What Are Double-Entry Journals?

How Are They Implemented in the Classroom?

The double-entry journal is a writing-to-learn strategy that can be used in every academic discipline. The strategy is easy to implement but should be used frequently to be effective. Students keep an ongoing record in a notebook or loose-leaf binder of learning as it occurs. Students write in their own language about what they are learning. For teachers and students, entries influence learning by revealing problems, questions, connections, and concerns. Double-entry journals serve a variety of purposes. Students record their thoughts and feelings or reactions to text excerpts or features, teacher- provided prompts, and/or to their own questions and areas of interest relating to the text.

To create a two-column format for the double-entry journal, have students divide sheets of paper in half, length-wise. In the left column of the double-entry journal, students may be prompted to select words, short quotations, or other passages from or features of the text that interest them or that elicit a strong response. They record the word, quotation or brief passage, either verbatim or in paraphrased form. In the right-hand column, students record their reactions, interpretations, or other responses to the text segments/features they have selected.

**How does the double-entry journal help students? Some examples:**

* to react to a writer’s main idea, topic development, argument, etc.
* to keep track of their learning during question and answer sessions
* to look at specific lines and passages for clarity of meaning
* to interpret a line of poetry or to decide how they feel about a character (words, actions, etc.)
* to explore a topic or idea. (By being asked to explain what specific words or phrases mean, students will be able to reference reasons and evidence to support their views, their understandings.)

A Sample Double-Entry Journal

Text Source: “Who Cares About Population Anyway?” (page two)

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| From The Source (text) . . . | Sample Responses . . . |
| “The way people respond to scarcity also causes problems. We work the environment even harder to obtain resources, and do even more damage. Sometimes we refuse to share with those of a different race, religion, class, or gender. (In some cultures, when food is scarce, males are fed and females go hungry.) When scarcity is acute, people may be forced to migrate in search of food, farmland, employment, or whatever resources they need. In some situations, they may revolt against the government, begin ‘ethnic cleansing’, or go to war against their neighbors to obtain additional resources.”  -from *Facing the Future / People and the Planet*  [www.popinfo.org](http://www.popinfo.org) | Questions . . . |
| My Predictions . . . |
| Comparisons . . . |
| Images . . . |
| Reflections . . . |

The Double-Entry Journal: A Myriad of Options!

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| On The Left: The Source | On The Right: The Response |
| Notes from the text | Summaries/Comments  Drawings/Images |
| Observations | Interpretations |
| Headings/Subheadings | Questions |
| Facts | Questions, Quick Responses |
| Key words or phrases | Observations/Questions  Definitions |
| Concepts & Ideas | Explanations/Questions |
| Author’s Predictions (based upon a text portion, excerpt) | Reflections |
| Facts, details, statements | My Predictions/Questions |