

THE write STUFF

A bullet journal could be just *the tool to keep your life on track*. All you need is a notepad and pen...

By ERIN COE

LIFE IS CHAOTIC AT times. There are business meetings, school lifts, and date nights. Then, on top of the daily grind, there are overseas trips you want to plan, goals you want to reach and habits you want to break or create. Keeping track of it all can be a bit of a nightmare. Enter the bullet journal.

In creator Ryder Carroll's words, "The bullet journal is a customisable and forgiving organisation system. It can be your to-do list, sketch-book, notebook and diary, but most likely it will be all of the above." It's meant to track the past, organise the present and plan the future. Sounds interesting, right? So here's how to set one up.

How to start

Open your notepad to the first blank page. Title this your **index page**. As you start to fill up your bullet journal, add the topics of your entries and their corresponding page numbers to your index so you can easily keep track of where everything is. Title your next blank page **future log**. Divide the pages equally into boxes for each month, then title each box accordingly. Holidays, birthdays – anything that occurs in the future gets put here. Turn to your next blank page – your **monthly log**. Write the name of the current month on both pages. On the left write out the monthly calendar with the dates and days, and on the right, your monthly task list.

Next up is your **daily log**. Write the date at the top and then jot down your entries for the day in bullet format. There are three types of bullets. A dot for tasks, a circle for events and a dash for notes. As well as bullets, there are signifiers. The most common are stars to indicate priority, and exclamation marks to indicate inspiration. These give the bullets a little extra context. All of these logs are known as collections, but you can add extra collections too. They are great for organising specific lists, deadlines, and projects. To create a collection, simply flip to the next blank spread and title it. Some examples include: books to read, bucket list, and birthday wish list.

When you set up a new month, scan the previous month for anything you didn't finish. If a task has become irrelevant, cross it out. If you decide to put it off until a later date, add a left arrow and put it in your future log. If you still plan on doing it, add a right arrow and put it in the new monthly log.

The good stuff

So, now that you know how to set up one, let's look at the benefits of bullet journalling.

IT KEEPS YOU ORGANISED

No more sticky notes taped to your laptop, and no more alerts on your phone. Now, everything from your to-do list to your sleep tracker stays in one place. How does this help everyday life, you ask? Well, for starters, you'll stop wasting time looking for the correct sticky note because everything of importance will be in your bullet journal. And you'll no longer have to worry about missing a meeting, a coffee date, or a deadline. Not only that, but the simplicity of bullet format means it's easy to see at a glance what needs to be done each day, and what is a priority. "This can be especially effective if your working environment involves multiple projects and deadlines," career coach Penny Holburn explains. "Due to the nature of the bullet journal, you'll spend a fair amount of time looking at it. As a result it'll be much easier to keep track of projects and meet deadlines because you'll constantly be reminded of what needs to be done."

IT CAN REDUCE STRESS AND ANXIETY

"Having to remember all of your to-dos can be stressful," Penny explains. "It's a lot of work keeping everything in your head." Communications manager Claire Shortt, 35, agrees. "My anxiety used to be quite bad because I always had the feeling I was forgetting something. I would remember that I needed to buy something from the shop, but wouldn't

THE SYMBOLS

- = Tasks
- = Events
- = Notes
- * = Priority
- ! = Inspiration
- 👁️ = Explore
- ✕ = Task complete
- > = Task moved to future log
- < = Task rescheduled

WIN
Stock up on summer fashion by entering to win a
XXXXXX
XXXXXX SMS 'XXXX' and your ID number to XXX.
(Details on page 74)

be able to remember what it was. Now, as soon as something pops into my mind, I write it down in my bullet journal. As a result, my anxiety has lessened because I know with certainty that I haven't forgotten anything.'

YOU CAN CREATE BETTER HABITS

Entering detailed information about your daily life into your bullet journal means you'll be able to track your habits. Do you exercise daily? Drink water? Get eight hours of sleep? Unlike a regular planner, you can dedicate multiple pages to tracking your habits. Claire has found this to be a useful tool in breaking bad habits. "I used to wake up and reach straight for my phone, which I hated," she recalls. "So I decided to track my behaviour. Every day I would fill in whether I'd looked at my phone or not. The habit tracker was a way of holding me accountable, and after a month, the habit was broken."

Penny elaborates, "The first step to changing behaviour is awareness of what you're doing. This is why tracking habits would be helpful. Sometimes, having something to physically look at is a big "aha" for people.'

YOU'LL NEED • A blank notepad
• A pen

PHOTOGRAPHY: GALLO/GETTY IMAGES