

A Facilitator's Guide to SPY

the biomimetic challenge journal of
practiced observation



Facilitator's Guide

SPY, A journal of practiced observation

Challenges learners to exercise their awareness and communication skills.

The journal has ample room for notes and ideas, sketching and ideation, and pages for citations.

Think of the journal as a naturalist's notebook sprinkled with potential inspirations.



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Many people move through life without noticing the systems around them.

This journal is an opportunity to engage learners with the meaningful, intentful, practice of heedfulness, of really seeing. Help learners to use these pages to track details and unseen relationships they have not bothered with before. The remainder of the pages are about expression, translating and communicating what one has found so that others may see it too.



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A journal is a space to capture one's own musings.

Accent images may help to model potential content as a means to invite learners to follow an example.

This journal has two essential concentrations, observation and communication.

To these ends, accent images in the observation pages may include the following models:

Labelled diagrams
Botanical photos
Research notes
Quantity models
Relationship models

Communication pages may include:

Invitations to code
Composition scores
Graphic organizers
Grid or graph paper
Perspective or shading guidance



Encourage learners to create their own versions of these

Or to examine investigative and expressive devices used by others to try in their own journal.

Allow the use of game pieces to track quantities and interactions.

Allow the use of a camera, binoculars, or magnifiers if available.

Recommend a site like the Khan Academy

To help learners express what they see through graphing or computer code.

Recommend the Encyclopdia of Life or the Department of Natural Resources,
Division of Wildlfiie, Species Guide, for finding more information about observed organisms.

Help learners to look beyond the obvious, or things that are seen and quickly dismissed. Ask: “What are the details, the cause and effects? Does a certain bark have a specific pattern, or is it the moss that lends itself to the perceived texture?”

Engage with the content they track in their journal. Have they been identifying the passages of ants, keeping a behavior log for a home pet? Ask questions: “When your cat’s tail twitches is it from nervousness or interest; is there a difference in the way it twitches?”

A few of the pages in the journal will invite learners to think about interactions between things, the parts of a plant and the plant as a whole, appearance and purpose. Noticing the structures that make up a plant may help learners to identify the functions it is capable of. Do they note tubes in the stem? Maybe that helps the plant to gather water through capillary action. Maybe they lend the plant strength and stability as fibers. Encourage learners to make use of the Biomimicry Institute's resource: AskNature.org to help them to look deeper.



SPY

a biomimetic challenge journal

Daily writing benefits learners across subject areas.

As does daily noticing and daily thinking.

Make time for learners to use their journals to explore and reflect upon their world.

Use these guided journals as an opportunity to track learners progress in observation and communication over time.

Encourage learners to experience mediums and approaches they have not tried yet, in number, in art, in words.

