



LEARNING JOURNAL

FOR INTERNATIONAL
LONG AND SHORT-TERM
VOLUNTEERS
AND THEIR MENTORS



EUROPEAN
SOLIDARITY
CORPS



UDRUŽENJE GRAĐANA
NEŠTO VIŠE
CITIZENS' ASSOCIATION

BOSNA I HERCEGOVINA



center for
intercultural
dialogue



Projekte Vullnetare Ndërkombëtare



The project was financed by the Croatian Erasmus + National Agency AMPEU, and these are the involved partners.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The project No ESCape from reflection (Erasmus + KA1) deals with improving the quality of support for international volunteers and mentors in the framework of the European Solidarity Corps program, especially when it comes to learning and reflection.

Partners are: VUK (Velebítska Udruga Kuterevo, Croatia), GAIA Kosovo, Volunteers' Centre of Vojvodina (Serbia), PVN (Albania), Center for Intercultural Dialogue (Northern Macedonia), Nešto Više (Bosnia and Herzegovina).

The objective of this project is the improvement of the support mechanisms, and thus of the quality, of Volunteering projects in frame of the European Solidarity Corps programme in the Western Balkans.

In the project, beside this journal, we also implemented two regional training courses for mentors and coordinators of ESC volunteers: they took place in Kuterevo, Croatia, in January 2022 and in Boževce, Kosovo, in November 2022.



ABOUT THE LEARNING JOURNAL

The Learning journal contains a series of materials, exercises and inputs that volunteers and mentors can use together or independently.

If you are a volunteer, you can use them on their own or during sessions with your mentors, in the order they are presented or in the order you prefer. You can use the journal fully or pick those contents that you resonate the most with, or that are more interesting for you.

If you are a mentor, you can suggest the volunteers you work with to use this journal, or pick certain pages or materials for your sessions, according to your preferences and the volunteers'.

In the Learning journal, you will find materials and inputs on different topics, that we have identified as relevant during our work with international volunteers. These are:

- activities, tasks & plans
- traveling
- wellbeing
- money & consumption
- permaculture
- important dates
- letter to myself

We have created it with the hope that it will be useful, inspiring or maybe even eye-opening for the volunteers and the mentors who will be using it.

ACTIVITIES, TASKS & PLANS

In this part of the journal, you will find some templates that can help you to keep track of your different activities, responsibilities and schedules. Especially at the beginning of your volunteering service, you might find it hard to "juggle" between different tasks.

Some of them could be new or unusual to you, and you might need to engage in activities that can sound unfamiliar or are just different from what you have been doing so far.

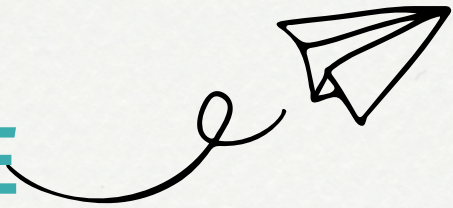
As an ESC volunteer, you will see that meetings will be a very important element of your monthly, weekly or (according to the types of activities you are engaged in) even weekly routine.

Meetings with your coordinators, mentor, fellow volunteers, local team and more will serve you to keep track of your current and upcoming activities, while an organized schedule is important to keep track of all present and upcoming responsibilities, but also of special events at your organization, or free time that you are planning to spend, maybe, going on a trip.

Language classes are also there.

In order to support you in getting used to this part of your volunteering service, we have collected a few templates that you can use, copy, adapt to your needs, improve, for your weekly agenda, your classes schedule, checklists of various kinds, minutes from meetings, but also in order to plan your personal projects.

CLASS SCHEDULE



M

T

W

T

F

Keep track of your language classes, so that they don't overlap with your activities and vice versa!

Especially at the beginning, learning the local language is super important!



CHECKLIST

Fill in the checklist spaces below with everyday tasks, then mark them with different colors according to how urgent/important they are.



You can also create similar lists online, using Google drive, so that you can share them with other volunteers and/or your coordinator..

DAILY PLAN

Date

TODAY'S SCHEDULE

6-7 am	
7-8 am	
8-9 am	
9-10 am	
10-11 am	
11-12 am	
12-1 Pm	
1-2 pm	
2-3 pm	
3-4 pm	
4-5 pm	
6-7 pm	
7-8 pm	
8-9 pm	

TOP PRIORITIES

TO DO LIST..

-
-
-
-
-

If you share your tasks with other volunteers, having regular meetings where you create joint plans will help you to improve your communication and coordination, but also to be more responsible and organized.

FOR TOMORROW..

NOTE..



DAILY PLANNER

S M T W T F S

Date:

For tomorrow

Notes to self



Just another
version of the
previous page!

For this week

DAILY FOCUS PLANNER

MAJOR PROJECT GOAL

PARKING FOR IDEAS (TO DEAL WITH LATER)

TODAY'S MUST-DO TASKS

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Notes:

TODAY'S COULD-DO TASKS

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Notes:

Keep track of ideas
that you have and that you
want to realize later on
in the Parking!



PERSONAL PROJECT PLANNER

Milestones

Notes

Task

Assigned To

m

t

w

s

As an ESC volunteer, you can allocate part of your activities to the so-called Personal project. Talk to your organization, share your ideas and don't miss this chance!



WEEKLY PLANNER

monday

tuesday

wednesday

friday

thursday

SATURDAY

SUNDAY

Notes

MONTHLY PLANNER

Month :

MON.

TUE.

WED,

THUR.

FRI.

SAT.

SUN.

MEETING NOTES

Person taking notes:....
Where and when:....
Who else is present:.....

Point 1

Point 1

Point 2

Point 2

Point 3

Point 3

Point 4

Point 4

Point 5

When having meetings, especially on more complex matters, keep track of the main points so that you can get back to them later on!



TRAVELING

In this part of the journal, you will find some resources and ideas that can help you to plan your free time and your trips, in case you are planning to travel during your ESC (hint: you should!).

While planning your trips in your hosting country, or maybe even the neighboring ones, you can at the same time explore new practices that can make your trips more sustainable.

Use **carpooling**, **buses** and **trains** instead of flying: low cost flights are becoming more and more popular, but how about the CO2 emissions that flights create? Sometimes what looks like the most convenient option comes with higher costs, not only for ourselves but for the Planet!

- If you already have a trip in mind, you can check **EcoPassenger** (<http://ecopassenger.hafas.de/>), a tool developed by the International Railways Union in cooperation with the European Environment Agency, which compares the energy consumption, the CO2 emissions and other environmental impacts for planes, cars and trains and includes train schedules.
- These websites/apps can help you plan your next train trip easier:
- **Interrail** (<http://www.interrail.eu/en/interrail-passes>) - European train passes which allow unlimited rail travel in (and between) all 33 participating countries for a certain period of time
- **Railplanner app** (www.eurail.com/en/plan-your-trip/rail-planner-app) is a free trip planner and timetable app
- **Night trains (on interrail.eu website)**: list and links of all night trains in Europe
- **The man in seat 61** (www.seat61.com) - travel website which gives you all the know-how on booking yourself train trips worldwide.

TRAVELING

When packing, make sure to carry your **water bottle**, **cutlery** and **shopping bags**: this will help you to avoid unnecessary waste such as bottled water, or take away meals and cutlery. Prefer **hostels with a kitchen**, for this reason, too, and make sure you visit the local **green market** for grocery shopping!

When looking for accommodation, you can create your own account on websites such as **CouchSurfing** (www.couchsurfing.com) or **BeWelcome** (www.bewelcome.org) and connect with locals that can offer you a couch to sleep on: in this way, you'll have the chance to meet locals and experience your destination through the eyes and experiences of locals.

If you are traveling by bike, you can consider using **WarmShowers** (www.warmshowers.org), a free worldwide hospitality exchange for touring cyclists.

When looking for places where to eat, do prefer **local shops** to fast-foods run by corporations, whose chain of supply is usually less sustainable (products coming from far away) and that contribute to *globalization* (the interdependence of the world's economies, cultures, and populations, brought about by cross-border trade in goods and services, technology, and flows of investment, people, and information).

HappyCow.net is a website and app that can help you to find vegetarian and vegan food in your destination: all places come with a review from customers and information about price range.

Almost every larger city has its own **Free walking tours**: as the name says, they are walking tours created by locals, and they can be thematic, as well. You can easily find them on Facebook, and at the end of the tour make sure to leave a tip to the local guide!

TRAVELING

Finally, traveling locally should be a great experience for you, and for the locals you will meet and communities you will visit, too.

Before traveling, make sure you ask your mentor or your local friends about:

- **safety norms** (water, food, transportation, any other important matter);
- **cultural norms** (Dos and don'ts, behaviour and clothing in places of worship, anything locals might be sensitive about);
- **historical information** about a certain places that locals can share with you according to their experience and their point of view, and that can help you being more aware of the context you will visit;
- **social movements** and anything interesting going on: you might want to check out the local social center, a youth NGO connected to your hosting organization, or meet the people who are protesting to protect the local park, and in this way make their struggle more visible..
- **a contact of their local friends in case of need** (you never know..) or simply to meet and hang out!



When planning your trips, make sure you have checked with your organization that they agree with the dates and no bigger events are taking place!

ITINERARY PLANNER

Destination :

Travel Date :

Day

Destination :

Budget :

Tickets

Hostel

Day

Destination :

Budget :

Tickets

Camping

Day

Destination :

Budget :

Tickets

Phone credit

Day

Destination :

Budget :

Tickets

Food

Day

Destination :

Budget :

Tickets

Tips on what to see

TRAVEL PLANS

Date :

DESTINATION

TRANSPORTATION

THINGS TO DO

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

**THINGS TO
BRING**

-
-
-

BUDGET ESTIMATION

NOTES

WELLBEING

Living in a new country, in an environment which is different from the one you are used to, together with people you have just met and talking in a language that is not your mother tongue can sometimes be overwhelming.

Sometimes, different between expectations and reality, but also misunderstanding and lack of clear communication can lead us to frustration and tensions. Being away from home and far from one's support network can be hard, and as a volunteer living abroad you might sometimes feel lonely or homesick.

Different tasks, especially if emotionally engaging, can leave you drained, or overwhelmed, and you could even experience *compassion fatigue* (the physical, emotional, and psychological impact of helping others in distress).

On the other hand, spending time abroad, outside of one's comfort zone, surrounded by new people with different experiences and a different view on the world can be a deeply empowering experience. You learn a lot about yourself and the others, your strengths but also goals might become clearer and at the end of your voluntary service you just won't be the same as before!

If things become hard for you, do not hesitate to ask your receiving organization about the options visit a psychologist in your hosting country, or you sending organization about online psychological support that could be available in your country of origin.

WEEK IN PIXELS

HIGHLIGHTS

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

KEY



Awesome day!!



Happy day



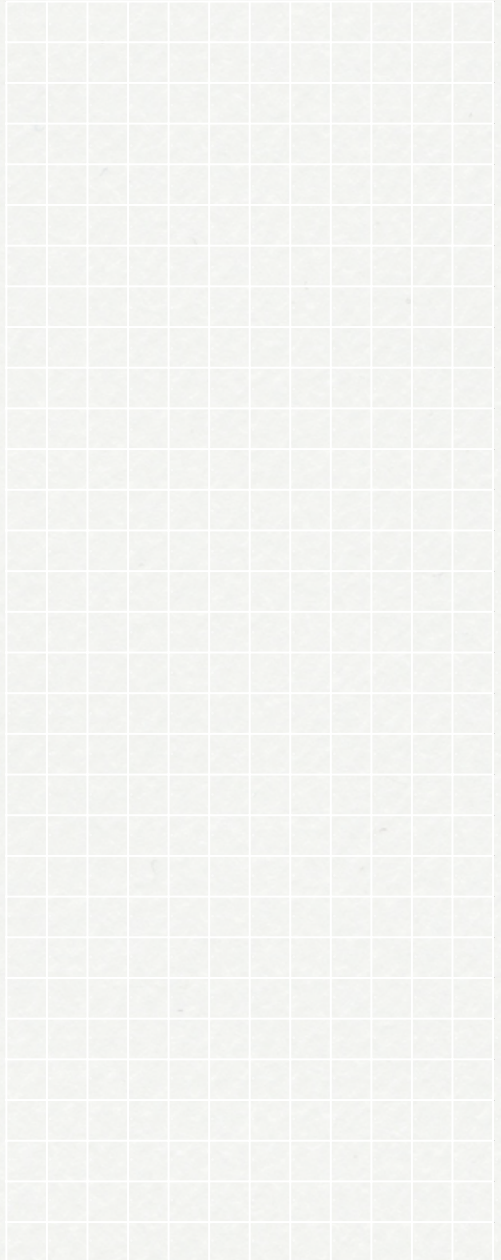
Normal and average day



Bad and stressful day

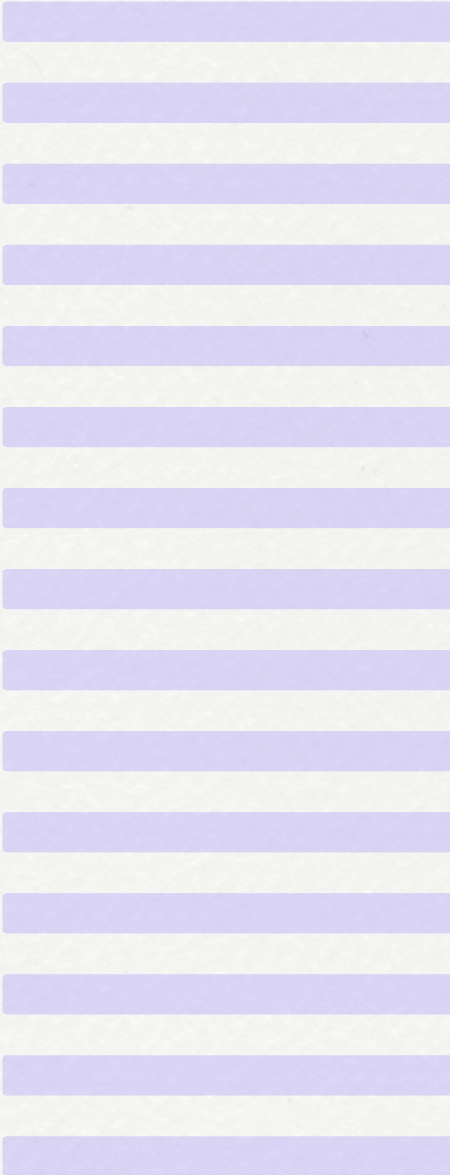


Awful day



THINGS I NOTICE ABOUT MYSELF

I like...



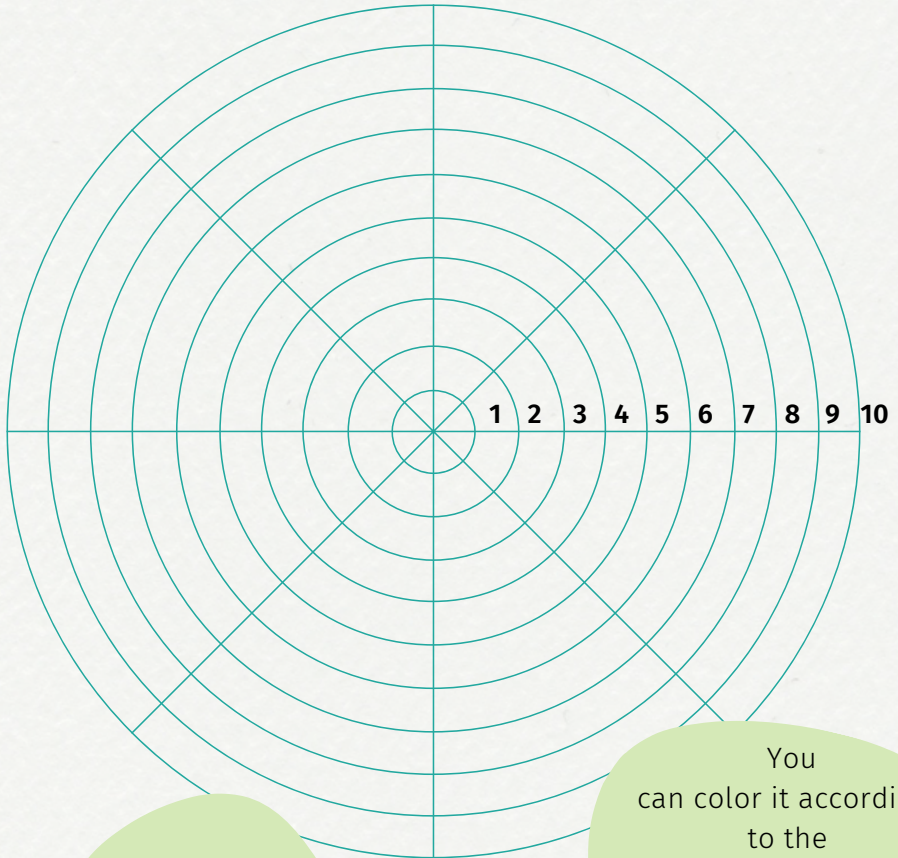
I'd like to change...



THE WHEEL

You can use the wheel if you want to think about what are the areas on which you want to focus, or improve.

You can use the wheel for your activities or for different areas of your life during ESC.



Each slice is a topic or an area that you choose,



You can color it according to the progress you want to achieve or have achieved !

MENTAL HEALTH CHECK-IN

DATE _____

How are you feeling today?

What are the things you can do to feel better?

What have been your three dominant emotions this week?

What do you feel good about right now?

Things that trigger negative emotions:

What do you feel confused about?

30-DAYS CHALLENGE

Feed a stray animal	Learn 10 new words	Go for a walk in the nature	Try and cook a local meal	Go to bed earlier
Grow your own herbs	Spend a day without social media	Write to an old friend	Eat vegan & seasonable food	Buy nothing
Donate your extra food	Listen to the local radio	Watch the stars at night	Practice gratitude	Try a DIY Project
Plan a new activity	Walk instead of catching the bus	Shop at the green market	Visit a village	Do smth nice for your roommate
Make no waste	Try a new hobby	Write out your goals	Explore a new place	Start reading a new book
Give yourself a break	Watch the local news	Make a DiY gift for someone	Donate today's pocket money	Keep on challenging yourself!

MONEY & CONSUMPTION

One of the many perks of being an international volunteer is that your lifestyle will change a lot, and that you have a lot of space to take your own decisions, especially when it comes to those aspects of life that differ from your life at home.

A new country could mean new or different food: you will have the chance to cook for yourself on a daily basis, and not all ingredients might be the same as at home. Make sure to learn about which **fruits and vegetables are seasonable**: this will not only save you money (seasonal groceries are cheaper!) but also contribute to reduce your *ecological footprint* (how much we consume resources and generate waste), as non-seasonal groceries tend to come from far away or are grown in greenhouses.

On ESC, you might want to try *Meatless Mondays* (movement that encourages people to **reduce their meat consumption** for their personal health and the health of the planet), or even reduce the amount of meat, fish and/or other products of animal origin you consume.

If you live with roommates, make sure to **share the grocery shopping and the cooking**: you will learn a lot of new recipes while saving money, avoiding food waste and spending time together.

Make sure you visit the local **flea market**, as well as **second hand** shops, and to prefer these to malls and *fast fashion* (the quick turnover of fashion trends and the move towards cheap, mass-produced clothing) brands!

Ask your mentor to tell you more about where you can find local products, and in which ways you can contribute to local economy. Inform yourself about local business, and if there is any you find shady, or openly unethical, do practice boycott (the act of nonviolent, voluntary abstention from a product, or other).

Living abroad, you might have more free time than at home, and you might want to spend it experimenting with new recipes, or doing your best to follow the "5R's" (see picture below).

Ask your mentor about **waste separation** in the local community, explore your possibilities to **compost** your kitchen scraps (this could also become an activity you do regularly at your organization, if the conditions allow).



Learn about the **environmental problems** affecting your hosting country/community, and how your behaviours could, even if unwillingly, contribute to those. Ask your mentor about the most common sources of **heating/cooling** in your hosting country, as well as any other practice that you can put into place in order to save energy, especially if you are not familiar with your new household items. If suitable, check with your receiving organization if they can provide you with a **bike**: it is a great way to explore the new environment while not relying on means of transportation powered by fuel or gas.

GROCERY LIST



FRUIT

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

VEGETABLES

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

BAKERY

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

DRY/PANTRY

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

OTHERS

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____



Planning your shopping can help you to make sure you avoid food (and money!) waste and that you and your roommates plan your meals together!

SEASONAL FOOD: SPRING



ARTICHOKES



ASPARAGUS



CARROTS



PEAS



**SPRING
ONIONS**



BEETS



These are just some examples of seasonal vegetables in spring. You can make your own lists according to the country where you live: ask locals!

MEAL PLANNER

Monday

Breakfast:

Lunch:

Dinner:

Snack:

Tuesday

Breakfast:

Lunch:

Dinner:

Snack:

Wednesday

Breakfast:

Lunch:

Dinner:

Snack:

Thursday

Breakfast:

Lunch:

Dinner:

Snack:

Friday

Breakfast:

Lunch:

Dinner:

Snack:

Saturday

Breakfast:

Lunch:

Dinner:

Snack:

Sunday

Breakfast:

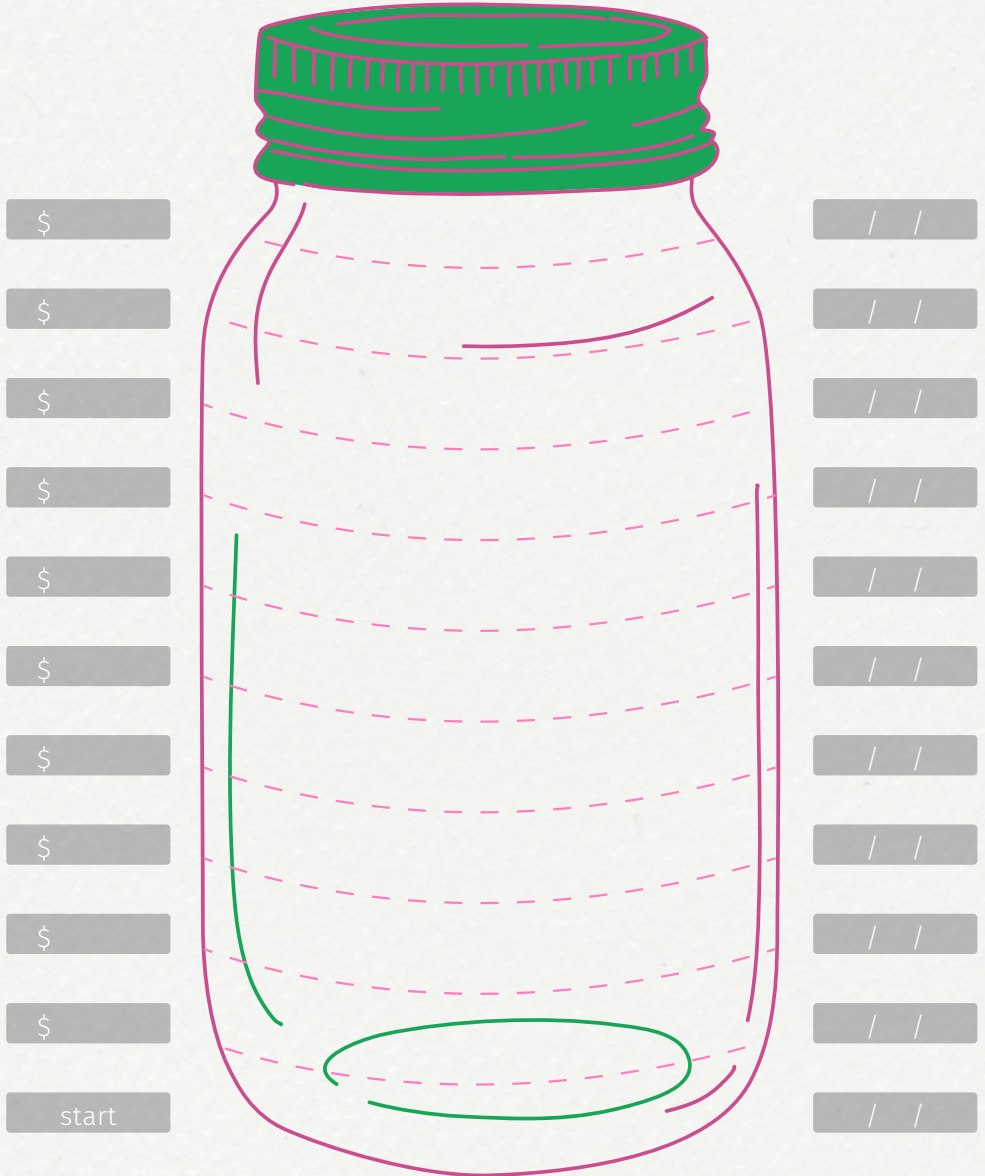
Lunch:

Dinner:

Snack:

Notes

THE SAVING JAR

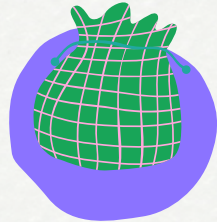


SAVING RESOURCES



In which ways can you:
save energy, make less trash,
recycle and plant seeds
in your new local
environment?

LIVING WITH LESS PLASTIC



In which ways can you reduce the amount of plastic you use and the plastic waste that you create, and encourage others in doing so?



PERMACULTURE

Permaculture (the word, by Bill Mollison, puts together permanent agriculture and permanent culture) is the conscious design and maintenance of agriculturally productive ecosystems which have the diversity, stability, and resilience of natural ecosystems. It is the harmonious integration of landscape and people — providing their food, energy, shelter, and other material and non-material needs in a sustainable way.

The discipline of permaculture design is based on observing what makes natural systems endure; establishing simple yet effective principles, and using them to mirror nature in whatever we choose to design. This can be gardens, farms, buildings, woodlands, communities, businesses, even towns and cities. Permaculture is essentially about creating beneficial relationships between individual elements and making sure energy is captured in, rather than lost from, a system. Its application is only as limited as our imaginations.



THE THREE ETHICS OF PERMACULTURE

The foundations of permaculture are the ethics which guide the use of the 12 design principles, ensuring that they are used in appropriate ways. These principles are seen as universal, although the methods used to express them will vary greatly according to the place and situation.

What permaculture does is it makes them explicit within a design process; removing them from the realms of philosophy and practically rooting them in everybody's lives.

This transforms thinking into doing. It is their combined presence within a design that has a radical capacity for ecological and social transformation.



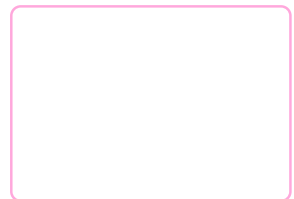
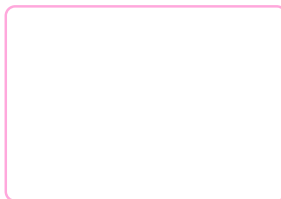
How do you implement these three ethics in your life?
Do you think they can also rely to your project and activities? How?
Use the following to draft a plan.

EARTH-CARE PLAN

-
- ▶
 - ▶
 - ▶
 - ▶



- ▶
- ▶
- ▶
- ▶



PEOPLE-CARE PLAN

<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶▶▶▶	<p>●</p> <div data-bbox="759 459 1014 734"></div>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶▶▶▶	<p>●</p> <div data-bbox="759 861 1014 1136"></div>
<div data-bbox="415 1251 697 1445"></div> <div data-bbox="732 1251 1014 1445"></div>	

FAIR-SHARE PLAN

<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶▶▶▶ ▶▶▶▶	<p>●</p> <div data-bbox="759 459 1016 737" style="border: 1px solid #e91e63; border-radius: 10px; height: 174px; width: 230px;"></div> <p>●</p> <div data-bbox="759 861 1016 1139" style="border: 1px solid #e91e63; border-radius: 10px; height: 174px; width: 230px;"></div>
<div data-bbox="415 1251 697 1445" style="border: 1px solid #e91e63; border-radius: 10px; width: 252px; height: 122px; display: inline-block;"></div> <div data-bbox="732 1251 1014 1445" style="border: 1px solid #e91e63; border-radius: 10px; width: 252px; height: 122px; display: inline-block; margin-left: 20px;"></div>	

THE 12 PRINCIPLES OF PERMACULTURE



1 OBSERVE AND INTERACT

By taking the time to engage with nature we can design solutions that suit our particular situation.



2 CATCH AND STORE ENERGY

By developing systems that collect resources when they are abundant, we can use them in times of need.



3 OBTAIN A YIELD

Ensure that you are getting truly useful rewards as part of the work you are doing.



4 APPLY SELF-REGULATION AND ACCEPT FEEDBACK

We need to discourage inappropriate activity to ensure that systems continue to function well.



5 USE AND VALUE RENEWABLE RESOURCES AND SERVICES

Make the best use of nature's abundance to reduce our consumption and dependence on non-renewable resources.



6 PRODUCE NO WASTE

By valuing and making use of all the resources that are available to us, nothing goes to waste.



7 DESIGN FROM PATTERNS TO DETAILS

'By stepping back we can observe patterns in nature and society. These can form the backbone of our designs, with the details filled in as we go.'



8 INTEGRATE RATHER THAN SEGREGATE

By putting the right things in the right place, relationships develop between them and they support each other.



9 USE SMALL AND SLOW SYSTEMS

Small and slow systems are easier to maintain than big ones, making better use of local resources, and producing more sustainable outcomes.



10 USE AND VALUE DIVERSITY

Diversity reduces vulnerability to a variety of threats and takes advantage of the unique nature of the environment in which it resides.



11 USE THE EDGES AND VALUE THE MARGINAL

The interface between things is where the most interesting events take place. These are often the most valuable, diverse, and productive elements in the system.



12 CREATIVELY USE AND RESPOND TO CHANGE

We can have a positive impact on inevitable change by carefully observing, and then intervening at the right time.

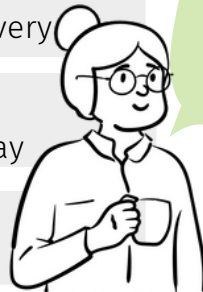
IMPORTANT DATES

DATE	EVENT	NOTES
24 January	International Day of Education	
11 February	International Day of Women and Girls in Science	
20 February	The World Day of Social Justice	
21 March	International Day of Forests	
22 March	World Water Day	
8 April	World Roma Day	
15 May	International Conscientious Objectors Day	
20 May	World Bee Day	
3 June	World Bicycle Day	
20 June	World Refugee Day	
30 July	International Day of Friendship	

IMPORTANT DATES

DATE	EVENT	NOTES
9 August	International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples	
29 August	International Day against Nuclear Tests	
21 September	International Day of Peace	
23 September	International Day of Sign Language	
2 October	The International Day of Non-Violence	
15 October	International Day of Rural Women	
16 November	International Day for Tolerance	
29 November	International Day for Women Human Rights Defenders	
2 December	International Day for the Abolition of Slavery	
5 December	World Soil Day International Volunteer Day	
20 December	International Human Solidarity Day	

These are just some dates to inspire you to organize online/offline awareness-raising events and activities!



CONTACT LIST

Name : _____
Address : _____

Cell # _____
Work # _____
Home # _____
Email : _____

Name : _____
Address : _____

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