

Brilliant Journaling

Because every great idea starts with a Pad & Quill.



You might be asking yourself, “Brilliant Journaling? How is that different than regular journaling?” Or, “I don’t even journal, let alone Brilliant Journal.” This white paper focuses on exploring what Brilliant Journaling is, and if you’re not journaling, why you should start.

Weaving Analog into a Digital World

At Pad & Quill, we love our digital world. No, we REALLY love our digital world. When it comes to tech, we’ve adopted it wholeheartedly and happily embrace it every day. We’re grateful for it. From our work life to our personal lives, there’s really nothing we do that technology has not made better on some level, and we like it that way.

But, to every ying, there’s a yang. Digital technology wouldn’t be improving our lives today without analog “technology” first blazing the trail. Heck, the first ideas for digital technology were captured on paper. The Flux Capacitor, need we say more?

It’s in the middle of this love affair with tech that we would like to stake a claim for analog and the benefits of journaling as a compliment to our digital tools. Not only do we think the two easily co-exist, but we passionately believe that they make each other better. Peanut butter and chocolate. Lemonade and iced tea. Digital and analog.

The Science Behind Journaling

It’s easy to look at these analog experiences and see them as less productive, less useful, and less valuable than their digital counterparts. The race to become faster, more connected, and more accessible seems to give technology the apparent edge. But what if analog provided benefits that digital options couldn’t match?

As Maud Purcell wrote in her article *The Health Benefits of Journaling*,

the act of writing accesses your analytical and rational left brain. “While your left brain is occupied, your right brain is free to create, intuit and feel. In sum, writing removes mental blocks and allows you to use all of your brainpower to better understand yourself, others and the world around you.”

“Writing unlocks these other capabilities, and affords the opportunity for unexpected solutions to seemingly unsolvable problems.”

- Maud Purcell

Maud also cites journaling’s ability to help us more effectively solve problems. “Typically we problem solve from a left-brained, analytical perspective. But sometimes the answer can only be found by engaging right-brained creativity and intuition. Writing unlocks these other capabilities, and affords the opportunity for unexpected solutions to seemingly unsolvable problems.”

The benefits don’t stop with problem solving and creative thinking. Journaling has also been shown to improve mental clarity, providing a simple way to cut through the chaos and organize thoughts for focused use.

It also works in goal-setting and tracking results. As Dustin Wax writes in *Writing and Remembering: Why We Remember What We Write*, “When we take notes, though, something happens. As we’re writing, we create spatial relations between the various bits of information we are recording. Spatial tasks are handled by another part of the brain, and the act of linking the verbal information with the spatial relationship seems to filter out the less relevant or important information.” He continues, “But there’s something else going on, too. When we write something down, research suggests that as far as our brain is concerned, it’s as if we were doing that thing. Writing seems to act as a kind of mini-rehearsal for doing.”



“Writing seems to act as a kind of mini-rehearsal for doing.”
- Dustin Wax

Turning Bad Ideas into Breakthrough

Another essential benefit of journaling is its ability to save every idea, good or bad. Consider the last time you went to capture a thought digitally. You typed, and as you were typing, you reconsidered what you had written. Backspace and delete allowed you to, in an instant, erase that thought as though it had never occurred.” But what if that idea, the one you just deleted, was THE idea?

In the documentary *Art & Copy*, Charlie Moss recounts the creation of the historic Braniff Airlines rebranding. As he shares, “We had piles of ideas in the corner on these tissues, piles and piles and piles, and we hated everything. So she (Mary Wells Lawrence) comes down in the room, like the fifteenth visit she’s done, and she looks in the garbage can next to my desk, and she sees this wrinkled up tissue. She pulls it out and says “What is this?” “We come up with that about once a day, and we throw it away because it’s just too obvious.” “Obvious? It’s divine! Do that!”

What are the odds that your next breakthrough idea gets deleted before it has time to grow? Making the shift from digital to analog and collecting your thoughts in a journal creates the space you need to let your ideas rest. On blank pages, there is no need to differentiate between good ideas and bad ones, only the need to collect and capture so they don’t get lost.

Introducing Brilliant Journaling

The digital world we live in thrives on pre-set boundaries. Though it presents itself as the gateway to massive freedom, behind the curtain, it is built on a framework of “if-then” rules and formulas. That’s the only way it can properly work. Without strict guide rails, our software-driven lifestyle breaks down quickly.

To that end, journaling today finds itself in the grips of a massive tug-of-war. On the one hand, the urge to maximize productivity and bring digital efficiencies to pad and pen have driven the creation of methods and hacks to systematize our thought gathering. On the other hand, the whole point of analog, and in particular a journal, is to remove the rigidness and provide a blank canvas for collecting our thoughts, brainstorming new ideas, and capturing our experiences.

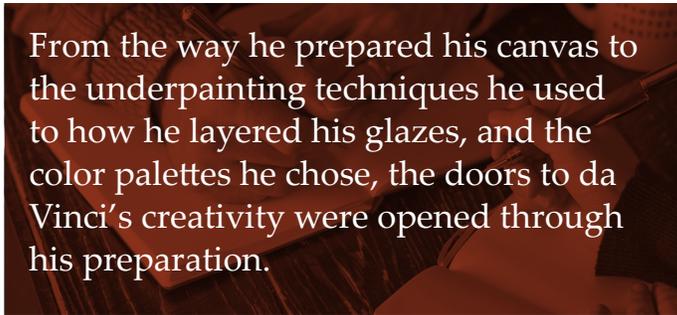
We believe there is a way to create a fusion between organization and freedom, and between efficiency and imagination. We call this fusion Brilliant Journaling, and we’ve established three simple rules for synthesizing these into a spontaneous yet deliberate experience.

Rule #1: Get Organized

Brilliant Journaling begins with preparing your journal for collecting your ideas. How you prepare it is a matter of personal preference, but the act of preparation lays the foundation for being open for the collection of ideas.

It’s easy to think that including some sort of formula may impede the creative process. Consider Leonardo da Vinci, one of history’s greatest painters. It was his processes that allowed him to create at the level he did. From the way he prepared his canvas to the underpainting techniques he used to how he layered his glazes, and the color palettes he chose, the doors to da Vinci’s creativity were opened through his preparation.

Bill, an engineer and inventor in Boston, uses his journal for three things and so he has divided his journal into three distinct sections. The first third is dedicated to tracking his current projects, his to-do lists, and his work. The second third is used to collect data and results from his engineering tests. The final third of his journal is an open space for brainstorming, jotting down ideas for new inventions, and capturing things he sees in his everyday life.



From the way he prepared his canvas to the underpainting techniques he used to how he layered his glazes, and the color palettes he chose, the doors to da Vinci’s creativity were opened through his preparation.

Jackie is an interior designer and blogger in Manhattan. Her journal serves as a treasure chest of inspiration and notes. Instead of dividing her journal into three distinct spaces, Jackie uses her journal in chronological order. It is a collection of meeting notes, sketches, inspirations, photos, and lists. She uses the table of contents in the front of her journal to document sections for easy future reference.

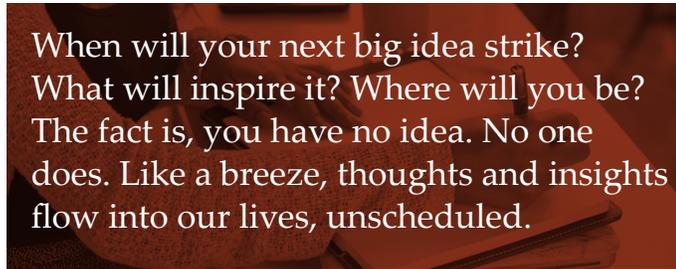
Brian is an entrepreneur in Austin, focused on the launch of his up and coming tech brand. Brian has adapted the Bullet Journaling method and his journal tracks his to-dos, his thoughts, and doubles as his planner. A bit less free-form than Jackie and Bill, Brian’s bullet approach allows him to symbolically track each log and categorize his thoughts and ideas according to his personally developed code.

The point of illustrating these three distinct journaling examples is to recognize that in each case, some sort of beginning organization was essential. It defined how the journal would get used, and laid the foundation for making it functional and valuable. By considering how you will organize your thoughts at the outset, you can prepare your journal like da Vinci’s canvas, ready and open for creativity to flow.

THE TAKEAWAY: There is no right way to organize your journal. Choose a system that works for you and make it your own.

Rule #2: Capture the Moment

When will your next big idea strike? What will inspire it? Where will you be? The fact is, you have no idea. No one does. Like a breeze, thoughts and insights flow into our lives, unscheduled. The power of a journal comes from its ability to capture your thoughts, viewpoints, and observations in the moment.



Intentionality is the key to Brilliant Journaling - accessibility matters. If the idea shows up and your journal isn't near, where will you capture it? In desperation, you might jot it down on a napkin or the back of an envelope, but the most efficient and safe place to capture it for future reference is in your journal. The only real way to ensure it's there when you need it is to keep it nearby. It requires you to keep it close, like a trusted friend... or your smartphone.

Bill, the engineer we met earlier, always keeps his journal nearby on his desk and it travels with him throughout the day to all of his meetings. Throughout the day, he continually refers back to it as a tool for organizing his thoughts and data. He collects many of the inputs, measurements, and results from his project development and testing in his journal, and utilizes it as a resource for managing the progress, milestones, and timetables related to his work. Having it close at hand throughout his workday also provides the freedom and open space for brainstorming and capturing new ideas whenever they strike.

Jackie, the interior designer, carries her journal with her everywhere she goes. As she travels throughout the city, she is surrounded by inspiration and never knows where her next great revelation will come from. She carries her journal with her as she travels, uses it to capture her thoughts during client meetings, and spends time in the local coffee shop brainstorming with it. With her journal always in her bag, Jackie is always prepared to kindle a creative spark.

The other side of capturing the moment is less spur of the moment. It involves purposefully setting specific times aside to stop, slow down, think, and write. It might be daily, or it might be weekly. It might be in the morning, or it might be at night. It might be tied to an event like a meeting or a study or some workflow. The time and place are based on personal preference, but for many, scheduling time to write creates the accountability required to practice regular journaling. Repeat the process over and over intentionally, and in time your journal will be filled with the thoughts and ideas that create the foundations for your next big thing. From notes for a future trip to your collected thoughts on a specific topic, to your lists and plans,

your journal quickly becomes the hub of all things important to you.

Brian, the entrepreneur, starts every morning with his journal. Before he checks his email, listens to his messages, or digs into the chaos of his day, he uses his journal to center himself and create a plan for his day. He tracks his tasks, collects his observations from the previous day, logs future events, and creates a list of priorities to guide his work. His daily, deliberate journaling practice has increased his productivity, stimulated new ideas, and allowed him the ability to work with purpose as he launches his company.

In each case, the journal becomes magnetic to your best ideas and has the power to combine organization with the freedom to be creative and unrestrained whenever the moment strikes. The key is to be ready when those breakthrough thoughts and ideas arrive, being intentional to keep your journal near.

THE TAKEAWAY: Being prepared is the key to capturing great ideas so they don't get lost.

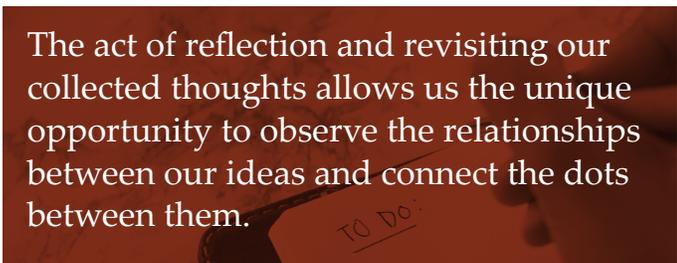
Rule #3: Reflect to Discover

The real impact of journaling does not end when you put pen to paper and harvest the thought. This is just the beginning. Unleashing the full potential of the idea occurs post-thought when you take the time to go back and reflect on what you captured. This is where breakthroughs occur, and the combined power of many ideas take shape to realize their full potential.

Reflection is the Brilliant Journaling rule that many disregard thinking that simply writing something down to capture it is enough. As we discussed earlier, the science behind journaling and the power of writing something down has been proven. The simple act of writing unlocks unexpected solutions and allows our brains to work and handle information differently. It is powerful on its own. That said, writing something down does not guarantee that we will have full recall of those ideas. Reflection unlocks journaling's power on an entirely new level.

The act of meditating on our collected thoughts allows us the unique opportunity to observe the relationships between our ideas and connect the dots between them. A month ago, a concept that you captured on a journal page may have seemed inconsequential. Today, when combined with one or two other ideas that seemed unrelated, you may unlock something unexpected. As an engineer, Bill's journal reflection provides him the opportunity to revisit his results in search of data trends, improvements, and progression. On a regular basis, going back to his previous journal entries reveals connections between projects and outcomes that he would have otherwise overlooked. It works the same for Jackie, the interior designer. The time she spends contemplating her journal's contents allows her to easily recall the inspiration she's gathered, and opens the doors to creating fabulous interiors that combine many influences that would never coalesce otherwise.

Reflection also allows us to witness our progress. It gives us the chance to see where we've been, re-engage past experiences, and look backward as we move forward. We can review past knowledge and compare it to new observations, track past projects and see the path we've taken as we move toward completion, and view yesterday's theories in the light of today's intelligence. As an entrepreneur, the time Brian spends contemplating his past Bullet Journal entries creates the space he needs to revisit his progress, movement, and growth. He is able to more easily create his future by reviewing where he's been.



The act of reflection and revisiting our collected thoughts allows us the unique opportunity to observe the relationships between our ideas and connect the dots between them.

Journaling's analog format provides an unexpected advantage when it comes to reflection. When brainstorming on a computer, "bad" ideas can be cleared and deleted with a click, replaced with "good" ones. We generally see this as a benefit of using digital technology, but what if it meant you were unintentionally erasing a great idea that looked bad at the time? Journaling does not afford this feature, and so all of your ideas stick once they flow from pen to paper, allowing them to be reassessed later.

By taking the time to reflect, we unlock journaling's full potential and get closer to discovering our own. We observe patterns, recognize progress, and contemplate thoughts. This is where the transformation occurs, taking ideas on paper and allowing them to emerge as something more significant.

THE TAKEAWAY: Revisiting the ideas you captured unleashes the power behind what you wrote.

So Why NOT Journal?

What's keeping you from trying journaling? We know what the common barriers are to getting started – we hear them all the time. "I hate my writing." "I don't have time." "My phone is faster and connected to everything else in my life."

First, it's YOUR journal – no one else needs to see it. If your handwriting is that bad, then doodle or draw. Start a little bit at a time. Commit to 3-4 minutes per day to get started and see what happens. Your phone may be faster and more connected, but as we've shared, it doesn't provide the all the benefits of a journal's open white space.

The point we're trying to make is this: Yes, there are reasons you may think journaling isn't for you. You may be telling yourself, "That's not me." Our challenge to you is to try it, and open yourself to the benefits journaling has to offer to see if maybe, just maybe, it might provide something to help you capture your own big ideas.

Your Analog + Digital Fusion

We believe strongly in a fusion between analog and digital, where technology lives as a companion to the pen and paper to make our lives better. It's our goal to help you leverage digital's unique capabilities while embracing the freedom and creative open spaces that the blank page provides.

The way you weave journaling into your life should fit your personal style and needs, and so Brilliant Journaling's three rules are simply focused on helping you create the right sandbox to play in, not telling you how to play or what to build. They're here to provide a framework for organizing your journal, capturing the moment, and reflecting on what you've written. The rest is up to you. So grab your journal and discover what shows up on each page.

Brilliant Journaling Starts with The Journal by Pad & Quill

It is our pleasure to humbly introduce Pad & Quill's full line of journaling products. Our journals are designed for easy Brilliant Journaling, with a table of contents and numbered pages in the front for easy reference and organization. Beautiful 80g ink-proof paper fills our journals, and they come in two sizes perfect to take with you anywhere, anytime. Choose blank pages or a dot-grid layout based on your personal preference. Two bookmarks provide an easy way to note your next great idea or mark a concept you need to come back to and reflect upon later. We also offer a selection of journaling accessories including crafted leather covers, writing instruments, backpacks, and bags to complete your journaling experience.

Find yours today at padandquill.com

Pad & Quill™