There are so many planners on the market but maybe you haven’t quite found one that serve your needs. Bullet journaling is essentially planning with a flexible system. Bullet journaling allows you to skip all the irrelevant pages, making planning personalized and more efficient. Whether you’re a minimalist or creative soul, bullet journaling may be the answer to organizing your life. All you need is a journal and a pen/pencil to begin. That’s it!

Selecting a journal:

There are so many journals out there. I think the most important decision is choosing what type of style you prefer. Lined notebooks are readily available but if you would like something less restrictive, I highly recommend dotted notebooks that offer some guidelines. Gridded notebooks and blank sketch books are some other options.

You may find that having numbered pages allows you to find specific pages quicker. You could either find a journal with numbered pages or number the pages yourself. You might also want to consider a journal with a table of contents page or make one at the beginning.

While I mentioned that you only need a journal and a pen/pencil, do not let that stop you from incorporating your creative soul! Markers and paint may be tools you wish to use. I highly recommend that you look for thicker paper if you do not wish to see ghosting or bleeding of the previous pages.

AMY NGUYEN, SENIOR PEER HEALTH EDUCATOR
**Spreads:**

Spreads refer to pages, typical two side by side pages, in a journal. There is no organization you are restricted to. There is no right layout either. Everything is all up to you. You could immediately start your bullet journal any day of the year. Here are some typical spreads in bullet journals:

**Key**

A key may be beneficial to have a system of completing tasks. You should make one that makes the most sense to you. You could put this near the front of your journal to easily access it in the future.

**Yearly Spread**

This is simply a yearly overview that you could quickly reference especially when making new spreads. If you are starting bullet journaling at the beginning of the year, you might only need one calendar year. However, if you are starting in the middle of the year, you might want to incorporate two calendar years.

**Future Log**

Future logs for bullet journals are analogous to an outline of a paper. You may have some events (ie. birthdays, finals, weddings, deadlines, etc.) that you expect to attend months ahead. You may have dates set to achieve a certain goal. In a typically planner, you would be able to flip to the month and write the event down. In a bullet journal, you may not have planned for that month yet. You can collect all upcoming events here so that you would remember to include in your monthly spreads. You do not necessarily need to set up your future log as I have in the following picture. You could set up 3 months or 12 months at a time in your future log. The number of months is all up to you!
You could simply number the days of the month and plan from there. It’s quick and efficient. You could also separate personal and work/school related events to stay more organized.

I’m more of a visual person so I prefer the traditional layout. Adding fun quotes or quirky sayings makes my monthly spreads more fun to flip through. I typically follow a theme with my monthly and weekly spreads each month.

**Monthly Spreads**

Monthly spreads are the most important pages in my journal. I always refer to these pages each week of that month and when I need to look back on event dates.

**Weekly Spreads**

Weekly spreads are where most of the fun is. I like to utilize two pages, side to side. I found that the most efficient layout for me is having my weekly’s tasks on my left page and a brain dump space on my right page. Having a weekly brain dump space allows me to relieve some stress by emptying out what’s on my mind. I often use my brain dump space to take quick notes, write down important reminders, doodle my stress away, or all of the above.
There are some weeks where I am on a time crunch, so I like to plan my day by the hour. I find that this is most effective if I need to discipline myself on time. With online classes, this definitely helped me keep a structured routine.

**Extra Spreads**

The spreads that I have shared above are typical spreads you would expect in planners. However, you’re not limited to only those types of spreads. I have included some that have been helpful for me in organizing my bullet journal and life.

**Cheat Sheet**

This spread has saved me so much time in creating layouts in my spreads. I went ahead and divided the page into quarters, thirds, halves, etc. I don’t know how many times I saved myself from counting each square space. I kept this spread at the very end of my journal for quick reference.

**Trackers**

There are a wide variety of things you may want to track including habits, mood, sleep medications, savings, shows, etc. Trackers could have week, month, or year durations. I started a productivity tracker last year, which motivated me to be more productive. As you can see, I’m not productive every day, and it’s okay. We all deserve some rest days!
Favorites
One of my favorite spreads is my Year in Playlists. There are some songs that just bring back to a specific memory. I like to note my favorite songs of each month and look back at them at the end of the year. You could similarly make spreads for favorite books, films, etc.

Recommended Supplies
As you could probably tell, I like to expand my creativity in my bullet journal. It’s my sort of mediation to plan for upcoming dates. If you enjoy the process, you’ll more likely refer to your journal more often. Here are some ways you could get creative with your journal!

- Brush pens may enhance your writing. The Tombow Fudenosuke pens are my absolute favorites. This duo consists of one brush pen with a soft nib and one with a hard nib. These nibs basically control the thickness of your brush strokes.
- Crayola Supertip Markers come in so many different colors and are relatively inexpensive. They add a nice color to your spread and are great to use to start hand lettering!
- Zebra Mildliners change the game in highlighting. In general, I prefer their soft colors over the typical fluorescent highlighters. They are useful in drawing attention to important tasks.

Daily Gratitude/ Positive Affirmation Logs
I find that my daily gratitude pages make me more mindful of my surroundings and provide me healthy doses of smiles.
• Washi tapes and stickers are quick ways to add some decoration to your journal. One trick that I often use is washi taping the side of a page so that I could easily refer to by looking at the side of the book. Your local craft store, Etsy, and Redbubble are great resources to look for unique washi tapes and stickers!

A little note on perfectionism from experience

Don’t be afraid to try out new ideas and get creative with colors and designs. It’s a learning process. If you don’t like the page, you could flip it away or tape pages together to hide the page. Misspelled words and accidental lines shouldn’t stop you. Ultimately bullet journaling should be a resource for you to keep staying organized. Enjoy the process and have fun bullet journaling!

AMY NGUYEN, SENIOR PEER HEALTH EDUCATOR