

# 18 Simple Tips for Stress-Free Journaling

By Angie Lucas

Building on the concepts taught in my presentation, “Write Away: Why Journaling Matters,” here are 18 simple tips to help you build and sustain a journaling habit. For more details about each of these tips, read the full article at [angielucas.com/blog/18simpletips](http://angielucas.com/blog/18simpletips)

## 1. Own Your Story

Nobody can tell your story or share your perspective on your family history better than YOU. Believe in the **value** of your singular **vision** and your unique **voice**.

## 2. Tell Favorite Stories Aloud

Sharing a memory out loud helps you add structure to fragmented details, so it’s easier to write down later. You can even record audio stories in place of a written journal.

## 3. Make a List of Stories to Tell

Not sure where to start? Make a list of memories and events you want to journal about eventually. Be sure to include the stories and anecdotes you frequently tell out loud.

## 4. Make a Timeline of Major Life Events

Write down each year of your life in a notebook, leaving a page or two between year to add in major life events and turning points. You can also include significant national and world events.

## 5. Forget About Chronology

Whether or not you compose a timeline of your life for reference, you don’t have to journal about your life in chronological order. Start with what’s most inspiring to you right now.

## 6. Use Memory Triggers

Photos, keepsakes, clothing, and other objects can be great memory triggers. Search for “FamilySearch 52 Stories” on the Internet for printable journaling prompts, one for each month of the year.

## 7. Let Your Thoughts Percolate

Select a writing prompt or memory trigger at the beginning of the week, then let your subconscious work on it as you go about your day. You’ll be surprised what arises.

## 8. Use Your Handwriting

Your handwriting is unique to you. Your family will *want* to have some of your words written in your own hand, so keep at least one handwritten journal.

## 9. Write the Way You Speak

If writing intimidates you, say each sentence out loud, then write down exactly what you said. As you practice, you’ll get more comfortable with your own unique writing voice.

## 10. Be Specific

Dive into the details. Rather than making general claims (e.g., “My dad is so generous.”) and leaving it at that, include evidence, examples, and anecdotes that back up your point.

### 11. Don't Stress About Grammar and Spelling

Don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good. An imperfectly written life story is infinitely more valuable than a lofty vision that's never written down.

### 12. Gather Memories from Other People

Consult siblings, cousins, children, and other loved ones to help round out your memories of a person or event, especially if the details are fuzzy.

### 13. Write in List Form

Write some journaling entries in list form, instead of paragraphs. Make lists of places you've visited, accomplishments, favorite books, things you love about your kids, traits you inherited from grandma, etc.

### 14. Make it a Regular Practice

The more you exercise your writing muscles, the easier and more naturally your words will flow. Set aside a block of time once a week or once a month for journal writing.

### 15. Keep Multiple Journals

You can capture memories in a handwritten journal, in a smartphone app, in a computer file, in a notebook in your purse, even on a wall calendar or desk diary. Use a variety of methods.

### 16. Curate Your Own Writing

Comb through your social media posts for stories you'd like to save in your journal, too. Also save copies of wedding vows, speeches, remarks at funerals, etc.

### 17. Make Some of Your Stories Permanent

Consider saving your most important family memories in the FamilySearch app, under the "Stories" tab, where your words will be archived and discoverable by other family members long into the future.

### 18. Just Start

Start somewhere, and start today. Even if you don't have time to delve deeply into your history right now, build a regular habit of capturing current thoughts and experiences while the details are fresh.

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**Angie Lucas** is the author of *My Big, Dumb, Invisible Dragon*, a picture book about grief, healing, and hope. (Available at <https://amzn.to/3siVyyy>) A former magazine editor and content marketer, Angie is passionate about reading, writing, and journal keeping in all of its forms. She also loves ampersands, freshly sharpened pencils, Jane Austen, and ooey-goopy cinnamon rolls. Having achieved the rare "motherhood trifecta," Angie has one child through marriage, one through adoption, and one through birth. You can connect with Angie on Twitter (@angielucas), Instagram (@angielucas), or on her website: [angielucas.com](http://angielucas.com).

