** = a book you read or are reading; **C** = a new contact; etc.

-New entries: Always start new entries at the top of the page, recording the date, time and location.

Friday Night, Oct. 16  
Good Shabbos!

ⓑ Think and Grow Rich  
Napolean Hill

Don't always follow what others say. Be especially aware of their "NO"s!

1. I was told by Dutchings to go to outreach meetings, take the free meds they gave me, and to live in the neighborhood of other ex-patients

→ I did not of these, to my betterment. I stayed out of

Table of Contents:

Every so often, say every 50 pages, go back and add the labeling letters. Underline important segments. Write in subject titles for the important themes. Then, in the *Contents*, use the left column for the page number, followed by the date. To the right of that, put in themes and any label letters.

<u>PAGE</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>THEME(S)</u>
2-15	5/6	Lisa Nichols: No Matter What
16-17	8/21	Book Seguel (D)ream types
18	10/3	Tepoz returns: Ixchel, S
19	10/4	Arrange 2nd Ann Scorp. Dance
20-22	10/16	(B) Think & Grow Rich / Developing Book Success
23-25	10/5	@ A's / Coaches: Wendy, Anna, Megan
26		B-day greetings from Lee
27-28	10/10	Fiesta: 70 people HUGE SUCCESS!
29-30	10/23	Bob vs Wendy; 1st practice f.
31-32	10/24	CMC 1st mtg: <sup>clearing</sup> Wendy, Gretchen
33-34	11/26	Thanksgiving @ A's with <sup>*song: He said / She</sup>

## **When to Write**

-Frequency of writing: This is entirely up to you, but when just beginning it's best to make this a daily habit. Fifteen minutes might be enough. Eventually you might only write when you've something significant to record, but don't let that stray to too long a period.

-Dreams: best time to record them is just after you wake up. Make sure to record the *feelings* you had during the dream.

-Triggers: As soon after they happen as possible.

-Reflections: Before going to bed at night, record significant events of the day and how you felt about them.

## **Some Ideas on Content**

-Triggers: Develop a way of tracking triggers—what sets off your paranoia, hearing voices or other disturbing behaviors. Keep an ongoing record of how they affect your life, and make a plan to deal with them appropriately and effectively.

-Patterns: By recording your life's experience, day by day—events and how you felt about them—you will notice repeating negative patterns. If you are in psychotherapy, this will give you information to bring to your therapist. Also you can record insights your therapist offers.

-Dreams: Record dreams—characters, events, places and even inanimate objects. Especially note any feelings you experience during the dreams. In a module I'll be offering, you'll learn how to use dreams to work out current life problems.

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-Other Uses of Journal Writing: The list is endless, but here are a few more uses of journal writing that will be covered in my offerings:

Learn to develop intuition based on gut-thinking, not on the use of your rational mind.

Become aware of precognitive experience—a way of knowing the future.

Record special events and travel experiences.

Remember creative ideas to be explored later.

Keep a list of contacts, books to read and those read and future searches to do on Google.

Journal writing is a special time for you to sit alone quietly and write. The journal is only for your eyes. No one else is to see it. You can write whatever you want without censoring. Don't worry about grammar and spelling. *Stick to the “flip out” rule: if your writing becomes too emotionally heavy for you, stop. You can pick it up another time, if appropriate.*

I have given suggestions based on what has worked well for me. Everyone is different. You will develop your own style. Get started today!

If you've any comments or questions, you can contact me: [don@donkarp.com](mailto:don@donkarp.com) or [@donsbumpyroad](https://twitter.com/donsbumpyroad) (Twitter)

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## References

1. Dr. James W. Pennebaker.
2. Pennebaker's research.
3. Pennebaker's book, *Writing to Heal*.
4. The Center For Journal Therapy.
5. Journal to the Self, Kathleen Adams.-
6. [Kate Thompson, "Therapeutic Journal Writing: An Introduction for Professionals \(Writing for Therapy or Personal Development\)", 2011.](#)

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