

# Making Your Own Family History: Keeping a Daily Journal

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## Journal Jar (a sampling)

Courtesy of Janet McNaughton, Tempe Chapter, Family History Society of Arizona

- Between the ages of 5 and 10, what was your favorite activity?
- Describe a sound from your childhood. What was it? When did you hear it? What does it bring to mind?
- Describe a childhood birthday.
- Describe a childhood Christmas.
- Describe a favorite childhood friend and some things you did with that friend.

## Daily Journaling to Record Family History as It Happens

**Principle:** “Memory is always partial and selective.”

– C.K. Reisman, *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*

**Purpose:** To let your descendants know what your life/your family’s life was like.

**Concern:** What do you want descendants to know about your life?

## Some Quotations about Journaling

"I can shake off everything as I write; my sorrows disappear, my courage is reborn." – Anne Frank

“The very act of writing it down made her realize how easy it would be to forget, how important it would be from now on to put everything, everything, down on paper.”— Donna Tartt, writer

## Sample Questions for Daily Journaling:

1. Among your activities today, which ones are indicative of this year?
2. What short-term or long-term goals have been on your mind recently?
3. What New Year’s resolutions, if any, have you made for this year? How are you doing with them so far?
4. What did you do today that reveals something about your personality?
5. What happened in the world today that made you pause to think?
6. What was the weather like today?
7. Has COVID been part of your life today? If so, how?
8. What television shows did you watch today? Why did you watch them? How did they make you feel? How did they make you think?
9. What did your children do today that shows their personalities?

10. What did your children do today that made you reflect on who they are?
11. What did your children do today that made you proud?
12. What cognitive, social, or language development did you see in one of your children/grandchildren today?
13. What did your children do today that caused you to reflect on your parenting?
14. What happened on this date in history? In the family? Locally? Regionally? Nationally? Internationally?
15. What well-known person died today?
16. What was it like at work today?
17. If you called a sibling or parent today, what did you talk about?
18. If you thought about something from your childhood today, what was it? How did it make you think or feel?
19. If you listened to an “oldies” (50s, 60s, 70s, 80s, 90s) radio station today, which song made you think about your earlier years? What memories came back to you?
20. If you thought about an ancestor today, what memories came back to you?
21. If you emailed a family member today, what did you write?
22. If you received an email or letter from a family member today, what did that person write?
23. What piece of good news did you receive today?
24. What did you eat today?
25. What did you wear today?
26. What recreational activities did you do today?
27. If you had a dream last night, what happened in it? Can you speculate what the sources are for features of the dream?
28. What book did you read today? Summarize what you read and how you reacted to it?
29. What newspaper did you read today? Summarize the most memorable story.
30. What movies are popular this week? If you have seen any of them, give a brief synopsis.
31. What did you do with friends today?