

# GETTING STARTED IN YOUR NOTEBOOK



## CHOOSE THE RIGHT NOTEBOOK

Getting a notebook that you like the look and feel of is more important than you think. That picture on the website of all my notebooks? Don't be impressed. Most of those are at best half-filled. Why? Because it always took me a while to figure out I didn't like the way the notebook fell open, or how big/small the lines were, or that there were no lines, or that the notebook was too big to carry, etc.

FINALLY, I've figured out that when it comes to notebooks, I like it **simple** – a spiral notebook or composition notebook with college-ruled lines. Anything fancier and I'm intimidated. In a plain old notebook, I don't worry that my thoughts aren't impressive. I can **just write, and that's the point.**

So choose wisely. Choose for yourself. Get fancy. Keep it simple. Then get a pen you'll like writing with. My personal choice? Hotel pens. I take them **EVERY TIME** I travel: from the room, from the front desk, from your desk if you happen to bring one and I see it. I love a good hotel pen.

## Why Keep a Notebook?

Many of the thinkers we'll present this semester kept notebooks. David Foster Wallace, who you'll read this week, was an avid notebook-writer AND you can go see his notebooks and annotations at UT (pretty cool stuff).

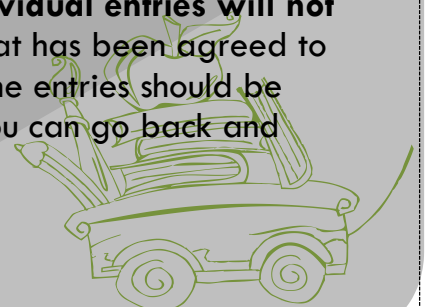
Great thinkers in all fields write down their thoughts in order to maintain a record of them. Writing it down means you can return and improve later. It means you value the musings of your own mind, you honor the incredible thoughts that run through you each day.

Think you're not a writer? So what? Keep an engineer's notebook or a gamer's notebook or a musician's notebook or a mathematician's or a scientist's or an artist's notebook. Just keep a notebook!

## What to Write for Great Ideas?

For our purposes, think of your notebook as place to record and explore your **THOUGHTS**. That's one of the goals of this class – for you to figure out what you think, examine what you think and articulate what you think.

The goal is simply to record, not to produce beautiful writing. Be messy and scattered. Don't worry about grammar and punctuation. Be honest, like really honest. **Your individual entries will not be read** unless that has been agreed to ahead of time. The entries should be legible so that you can go back and read them.



# FAQS

**I have to have a notebook for English too. Can I use the same notebook for both?**

YES, absolutely!

**But how will you know which entries are for which class?**

YOU will clearly label each of our entries with the DATE and GREAT IDEAS.

**What if I want two separate notebooks?**

Cool. Still label the entries with the date.

**What if I write twice in one day, like I start in class but finish writing on the bus?**

Note that in your heading somewhere so you could get credit for having written outside of class.

**Are you serious when you say you won't read the entries?**

Yes, absolutely. I will only read entries I have told you will be read. During notebook checks I am looking quickly at the pages, not even skimming. What you write is your business. I just want you to write.

**So I can curse?**

Yes, if that's how you need to express yourself.

**What if I write something REALLY private and you read it?**

You can always turn down the page it you want to ensure it's not read.

**What if I forget my notebook, but I write on other paper?**

That happens to me all the time! Keep that paper and staple/tape/glue it into your notebook when you can.

**Can I use my notebook for other things like taking notes in class?**

Yes, just label those so it's easy to distinguish that from your entries.



## First Notebook Assignment

*You have until Friday, September 4<sup>th</sup> to show Mr. Loewen your notebook. This check counts as a third of a major grade. Late points will be taken off if you wait until after the due date to have your notebook checked.*

1. Get a notebook you like! Write an entry **(to be read)** that explains why you chose that notebook and why you write with the pen/marker/pencil you do. Be thoughtful in your choices so that you can be thoughtful in this entry.
2. Write EVERY DAY for 7 seven days. You will not always be expected to write every day, but to get this writing habit started, this is a good start. Writing during in-class time does count as writing for a day.
3. Keep writing, both during in-class time and outside of class. Make sure you are labeling your entries.

## ASSESSMENT

*Be prepared to show your entry for number 1 above. Be prepared to show at least 7 straight days of entries. Finally, be prepared (for an A) to show you've gone above and beyond what was asked: by writing more entries than was required and writing a lot (at least sometimes). Having only or just above what is asked is how you get a B. Having less than what is asked is how you get a C.*

