

Finding the Right Journal for Daily Writing: A Personal Guide

Why a dedicated journal matters

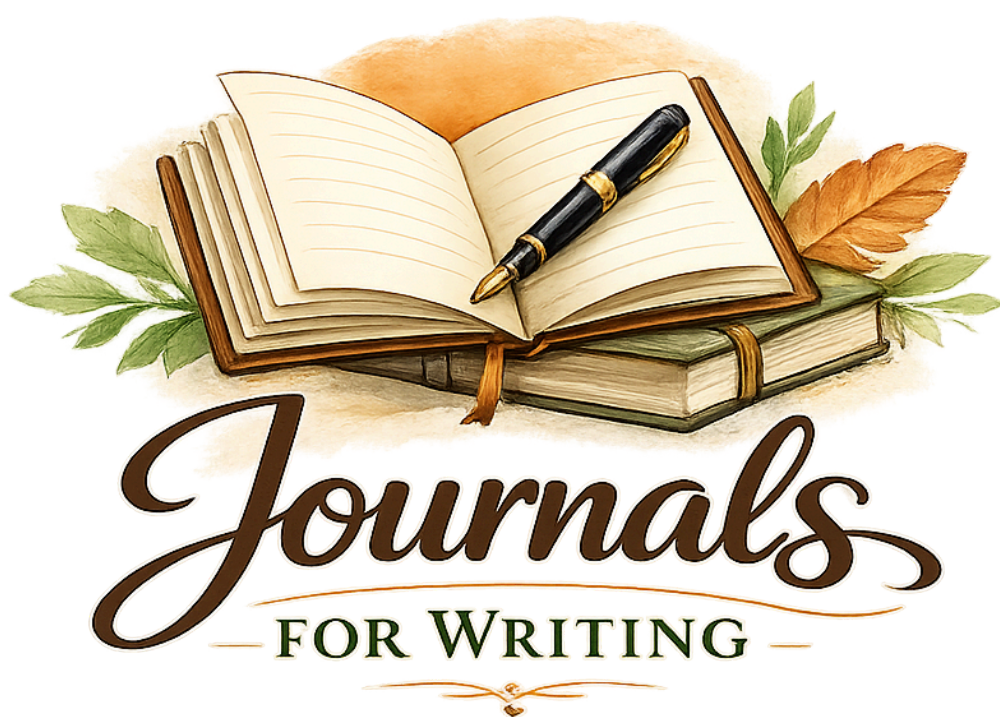
I have been keeping a journal for daily writing for over twenty years. In that time I have filled dozens of notebooks, tested more brands than I can count, and learned what actually works when you sit down to write every day. The right journal for daily writing is not about aesthetics or status. It is about removing friction between your thoughts and the page. When the paper feels good under your hand, when the binding lies flat, when the lines are exactly where you want them, writing becomes a habit instead of a chore.

Through years of trial and error, I have settled on a short list of notebooks that I return to again and again. These are the ones I recommend to friends, to students, and to anyone who asks me how to start a daily writing practice. They are not all expensive. They are not all perfect for every style. But each one has earned its place through consistent use and genuine satisfaction.

What to look for in a journal

Before I get to specific brands, let me share the criteria I use when I evaluate a notebook. Paper quality matters more than anything else. If the paper bleeds or feathers with your favorite pen, you will stop reaching for the journal. I prefer **Tomoe River Paper** for its thinness and its ability to handle a **fountain pen** without ghosting. But not everyone writes with a fountain pen, and not everyone wants paper that thin. Some writers prefer a heavier stock that takes a **Pigma Micron** or a ballpoint without any show-through at all.

Binding is another make-or-break factor. A journal that does not lie flat is a journal that annoys you every time you open it. I have abandoned notebooks mid-way through because the spine fought me. **Leuchtturm1917** notebooks use a thread-bound spine that opens flat from the first page. **Moleskine** notebooks, by contrast, tend to have a stiffer spine that requires breaking in. Some people do not mind that. I do.



Then there is page layout. **Grid paper** gives you freedom to write, draw, and sketch without worrying about margins. **Lined paper** is best if you write long paragraphs and want the lines to guide your hand. **Blank pages** are for the artist or the poet, though I find them intimidating for daily prose. I use grid paper in most of my journals because it works for morning pages, for lists, and for occasional diagrams.

My favorite notebooks for daily writing

Leuchtturm1917

The **Leuchtturm1917** is the notebook I recommend most often. It comes in **Hard Cover** and **Soft Cover** options, both of which lie flat. The paper is smooth and takes ink well, though it is

not Tomoe River. It handles a fountain pen with minimal feathering, and it holds up to erasing and moderate use. The numbered pages and table of contents are useful if you like structure. I use a Leuchtturm1917 for my daily [journal for daily writing](#), and I have filled three of them so far. The only downside is the price. It is not cheap. But it lasts, and the experience is worth the cost.

Midori MD Notebook

The **Midori MD Notebook** is a quieter option. It has a simple, almost austere design. The paper is cream-colored and has a soft texture that feels wonderful under a fountain pen. It does not bleed or feather, and it ages beautifully with use. The notebook comes in grid, lined, and blank pages. I prefer the grid version. The binding is thread-bound and opens flat. This is a journal for writers who want nothing between themselves and the page. No frills, no gimmicks, just excellent paper and careful construction.

Rhodia

Rhodia notebooks are the workhorses of the writing world. They use high-quality, bright white paper that is coated to resist ink. A fountain pen glides over it without catching. **Rhodia** pads and notebooks are staple-bound or spiral-bound, which means they open completely flat. They are affordable enough to use for rough drafts and daily notes. I keep a Rhodia pad on my desk for quick writing sessions and for testing new pens. If you are just starting a daily writing habit and do not want to invest in an expensive journal, Rhodia is a solid choice.

Field Notes

Field Notes are pocket-sized notebooks that fit in a jacket or a bag. They are not meant for long, reflective journal entries. They are for capturing ideas on the go. I use a **Field Notes** notebook when I am traveling or when I need to jot down a thought before it disappears. The paper is not as fountain-pen-friendly as the others on this list, but it works well with a ballpoint or a **Pigma Micron**. The covers are colorful and durable, and the notebooks are inexpensive enough that you do not feel bad filling one up quickly.

Hobonichi Techo

The **Hobonichi Techo** is a cult favorite among daily writers and bullet journalists. It uses **Tomoe River Paper**, which is incredibly thin yet resistant to bleeding. The result is a notebook that holds a lot of pages in a slim package. The **Hobonichi Techo** comes with a dated daily page layout, which is perfect for morning pages or for anyone who wants to track their writing progress day by day. The paper is so thin that you can see the ghosting of the previous page, but many writers, including me, find that ghosting charming rather than distracting. If you write with a fountain pen, this is one of the best experiences you can have.



Building the habit

Finding the right journal is only half the battle. The real work is showing up every day. I have found that a **daily habit** of writing, even for ten minutes, changes the way I think. When I skip a day, I feel it. The words get stuck. The ideas stop flowing. The journal becomes a burden instead of a release.

One method that works for many people is **morning pages**, a practice from **The Artist's Way** by Julia Cameron. The idea is to write three pages of stream-of-consciousness every morning, before anything else. You do not worry about quality. You just fill the page. I have done morning pages on and off for years, and they are most effective when I use a journal that I genuinely enjoy holding. The **Leuchtturm1917** and the **Midori MD Notebook** are both excellent for this practice because they open flat and have enough pages to last several months.

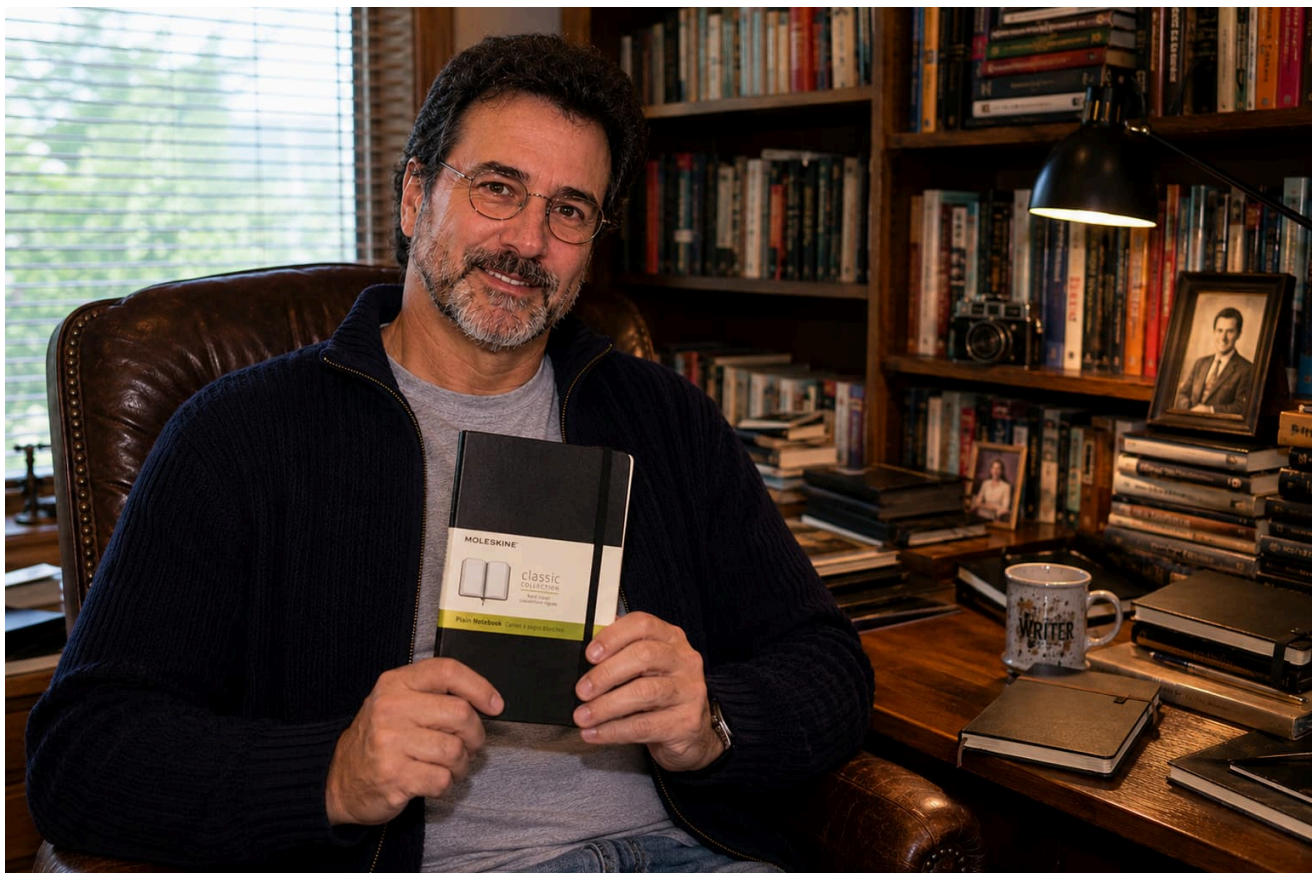
Another approach is the **bullet journal** method, which combines daily writing with task management. The **Hobonichi Techo** is a natural fit for bullet journaling because its dated pages give you a framework without being restrictive. You can log your tasks, your thoughts, and your reflections all in one place. The key is to find a system that you actually use. I have tried

elaborate layouts and color-coding, and I always return to simple lists and plain writing. The journal is a tool, not a performance.

Writing prompts and getting started

If you are new to daily writing, or if you have fallen out of the habit, **writing prompts** can help. I keep a small list of prompts inside the front cover of my current journal. Simple questions like "What am I grateful for today?" or "What confused me this week?" or "What did I learn?" can start a flow of words that carries you for several pages. The **Baron Fig** journals, which I have not mentioned yet, include a prompt inside the front cover of each notebook. It is a nice touch, though the paper is not as fountain-pen-friendly as I would like.

The point is that the journal for daily writing is a personal choice. What works for me may not work for you. But I believe that the investment in a quality notebook pays off in the consistency of your practice. When the paper feels right, when the binding lies flat, when the lines match your handwriting, you stop thinking about the notebook and start thinking about what you want to say. That is the goal.



A final note on materials

I use a **fountain pen** with a medium nib for most of my writing. Paired with a **Pigma Micron** for annotations, this combination works well on the papers I have described. If you use ballpoints or gel pens, you will have even fewer issues with bleeding. The important thing is to test your pen on the paper before you commit to a journal. Write a few sentences. Check the back of the page. If you see dots of ink bleeding through, that journal is not for you.

One last recommendation: do not buy a dozen journals at once. Buy one. Fill it. Then buy another. The act of finishing a notebook is deeply satisfying, and it gives you time to decide what you want in the next one. I have a shelf full of half-filled notebooks from my early years, and they remind me that the habit matters more than the equipment. But good equipment helps.