

WRITING PERSONAL HISTORIES

Writing a life story may require time and effort, but it offers many satisfactions. Writing a life story provides a person with the opportunity to review his or her own life, the pleasant memories, the difficult experiences, and the goals he or she formulated. In addition the life story is a means of preserving an individual's memory for future generations to appreciate.

If you illustrate your life story with pictures, it takes on a new meaning. You see yourself as you progress through each phase of growing. You visualize yourself as a continually growing, progressing human being. If you provide visual records, your descendants will truly get to know you and they will appreciate this. You can provide a narrative about each picture that you show with the date, time or even what it represented.

HOW TO ORGANIZE THE MATERIAL

By categories
In chronological order

WHAT TO INCLUDE

Spiritual experiences
Important events and accomplishments
Family traditions
Feelings and opinions
Reactions and interpretations of life events

LEAVE A RECORD OF YOUR FAITH

Bear your testimony – strengthen your family now and in the future with a record of your faith. Who knows, perhaps reading your life history in the future will change the course of someone's life.
Tell how faith works in your life
Tell what is important to you

IMPORTANT FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS AND TRADITIONS

Favorite songs, stories, poems, nursery rhymes
Humorous family anecdotes
Favorite recipes and menus
Family traditions
Holidays and vacations
Favorite or typical Family Home Evenings or reunions

SUGGESTIONS AND ITEMS TO CONSIDER WHEN WRITING YOUR PERSONAL HISTORY

1. The history of your family (Your ancestors)

Write histories of those you knew personally
Write a sketch of those you did not know
Tell about their living conditions, occupations, religious backgrounds or experiences.
Native country, major change in residence, where, when and why

2. **Parents, brothers and sisters**

When and where your parents were born and who were their parents
When and how they met
When and where they married
Brothers and sisters – names, birthdates and birthplaces
Your association with your brothers and sisters

3. **Your birthplace**

Time, place, county, state, country
Kind of house, weather, doctor, etc. and other incidents associated with your birth

4. **Your early recollections**

Visits from grandparents and other relatives
Unusual happenings
Visitors in your home
Accidents
Playmates
Family experiences including trips and vacations

5. **Early church activities**

Religious convictions taught in your home
Prayers answered
Attitude toward the Church, blessings received, priesthood ordinations or offices held
Faith promoting incidents
Recreational activities
Early attendance at Church functions

6. **Baptism and Confirmation into the Church**

Where, when and by whom
Impressions

7. **Home tasks, economic and religious conditions in the home**

Responsibilities, allowances, comparative prices of things
First job, wages, experiences
Occupation of parents

8. **Schools**

Schools attended and where
Teachers, studies, activities, associates
Achievements, social, report cards, humorous situations
Who or what influenced you

9. **Youthful associations and activities**

Primary, scouts, Young Women or Young Men
Special activities, amusements, dancing, dramatics, sports and vacations

10. **Mission, military service and job experience**
 - Choices, decisions, summer employment
 - Influence of associates, brothers and sisters, parents, grandparents
 - Influence of teachers, leaders, Church authorities

11. **Your courtship and marriage**
 - To whom and where
 - How you became acquainted, special dates, first date and dating years
 - Engagement, parties, gifts
 - Wedding, reception, gifts, honeymoon, first home, income
 - Companion - date of birth, family, home, etc.

12. **Your vocation**
 - Training for your job, promotions
 - Companies you worked for
 - Salaries, associates, achievements
 - Your own business

13. **Your children**
 - Names, dates, and places of birth
 - Characteristics, habits, clever or unusual sayings and doings
 - Growing up accomplishments, schooling, marriage, vocations, sicknesses or accidents

14. **Your avocations**
 - Sports, home hobbies
 - Dramatic and musical activities
 - Reading habits, favorite songs, movies, books, writers, poems
 - Genealogy
 - Travel

15. **Special celebrations or holidays you remember**
 - Easter, Christmas, national and local holidays
 - Vacations, trips, how you traveled, with whom, special incidents

16. **Moving to new homes or locations**
 - Adjustments, ties, descriptions of homes
 - Neighborhoods, new friends, new schools

17. **Your plans and hopes for the future**

18. **Encouragement and counsel to your descendants**
 - Philosophy, faith, convictions, love, concern
 - Big decisions in your life, influences, how they were made
 - Great learning experiences
 - Summation of your personal values and beliefs

HOW TO WRITE THE STORY OF YOUR LIFE

If you have problems writing the story of your life, perhaps you need to reach down into yourself for the spiritual side of your story. Perhaps the hard cold facts of your story need to be put on a higher, spiritual plane of thought.

To do this you need the following:

Get some paper for writing and drawing; crayons, markers, pens and pencils; a quiet room. Work on one step at a time.

- Step 1:** Hold the image of your childhood as a treasure trove of memories. Take 10 minutes to draw a picture of your favorite room in the house where you grew up. (Don't worry about being an artist.) Include as many objects in the room and/or people as you can remember. If someone is with you, explain what you have drawn and why it is important to you.
- Step 2:** Take 15 minutes to write about your room and how you felt in it or about a pivotal person or experience from your childhood. Don't worry about style; simply concentrate on the subject. Read it to someone.
- Step 3:** Draw a picture of the way you saw yourself as an adolescent. Follow the same procedure as in Step 1.
- Step 4:** Draw a picture of a friend, mentor or guide whom you'd like to write about; someone who helped you at a sensitive time in your life and enabled you to move on.
- Step 5:** Now take a few minutes to write about your friend or mentor and describe how he or she helped you on your way. Read your piece aloud to someone.
- Step 6:** Drawing a "road map" of your life is good preparation for writing your autobiography. Using a large piece of paper, begin to map the experiences and changes, turning points, triumphs and crashes, dark nights and mountain peaks you have traversed to become the person you are. Include important external events and interior experience. Share your map with someone when you've finished.
- Step 7:** Using your "road map" as an outline or point of departure, you are now ready to write the story of your life's journey. Start with just a few pages at first. You can always add to our story.

Taken from Don Wakefield's book
The Story of Your Life: Writing a Spiritual Autobiography