art journal techniques
how to make a travel journal, a handmade journal, plus art journaling ideas
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JACQUELINE NEWBOLD
Art journaling is a way to express yourself through writing and art at the same time. This creative process pulls together a variety of materials to create mixed-media art. You can buy pre-made journals and fill them with your doodles and designs or craft your own custom journals to record everything from your travels to your art technique experiments to your innermost thoughts.

In short, an art journal is whatever you want it to be. But you have to start somewhere, so we've created this free eBook, Art Journal Techniques: How to Make a Travel Journal, a Handmade Journal, plus Art Journaling Ideas.

In her three-part series, Dawn deVries Sokol gives you art journal prompts and journaling tips that help you overcome the fear of the blank page. Her “pages in stages” approach to how to make an art journal also allows you to create a handmade journal as you have the time, with stress-free journal techniques.

In “Travel Journals, Using Maps as a Starting Point,” Jacqueline Newbold describes how to use maps (or copies of maps) as a foundation for the visual journaling of your journeys. She offers ideas and tips for how to make a travel journal that are easy and enjoyable.

Finally, the editors of Cloth Paper Scissors magazine take a look at writing tools that will help you express yourself through writing, doodling, and drawing in your art journal.

Once you have the inspiration and information provided in Art Journal Techniques: How to Make a Travel Journal, a Handmade Journal, plus Art Journaling Ideas, you will be off on your own art journaling adventures.

Warmly,

Cate Prato
Online Editor, Cloth Paper Scissors Today
Four years ago, I decided I wanted to art journal, but I had difficulty beginning. My desire to art journal led me to various blogs and websites, seeking journal pages to inspire me and get me started. I also found art books filled with invaluable tips and techniques, but I didn’t find anything to help me get past the blank page.

I attended workshops with incredible teachers explaining their methods, and their hands-on instruction answered my technique questions, but I still had nagging doubts when I attempted to art journal on my own. What was I supposed to journal about? How should I start? How do I art journal a whole page in one sitting?

In workshops, I had observed students effortlessly whipping up journal page after journal page while I was at a standstill. Deflated, I knew that even if I were willing to sit down with my journal, it didn’t necessarily mean I would actually finish a page, or even make a mark. I kept hitting a roadblock and I couldn’t bear it any longer.

Then, I had an epiphany: I realized I needed to listen to my creative intuition. I was unnecessarily pressuring myself to complete a journal page in one sitting. I realized it didn’t matter what other artists did. There are no rules in art making, so why was I looking for rules to guide my art journaling?

I needed to let my art journal pages develop slowly. I had to understand and accept that what worked for others wasn’t necessarily going to work for me, and that would require patience.

I started to art journal when I felt like it, using the technique that inspired me at that moment. I painted in my journal some days, and collaged, doodled, or wrote in it on others—using the same or different pages. I didn’t worry about chronological order or creating pages focused on one subject or idea. I learned which techniques worked for me, and which didn’t. I gave myself permission to paint over pages I didn’t like, and I painted and collaged over pages that contained writing and doodling. Suddenly, as the rules vanished, so did...
my inhibitions. I was journaling—on my own terms—and loving it.

Working on my journal pages in stages is key to my art journaling process. If you’re having trouble getting started in your journal, you may want to try this no-holds-barred approach.

There are three stages I like to work in:

- Painting
- Collage
- Doodling and/or writing

For the first part of this three-part series, I’ll focus on the painting stage. But you can work in any stage, in any order, whenever you want.

**getting started**

1. Flip through your art journal and stop at whatever page speaks to you.
2. Pull out a couple of paints and squirt one of the colors in dime- to quarter-sized spots, here and there, on your page. I like to use combinations of chartreuse green and light blue, pink and orange, or sometimes red and teal.
3. Choose another color and apply it in the same way. Using your fingers, rub the paints in, combining the colors. Make sure to cover the whole page. If you have empty areas, squirt a little more color onto the page and rub it in.

**note:** I spread paints with my fingers because it leaves a smooth finish on the page, the paints blend better, and I feel like I have more control.

4. Paint about 5 pages in one sitting; do more or less if you want. Listen to your instincts, and stop when you feel like it.

**changing it up**

- Use a paintbrush with tough bristles to add a lined texture to your backgrounds.
- Water down your paints for a wash across your pages. Have plenty of paper towels on hand to blot up excess paint.
- Use paper towels to create a different look. Spread the paint across a page, let it dry slightly, and then wipe the paper towel across the page, removing some of the wet paint. Try this method with baby wipes for a slightly different effect.
- Apply paint with items like sponges, old credit cards or hotel room keys, combs, etc., to create different textures.

Working in stages allows your mind to work more freely while creating. It will be easier to start each stage because you’ll work according to how you are inspired at any given time. I let my creative mood take over and I do what I want. Remember, no rules, no worries. That’s what art journaling should be about.

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**MY FAVORITE things**

- Fabriano® Artistico watercolor paper, 140-lb. hot-pressed, for making handmade journals
- Inexpensive fluid acrylic paints, such as Delta Creative® Ceramcoat® or Plaid®Apple Barrel®
- Paper towels
- Various household items for creating lines, texture, etc.
I like to work in three stages:

• Painting (See the May/June 2010 issue of Cloth Paper Scissors.)
• Collage
• Doodling and/or writing

In Part 1, we painted a number of pages in an art journal. Now we’ll build upon those pages with collage.

Collecting collage fodder can be an ongoing activity. Flip through old magazines and cut or rip out anything that pleases you. This can include words, objects, and/or patterns. Turn the magazine upside-down to see images in a different way. Keep a basket or folder (or many) to throw bits into when you find them. Think about having an envelope in your purse to store everyday bits easily.

Change it up

• Create new images on the page out of your collage bits.
• Collage borders on your pages.
• Combine some found pieces of ephemera with photos you’ve taken.
• Insert images with personal meaning. I often use photographs I’ve shot, such as a rose, a British phone booth, Big Ben, a church window. This really makes your pages your own.
• Repeat images. Some journal artists photocopy their pages, cut them up, and include these images in their collages. The photocopies can also be saved for future collages.
• Cut up photos and other bits. You don’t have to use full images. Cut a person in half and place them right on the edge of your page, so it looks like they’re looking in. If you have a group photo, cut out certain people and scatter them across the page.
• Add depth to your collage with transparencies. Anytime I find clear wrappers with text or an image on transparent paper, I stash it. You can also use clear packing tape and black-and-white photocopies to create great little transparencies.
• Overlap your collage layers.
• Use scrapbook papers and embellishments. Combining your own found papers with purchased papers can add interest, too.
items from your travels: straw and candy wrappers, coffee cups, printed napkins, receipts, decorative tape, stickers, etc.

**getting started**

Remember, you can work in any stage in any order, but it’s important to work in the stage that best fits your mood.

1. **Open your journal and find a painted page that calls to you.** The conversation may begin with the color palette you’ve chosen, or the way the color appears on the page. Whatever it is, don’t think too much about it.

2. **Sort through your collage stash for images that appeal to you.** Keep your journal close by and open to the page you intend to play on.

3. **Select several images in various sizes and other collage bits that may work color-wise.** I suggest 5–10 items. I like using black-and-white images for their contrast against my bright backgrounds.

4. **Cut out and place the images on your page.** Don’t think about placement too much. I’ve found that overthinking makes me hesitant in my choices. Include a large image to create a focal point. This balances the page and makes it more aesthetically pleasing.

5. **Once you are happy with your arrangement, attach the collage bits.** Mono Adhesive is my first choice, but I use gel medium when placing images that I plan to paint over because it keeps the images smooth and stable. Clear tape or any of the decorative tapes will provide some added interest, too.

Listen to your intuition when it tells you to stop. Remember, you can always add more collaged bits later, or paint over things. It’s your art journal, there are no rules.

**little things mean a lot**

Add small touches for enhancement and depth during any stage.

**Ink splottes** I love to use inks to add splats on pages.

**Crayon lines** Color around the edges of the pages. I usually do this after I’ve added my collage bits. Caran d’Ache® NeoColor II crayons line images well, and smear into backgrounds effortlessly.

**Photocopies** Adhere high-contrast black-and-white photocopies with gel medium. Once dry, brush a light, watered-down acrylic over them to match the background, so they blend into the page. Tearing the edges of these pieces will provide the illusion that they are part of the background.

**Rub-ons** Rub-ons provide another option for adding words and doodles that you may not be able to accomplish with your own hand. These can be added easily at any stage.

**Tissue paper** I’ve adhered thin tissue with gel medium at every stage. If you want your background to show through the tissue well, use thin, uncoated tissue paper.

**Words** Label makers are a good way to paste words to your page.

**Rubber stamps** Use ink that is slightly darker than your background paint. Journal or doodle over it later.

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I experienced difficulty when I started art journaling, even though I desperately wanted to express myself in this form. Overwhelmed by the staggering amount of amazing work online and in magazines, I thought if I couldn’t art journal like other artists did there was no point in doing it. But I finally realized it doesn’t matter how you art journal, as long as you’re happy doing it. The beauty of art journaling is that it really is just for the art journaler; there’s no need to share, unless you want to. You need to experiment with different techniques and processes, free your mind, and be flexible to discover what works best for you.

**the approach**

The “Pages in Stages” approach involves:
- Paint
- Collage
- Doodle and/or journaling

Of course, these stages can be tailored to work for you. You can mix them up, combine them, and create a process that pleases you.
I realized that if I journal in a “stages” approach (see box), I’m much more content with my pages. In this article, the last of three installments, I’ll discuss doodling and journaling.

For me, doodling and writing is the most mobile of the three stages. When I travel, I prep my journal before the trip. I paint and collage on the pages and leave them to be doodled and written upon while I travel. I may add some collage on the road, but mostly I just doodle and journal. This allows me to pack fewer supplies, and that works very well for me.

**doodle it up**

### my favorite things:
- Pitt® pens
- Soufflé™ pens
- Tombow® markers
- Uniball® Signo UM-153 pens (I used white and red.)
- Crayola® Pip-Squeaks™

With your paint and collage images already on the page, start to doodle. I use anything that’s in my arsenal, but I do have my favorites (see list above). Doodling can be mindless or meditative. It can also be a thoughtful form of expression. Sometimes I brainstorm while I doodle.

If you’re struggling to start, here are some tips:
- Think of shapes. I like hearts, flowers, stars, circles, rounded squares, swirls, and all kinds of flourishes. Shapes are easy to repeat and they fuel the doodling process.
- Outline or color one of the collage images to make it really pop off the page.
- Create animals, creatures, or flowers from ink or paint splatters.
- Doodle with markers a little darker than your background paint. These can be written over later with a darker or white pen, if you wish.
- Continue the lines of any shapes or collage images you added.
• Start at the edge of your page and doodle a simple border of dashed lines, triangles, flowers, etc. Continue to add to the border with other shapes, as desired.
• Section off a corner of your page, then doodle within it. Sometimes this helps when you feel overwhelmed by all the space on your page.
• Look through a magazine or book containing endless patterns and prints to spark your doodle energy.
• Try not to be linear in your doodling. Flip your journal upside down and doodle that way, too. Sometimes you have to rotate your page to think beyond the ordinary. Doodle across your page at all sorts of angles.

word it up

While doodling shapes, patterns, and lines, I also doodle words. Words that I doodle large are usually phrases that strike me, the title of a song that I’m listening to, or a movie quote I just can’t get out of my head. Putting on some headphones and listening to music that makes me groove really helps me during this stage.

You can write about anything in your art journal. Try words that pop into your head throughout the day, or words from a song that won’t leave you alone. Make lists, jot down random thoughts, record the things you need to do, etc. You don’t need to fill your page with doodles and journaling all in one sitting; journal random doodles and words as they occur to you. Date these entries, if you wish, for documentation.

Some creatives are tentative about writing in their journal because they don’t like their handwriting. I am still not satisfied with my handwriting, but I write anyway because my handwriting is a part of me.

To conquer a writing roadblock, try some of these strategies:
• Draw some wavy lines on your page and use them as a guide. You can pencil them in and erase later, or make them a part of your design. I did this when I started journaling and this practice has increased my confidence in my writing and lettering.
• Trace letters from stencils for larger words and then fill them in with color. Add flourishes.
• Rubberstamp words and then fill them in with pens that match the color of the ink pad. Draw in flourishes, if you like.
• Cut out a large word from a magazine. Extract the letters completely from the background with a craft knife and glue the letters onto the page. Doodle within the words and/or add flourishes and other lines flowing from them.

Listen to your gut when it tells you to stop. There is no rule stating that pages can’t be left unfinished. You can always paint, collage, or doodle more later. Go back to these pages when you feel the groove.

Remember to mix and combine these stages to work for you. If you want to collage first, then paint, then doodle and journal, do it! If you want to write on the page and then cover it with paint and collage, then write some more, try it. Open your mind, set yourself free, and your art journal will work for you.

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a look at . . .
writing tools

choosing the “write” tool for the job

Art journalers, surface designers, doodlers, and collage artists are all destined to meet with a pen or two in their creative journey. Knowing which tool to use on which surface is a must. We set aside some time between editing the terrific articles in this issue to do some serious in-the-studio research...okay, maybe not so serious. Take a look at what we discovered.

gel pens

a. WHITE GEL PEN
Sakura®, Gelly Roll White

Any good art journaler knows that a white gel pen is a necessity. This pen is chemically stable, waterproof, and fade resistant. It is easy and comfortable to write with and will not smear, feather, or bleed through on most papers. We tried it on acrylic-painted papers and were happy with the smooth writing and bright white lettering that resulted.

b. GLAZE PENS
Sakura, Glaze™

With this unique pen, you need to write slowly and allow the ink to dry to enjoy the raised lettering it produces. All of the 15 available ink colors are transparent, except for the white, which is opaque—making it a great choice for art journalers. We tried it on plain and painted paper and found no difference. You do have to be patient and wait for the paint to dry, but we found the cool effect of raised ink worth the wait.

c. FABRIC GEL PEN
Pentel®, Gel Roller for fabric

We love this pen for journaling and writing on fabric. The 1.0mm pen writes smoothly and its no-smudge, no-smear ink is permanent on most fabrics and will withstand repeated washings—even dry cleaning. You can use this pen for everything from labeling clothes for camp to drawing on your next mixed-media fabric project.
artist pens

d. FINE-LINE PENS
Sakura, Micron®
The Micron is just one example of the fine-line pens available to artists. This pen has an archival-quality ink that is chemically stable, waterproof, and fade resistant. You can use this pen with other water-based media without having to worry about it smudging or bleeding. The tips come in six different sizes (005, 01, 02, 03, 05, and 08). We especially love the 005 for drawing very small details. In our example we mixed a number of different sizes on acrylic-painted paper and the application was very smooth.

e. BRUSH PENS
Faber-Castell®, Pitt®
The brush-tip pen duplicates the feel of a round, pointed-tip brush. These artist pens come in 48 different colors and are acid free, waterproof when dry, and odorless. The nib is long lasting, sturdy, and can be refreshed by removing it and turning it over to reveal a fresh point. We tried the pens in the “shades of gray” collection to see how they worked with shading and we liked the results. These would be a great item to carry along for travel journals.

specialty markers

f. PERMANENT MARKER PEN
Staedtler®, Lumocolor®
There are many permanent markers on the market, but we wanted to try something with a more controllable tip. These pens are permanent, waterproof, refillable, and dry safe (the pen can be left uncapped for days without drying up). We loved that we could use them on glass and plastic, and immediately thought of using them to label storage containers. An added bonus was that we could easily change our labels, or fix errors with the Lumocolor Correction Pen (see below).

g. CORRECTION PEN
Staedtler, Lumocolor
This pen magically erases the permanent ink marks of the Staedler Lumocolor marker pens (see above) from transparencies, glass, acrylic, ceramic, and plastic. The Correction Pen is solvent based with a chisel tip.

h. FINE-LINE MARKERS
Staedtler, Triplus® Fineliner
With a triangular barrel, these markers make for effortless and fatigue-free writing. They were one of the nicest and most comfortable markers to hold. They are dry safe and can be left uncapped for days. For the messy doodler, it’s good to note that these markers wash out of most fabrics. They come in 20 different colors, including spring and olive green and a lovely aqua. We also love the case that these markers come in; it unfolds to become its own stand.
more specialty markers and pens

i. METALLIC PENS
Faber-Castell, Silver Pitt Artist Pen
When looking to add a little shimmer, especially on dark or painted paper, the metallic ink Pitt pen will do the trick. This pen comes in both silver and gold with a 1.5mm nib. We used it on painted paper and found the results to be perfectly opaque and shimmery.

j. CALLIGRAPHY MARKER
Faber-Castell, Pitt Calligraphy Pen
Even if you aren’t a practiced calligrapher, you can get impressive results with a pen tip like this. The India ink is waterproof, smudge proof, acid free, archival, and permanent. We tried the pen on both plain and painted paper with excellent lettering results. These pens come packaged individually or in a set of three colors—each with a free calligraphy lettering guide.

k. OPAQUE PEN
Marvy® Uchida, Opaque Stix
When you’re looking for markers that will write on photographs, vellum, journals, yearbooks, and dark paper, you might want to look at Opaque Stix. These markers are acid free, light fast, and photo safe. They dry opaque, which makes them ideal for light and dark paper. We tried them on painted paper and found the chalky appearance of the dried markings strangely appealing.

l. FABRIC MARKER
Marvy Uchida, Fabric Ball & Brush
Two different ends on the Fabric Ball & Brush make this marker doubly useful. The ball tip is extra fine, which is perfect for drawing delicate lines. The brush end was juicy and allowed us to color, draw, and write. This pen is quick drying, acid free, permanent, and requires no heat setting.

m. FILLABLE PEN
Tim Holtz® Adirondack®, Alcohol Ink Fillable Pen
The last pen we tried was a pen that came with no ink at all! This new pen has both brush and fine-point tips and is easy to fill. You choose the ink color and the tip you want to use. This alcohol ink pen will perfectly complement any artwork. We used the brush tip to write over acrylic-painted paper with an accompanying “splat” of ink from the bottle we used to fill the pen. You can see that the pen helps the ink to retain its transparency, making blue ink green in appearance when used over yellow paint.
Travel journals using maps as a starting point

Sitting in the cozy kitchen of a 17th century stone cottage in the tiny hamlet of Campagnac, I pull out a map of southern France. It unfolds to fill up the entire kitchen table. With my chin in my hands, I lean over to locate the path of my journey for the past week. The tangible feel of the map inspires me to run my fingers along meandering ochre and cerulean lines and roadways, dotted and dashed.

By Jacqueline Newbold

Adapted from Cloth Paper Scissors® July/August 2010
I am immersed in the French countryside where the honey-colored stone walls glow with the warmth of long autumn days. Here, the warm breeze encourages the fall of tasty, ripe figs from the gnarled trees. The ancient, perched villages beg for exploration as we drive down narrow lanes lined with tall straight plane trees, planted long ago to give shade to Napoleon’s marching army. And here in the cottage, I am giddy with artistic joy as I have time to paint and play in my watercolor journal, my constant travel companion.

I am fascinated by maps. I love the fact that they represent where I have been, and give direction to where I may go. I love the excitement of finding my way amongst exotic sounding villages—Blauzac, Sainte-Anastasie, Châtillon-en-Diois, and Ponet—not knowing what scenery will appear around the next turn.

While experimenting with ways to incorporate maps into my watercolor journals, I discovered that they create interesting and mysterious textured backgrounds for watercolor paintings. Maps also make a great foundation for mixed-media collage, collected ephemera, and journaling. Or, using a published map as my guide, it is fun and challenging to draw my own map of an area, lightly paint over it with a wash of watercolor, and then add little drawings to represent the local charm.

Taking the time to sketch and paint a map, or using a map as the background for my art, imprints in my mind the stunning and colorful locations found along my journey. For example, the map I painted while camping at Big Summit Prairie, Oregon, will always bring back the splendor of the seemingly never-ending, dazzling white fields of mule’s ears in bloom, sprinkled with specks of wildflower colors. Whether you are painting a charming European village or journaling about the sparkle of an ocean wave, using a map as the starting point for your art will bring back fond memories of your voyages for years to come.

### ideas for using maps

- Make copies of maps and prepare them with gesso before you leave on your trip.
- Make a hand-drawn map of the area you are visiting and incorporate little drawings of interesting points along the way.
- Use a map as a starting point and add collected ephemera such as business cards, tickets, postage stamps, cut-out words and photos from brochures, wine labels, paper money, paper napkins, postcards, and anything else that catches your eye.
- Use a map as a foundation for your journaling.
- Cut a map into interesting shapes that can be folded out from the page to reveal your art.
- Use different types of maps for different looks, such as nautical charts for marine scenes or hiking trail guides for nature paintings.

### directions

1. Cut or tear the map into an interesting shape that will fit in your journal.
2. Drizzle a little bit of white gesso onto the map and quickly spread it out with a paper towel, before it starts to dry. Rub some of the gesso off so that the map shows through but has a slightly pushed-back look. Allow to dry.
A map is the background for this painting. Flowers were painted, cut out of watercolor paper, and adhered to the foreground to add texture and depth.

**Tip:** The gesso dries quickly, so if your map piece is large, work in small areas, one area at a time. Ideally, you want the map to look whitewashed, with the map showing through in some areas more than others.

3. Paint a colorful wash using watercolor paints. Try a mix of colors that are close to each other on the color wheel, such as magenta, rose, and quinacridone gold. Transparent watercolor paints will let parts of the map show through. Allow the watercolor to puddle and bead up to create interesting effects. Try not to use too much water; let the paints mingle and blend on their own. Allow to dry.

4. Using a pencil, draw the image you want to paint, such as a European perched village scene, a grove of olive trees, or wildflowers in the foreground.

5. Paint in houses, trees, and distant hills using a variety of colors. Allow to dry.

6. Outline the drawn images and some accents with a permanent black pen.

7. Paint a page in your journal with watercolors, let it dry, and then glue your map art to it.

8. Stamp along the edges of the map to create an interesting border, or simply outline the outer edge of the map with a pen. ©

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**Materials**

- Map or a color copy of a map (Make sure the ink on the copy is not water soluble.)
- White gesso (Liquitex® or Golden Artist Colors®)
- Paper towels
- Watercolors (I use Winsor & Newton™ and Daniel Smith watercolors.)
- Watercolor brushes (I like the Daniel Smith Platinum series, round sizes 4, 8, and Round Mop #6.)
- Pencil
- Permanent black ink pen
- Glue
- **Optional**
- Stamps and ink pads for creating a border