

A GUIDE TO WRITING YOUR BIOGRAPHY AND/OR THE BIOGRAPHY OF A FAMILY MEMBER

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INTRODUCTION

This is a step by step guide to recording your and your family's life story and a guide to providing photos for the book.

OVERVIEW

Your life and the lives of your family are important. You have taken on challenges and won the day. You moved the human condition forward and bettered the earth. Tell your story and Inspire yourself and others!

You will leave a legacy – your story and the story of your family. You may think you have lived an unremarkable life, but succeeding generations will be interested in hearing it. What you consider normal and mundane will be interesting and slightly exotic to them.

You will help protect the history of your family. You may be telling all the stories you can about your life and your take on things, but that won't assure you that it will be remembered the way you are telling it! We rely on written or recorded information much more than verbal histories. Record your story and make sure it is woven into the history of your family.

You may inspire someone else with your story. Remember those challenges you conquered? What about those problems you solved? Someone else, somewhere on the planet needs to hear how you did those things. They need to understand that it is possible and they need to be inspired by the way you conquered and solved them.

It opens the door to reconcile open issues from your past. When you review your life from start to present, you will encounter unresolved items. Reviewing your life and accomplishments can cause you to see how you have overcome real and perceived obstacles such as these. Reflection can help you move past the feelings and perhaps provide a path to reconciliation with relatives and friends.

DEFINITION

- An **autobiography** is a nonfiction story of a person's life, written from their point of view.
- A **memoir** is a type of autobiography that focuses on a particular period in the author's life rather than their whole life.

For the books I create, it is best to record an autobiography. An autobiography should include all the most important details of your life story and/or the life story of the family member about whom you write.

WHAT SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

- A description of your personal origin story. This can include your hometown, your family history, your formative years, some key family members and loved ones, and touchstone moments in your education. Profile people and teachers who have influenced you.
- Significant experiences. Add accounts of each personal experience that shaped your worldview and your approach to life in the present day.
- Detailed recollections of episodes from your professional life - often these are the turning points that your autobiography will be known for the moments that would inspire someone to pick up your book in the first place. Be sure to give them extra care and attention.

- Personal stories of failure. Follow your setbacks with a good story of how you responded to that failure.
- Your philosophy on life. What wisdom would you like to leave to your family? What aspects of life are important to you? How do you define your character?
- Write about the people that have inspired you. Who were or are your role models? Why or how did they affect you.
- What are the events that have defined you? What significant events have helped shape your destiny, outlook on life, relationships etc.?
- What do you aspire to? Your romantic life, your faith, your aspirations, your dreams and your spiritual profile
- Profile your family. Describe those closest to you and their character. Their lives and your relationship with them. Their influence on you.
- Write about your friends, your pets, your workmates and your sporting and/or club companions.
- Discuss your passions - your favourite authors, movies, music and songs, art, theatre, food and drinks, games and activities, desires etc.
- Write about your belief systems, your politics and your relationships with the community
- Write about where you have lived. The country, the town, village, suburb and the homes you occupied etc. – what are the favourite memories
- Profile your travels. Where have you been? What were your experiences? Favourite places? People you met. Friends you made. Life-changing experiences.
- Talk about things that have triggered your emotions. Things that made you proud, sad, happy, excited, disappointed, angry, terrified, joyous, laugh, cry etc.
- Write about your significant achievements in life. Honours gained, inventions, awards, trophies, educational awards, workplace moments etc.
- Write about your career. Why you chose it, milestones and achievements, etc.

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS

- 1 Procrastination is your worst enemy! Make a start ... “I was born...”
- 2 Use a structured approach – Create your major headings, then sub-headings for each major etc. as below – then simply write sentences where required.
 - Major headings
 - Sub headings
 - Sub-sub headings
 - Key words
 - Sentences
- 3 I have prepared a long list of prompts to help you write your story or the story of another family member. They are a sequence of simple memory joggers that will help you structure your story or, for that matter, a story for anybody who has a story to be told. Not every prompt requires an answer and some may be irrelevant, but using a prompt system makes the task so much easier. (n.b. If all you can do is to answer the prompt questions with brief replies and you do not have the ability to write the story, I can generally create the prose required from your answers) These prompts can be found at

https://www.handricks.com/files/ugd/7befd5_ea36b63d32a7416fb128c85b94459461.pdf

4 The seven ages of our lives can also be a great help in getting some structure to your story. I have prepared a simple document which will help – this can be found at

https://www.handricks.com/files/ugd/7befd5_bcd38c5554214f529baa624148397ec8.pdf

5 As an example, my biography is on-line and can be viewed and read on-line at

https://www.handricks.com/files/ugd/7befd5_b2059bb3701444cd963ebdbf60a73e77.pdf

PHOTOS FOR THE BOOK

- Every book I create needs approximately 500 photos (the more the better)
- As a guide, you will need to provide me with photos of:
 - Your family's (and your spouse's) older generations – great grandparents, grandparents, great uncles and great aunts etc.
 - Your (and your spouse's) parents, aunts and uncles
 - Photos of you (and your spouse)
 - Children, grandchildren etc.
 - Homes your family has lived in
 - Workplaces, pets, special events, certificates, medals, awards etc.
 - Wedding, school, sports photos
- It is essential that the photos are named - write on back or send me an email associating name of photo with caption you wish me to use
- I will restore every photo.
- If you scan them, please scan at least 300dpi. If you cannot scan them, I will and then return them to you
- If you email me photos, please send no more than 3 with each email – use multiple emails for large numbers of photos