Read It, Use It - The Nonfiction Ideas & Action Journal

Sample Pages

Free sample - three real pages from the journal: The Ideas & Action Method (p.3), The Book, Opened: The Blank Sheet (Block Page 1) and The Book in One Argument + The Three Ideas That Matter (Block Page 2). Print at 100% on US Letter or A4.

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The Ideas & Action Method

Journal p.3. The four moves the whole journal is built around, so every later page makes sense.

1. Start with a blank sheet.

Before chapter one of any nonfiction book, open its book block (pp.9-28) and write, on the first page, what you already think you know about the subject - your current beliefs, your guesses, the things you'd defend at dinner. Five unpolished lines are plenty. This feels like a small thing and it is the engine of the whole journal: you cannot notice your mind changing if you never wrote down where it started.

2. Capture the idea in your words.

When a book lands something - a fact, a framework, a practice - write it in the Idea Ledger (pp.29-30) in your own phrasing, never copied from the page. If you can't say it in your words yet, you haven't got it yet; the attempt to phrase it is the learning. Tag it with the book and the page so future-you can go back for the full version.

3. Argue with it.

Every book block has a page for pushback, and the standing Source-Check log (pp.35-36) exists for the one claim per book you most want to be true - check that one hardest. Disagreement is data. A book you argued with and still believe is worth ten you nodded through. Your verdict is the one that goes in the index; the author's reputation is just the reputation.

4. Decide the action while the book is still open.

Before you shelve a finished book, its final block page asks the only question that converts reading into change: what, concretely, will I do differently? Write it on the Action List (pp.33-34) with a date and its source - book and page. Then let the list be honest: done, deferred to a named month, or dropped with a reason. All three are respectable. The only unlawful outcome is an intention that was never written down, because that one has a 100% failure rate.

A book block takes about ten minutes across the whole book - two before you start (the blank sheet), a line here and there as ideas land, five when you finish. An idea caught in the Ledger takes ninety seconds. The rule from our other journals applies unchanged: a journal you keep up beats a beautiful journal you abandon in February.

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The Book, Opened: The Blank Sheet

Block Page 1 (journal pp.9, 14, 19, 24) - the first page of every five-page book block. Fix everything about the start of the book on one page: what it is, why this reader, why now - and, most importantly, what you believed before the author got a word in.

Book No. _____ **Title:**

Author:

Subject, in my words (not the cover copy - what is this actually about?):

Published: _____ **Total pages: _____** **My copy: [ ] print [ ] ebook [ ] audio [ ] library**

Who is this author, and why should they know? (their field, their job, their stake in being right - two honest lines; a stak

Why this book:

The question I'm bringing to it (the specific thing in my life or my thinking this book might speak to - or write 'wanderin

THE BLANK SHEET - what I already think I know

Write BEFORE chapter one; five to ten unpolished lines; guesses labelled as guesses; the dinner-party version of your current position:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

The thing I'm fairly sure of, and would defend:

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The thing I suspect I'm wrong about:

Do not make this page tidy. Its entire value is that it is written by the version of you who has not read the book yet. That person is about to become unavailable for interview.

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The Book in One Argument + The Three Ideas That Matter

Block Page 2 (journal pp.10, 15, 20, 25) - the compression page, filled in at the finish: the whole book reduced to its single load-bearing claim, and the three ideas you are actually keeping - in your words, or they don't count.

THE ONE ARGUMENT

The claim the entire book exists to support, in ONE sentence, in my words - if the book has no single argument, write what it has instead: a portrait, a survey, a toolkit - and judge it as that:

HOW THE BOOK BUILDS IT (three steps, one line each)

1. Firs

2. Then it argues:

3. So it concludes:

THE THREE IDEAS THAT MATTER (in my words; each gets a Ledger number when promoted to pp.29-30)

Idea 1

Where it lives in the book: p. _____ **Why it matters to me:** **Ledger # _____**

Idea 2:

Where it lives in the book: p. _____ **Why it matters to me:** **Ledger # _____**

Idea 3:

Where it lives in the book: p. _____ **Why it matters to me:** **Ledger # _____**

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The idea I will repeat at dinner (the one most likely to leave this journal and enter my actual conversation):

What the book is NOT (its honest limits - the territory it never claimed, or claimed and skipped):

Compression is not summary. A summary retells; this page judges. If the one-argument sentence was hard to write, that difficulty is itself a finding about the book - write that down too.

This free sample holds three real pages of Read It, Use It - The Nonfiction Ideas & Action Journal (44 pages: the front matter and the Ideas & Action Method; the Reader's Desk - the Nonfiction Dashboard, the argument-shaped Index and the question-based Up-Next Shelf; four five-page book blocks - the Blank Sheet, One Argument + Three Ideas, Where I Pushed Back, the Argument Map, Actions & Open Questions; the standing pages - the Idea Ledger, Changed My Mind, the Action List, the Source-Check Log and Open Questions; and the Year in Ideas with the Annual Ideas Review, the Ideas Awards and the Second Look - US Letter, A4 and tablet editions). No star ratings and no plot fields anywhere: the journal keeps what the book argued, what you kept, and what you did about it. Full journal at pagelyra.vercel.app