



2024 Apprentice Field Journal

What is the apprentice field journal?

The field journal is a way for you to:

1. Get into the habit of making regular observations and reflections about what's going on around the farm.
2. Track your own learning about the farm, in a week-by-week way, across the course of the season.
3. Generate notes that you and the farm manager can review and reflect on together in check-ins.

This is also a formative assessment, and your participation in making weekly field journal entries is a **requirement** for your graduation from the apprenticeship.

What should my field journal look like, and what information should it contain?

Your field journal should follow the same format from week to week, and contain observations and reflections about your work on the farm.

In the beginning of your apprenticeship this will likely contain a wide variety of observations and reflections about your work. For example, "Date, Task, Observation":

1. "DATE, Harvested carrots for CSA on Wednesday, they were large and healthy. I knelt in one position for too long, and my knees hurt – need to switch up how I'm sitting more often next time."
2. "DATE, Learned how to form beds on contour today – Michael trained us, it was a new way for me to think about combating erosion."
3. "DATE, Trellised 100 bed feet of cherry tomatoes in the tunnel. It was hot and I had difficulties identifying suckers. I noticed a number of aphids on the undersides of the tomato leaves."

As time goes on, and you and the farm manager identify a management area for you to manage or co-manage, your observations will likely become more specific:

1. "DATE, nursery management: Made 2 batches of potting mix for fall seedlings today, we're out of vermicompost in the nursery – communicate in farm team meeting that we need more."
2. "DATE, irrigation management: Several drip irrigation lines in Field E are leaking. Bring up more connector pieces from Edmonston to the Bladensburg Farm in order to make repairs."

3. “DATE, CSA management: CSA customers loved the orange bell peppers at pickup this week but seemed less excited about the lemon basil. Offer another herb option next week and keep up the peppers.”

The format can be whatever works best for you – something as simple and analogue as a journal and pencil; a notes document on your phone; a file of photos with detailed captions; a running Word document on the computer.

Choose a format that is low-key enough to help you be consistent, but detailed enough so that you understand your notes and can explain them to the farm manager.

Your notes don't need to be lengthy – likely no more than a paragraph and/or several photos with captions per week – but should contain key details about the work you did, or anything notable that happened during your work week.

Please upload your notes to your apprenticeship google folder once a week. If you're using a pen and paper, take a picture of the notes and upload them to the folder.

Photos are a very informative addition to the field journal but are not 100% necessary!

When should I complete my journal?

You should fill out your observations on a weekly basis. Track the time it takes you to complete your journal entries in Clockify – the time you spend recordkeeping will be counted as paid time.

This should likely take no more than 30 minutes to 1 hour per week.

In October, apprentices will participate in the final BFTP group plot presentation class by giving an overview of their apprenticeship experience this year. Your field journal will be a crucial part of this presentation, in addition to discussing your overall learning experience and farming goals going forward. This presentation will be about 15 minutes long.

Why is it important that I participate?

Consistent observation of what's going on around the farm, and critical analysis of those observations, are some of the most important skills you can learn as a farmer. Recordkeeping is also a way of building your own knowledge base as a farmer – it's best to get yourself into the practice of creating an archive of information that you can come back to year after year as soon as possible.