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Five Tips to Prepare an Urban Diary

Urban diary topics are as varied as the inspiration that we find in cities. The urban diary interprets the intersection of the public and private realms, the boundaries of the built and natural environments, the relationships between land uses and transportation, and issues of adaptive reuse and public safety. Here are five tips gleaned from *Seeing the Better City* to help read and frame urban surroundings and the way people connect with the places around them:

1. **Choose the diary tool and type.** Will you photograph, write in a journal, sketch, record audio, tweet, or do a combination of each? Pick a medium that best fits your diary's purpose, whether your aim is to explore, document, or advocate for change.
2. **Plan your path.** Decide whether to follow a prescribed path or wander. Where will you start and end? Will you walk, bike, use public transit, or drive? Use maps (paper or digital) to gain perspective and define initial goals.
3. **Select what you will focus on.** Examples include the role of transportation, nature, color, the overlap of public and private space, height and scale of buildings, street features, spontaneous expression (e.g. graffiti), and feelings of safety or discomfort.
4. **Use the LENS (Look, Explore, Narrate, and Summarize) Method.** Here are some easy examples: summarize the walk from your home to a chosen destination in one to two paragraphs, videotape a walk, bike trip, or other focused activity along a street, or use continuous shutter or "burst" mode to photograph street life that you observe from a passing car, bus, streetcar, or tram.
5. **Finalize conclusions and use.** Assemble and present photographs and other diary media in a way that will inspire and show what is possible and what might be adaptable to your city or neighborhood. Most importantly, address human character and opportunity, no matter how the diary will be used.