Nature Journaling Basics
(AKA: get out there and scribble in a notebook)

Nature journals are simple way to relax and connect with nature. They’re also an excuse to get away from screens, break out your colored pencils or watercolors, and soak up some sunshine.

Nature journals are for people of all ages & artistic abilities. They’re also for people of all levels of outdoor experience; you don’t need to know lots of facts to explore what’s around you. Just grab your supplies, find a piece of the natural world—whether that’s in your backyard, along a trail, or in your kitchen (hello fruit flies!)—and fill up the page in whatever way you’re inspired.

What do journal entries usually look like?
There’s no wrong way to keep a nature journal, but most often, nature journals are a place where people record and reflect on things they experience in nature. Try using all of your senses (be careful with taste!), and write or draw what you experience and what you wonder.

Age range: all ages  
Time: 15+ minutes  
Materials: journal/ notebook & pencil (optional: coloring materials, magnifying glass, etc.)  
Location: outdoor or indoor area with physical, visual, or auditory access to natural objects
Some of our favorite ideas and prompts:

**Try a Sit Spot**
Choose a spot you can return to often. Get comfortable. Sit as still and quietly as possible. What is going on around you? As you return time after time, what is changing? Do you notice patterns?

**Try something silly**
Record the number of squirrels that show interest in your bird feeder and record their creative attempts to access it.

**Try The Three Questions**
In examining an object or scene, ask yourself,
“What do I notice?”
“What do I wonder?”
“What does it remind me of?”

**Try different ways of recording**
There’s no wrong way to fill up your journal. Record observations, write short stories, record your questions, create poetry, draw, create maps, trace objects. Get creative!

**Try one thing at a time**
Overwhelmed? There’s a lot out there to notice! To simplify things, choose and explore one aspect/object of the natural world per entry.
Try checking out:
- one leaf on a tree,
- bird sounds,
- a cluster of ferns, the weather,
- insects in a patch of grass, a wildflower, or the flow or inhabitants of some nearby water.

**Try to ID something**
Grab your supplies and wander until something catches your eye. Sketch it, describe it, or let it inspire a poem.
Not sure what it is? Try out a guidebook or website like Go Botany (gobotany.nativeplanttrust.org), or skip that and give it a creative name yourself.

**Try a schedule**
Decide how often you want to journal—every day? once or twice a week?—and set a reminder on your phone or calendar for a convenient time of day.