Custody Journal Template

Dated daily pages for keeping your own record of parenting time, exchanges, the children's day and anything that happens: the time, what you saw and heard, who was there, your child's words exactly as said, and where related items (texts, photos, notices) are saved. Facts only, written the same day. Seven daily pages; print more as you need them.

Write it as if someone else will read it. Notes you keep about a family court matter may be requested by the other side or shown in court, depending on where you live and how they are used. Write only facts you would be comfortable having read aloud. Ask a licensed attorney where you live how journals and notes are treated in your court.

If there is abuse or a protective order. Keep this journal somewhere the other person cannot find or read it. If a protective or no-contact order is in place, its terms come first; don't use the journal to contact anyone. A local domestic violence advocate can help with safety planning. In danger? Call 911. National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233, or text START to 88788 (thehotline.org).

How to use it

- Write the same day, with the date and the time. Same-day notes are easier to keep accurate than notes written from memory weeks later.
- Write what you saw and heard. Leave out guesses about why, labels and diagnoses.
- If your child says something, write the exact words in quotation marks and the time. Don't question your child to fill the journal.
- Note where related items are kept (a text, a photo, an email, a school notice), not just that they exist.
- Log ordinary days and things that went well too. A complete record is easier to follow.
- Never ask your child to help with the journal or read it. Keep it out of their reach.
- If you need to correct something, add a new dated note instead of rewriting an earlier page.

Example entry

Time	What happened (what you saw and heard)	Who was there	Child's words, exactly (if any)	Related items saved: what and where
5:40 pm	*Pickup was scheduled for 5:00 at the school lot. Other parent arrived 5:40. No message before 5:30.*	*Me, other parent, child*	*"Are we still going to practice?"*	*Text at 5:31 pm (phone); school pickup log*

Date: _____ Day: _____ Where the child was today: _____

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Other notes for this day (school, health, sleep, schedule)

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General template for organizing your own information. It is not legal advice and not a court-approved form. Court rules and required forms vary by state and county, so check your court's local rules and self-help center. Custody Commander is optional self-help software: keep dated entries, photos, messages and documents for your own records in one case file, on a timeline you can export. It does not tell you what to write, file or argue. Free plan with no card, or try Full Suite free for 7 days; see custodycommander.com for current trial and pricing terms.