

## The Learning Journal (Academic Diary)

The learning journal is a form of an academic diary and is generally written in everyday language.

When studying autonomously, it is especially important to reflect on your work. During the end of every working phase of a paper, it makes sense to deal with the following questions:

- What did I get done easily today? Could I repeat this during the next working phase?
- What did I accomplish today?
- Which obstacles did I encounter? What could have been the reasons for these difficulties?
- What will I continue working on?
- What is my next step?
- Did I learn something new today?
- ...

Further thoughts about the journal:

*What is the correct way?*

„There is no ‘correct way’ to work with your own learning journal. It might even be used as an expansion of your mind.”

*How can I become more confident about my academic work?*

„The journal is supposed to help you make yourself the center of your academic opinion – not because you should be the center of the universe, but solely because you cannot find security in a superficial knowledge that is not your own. You will only feel confident once you dare to make the knowledge your own, to test it, to criticize it, to combine and apply different elements.”

*How could I possibly manage all the different information I encounter during my studies and during the writing of my paper?*

„During the initial phase of your studies the journal can help you to organize the seemingly overwhelming masses of information of this new academic world. It can be valuable in finding your interests and preferences by showing you aspects you like writing about. Everything that is new and unknown (new vocabulary, theories, names, connections, methods) should be included in the journal right away. Thus you can check again if the occasion comes up.“

(each answer: Kruse 1998)

**Use your journal in order to make writing a constant part of your studies. You will realize that writing is a tool for thinking!**

After attending a seminar, take time to reflect on your thoughts in *one* minute. Write down everything you think about without censoring it: Resentment, questions, ideas, interesting topics, everything you remember especially, etc. („Today we dealt with... The professor gave a lecture on... I only understood about half of it, because (I was tired)... Maybe it would be worthwhile to read this or that again..., I want to look up, what... means, I am excited about the idea, that... etc.).

Take the time to go through your notes at the end of the week and to add or look up things, etc.

Source: Otto Kruse, Keine Angst vor dem leeren Blatt. Frankfurt/Main 1998