

Writing Your Life Story: A Guide

Here is a list of questions to guide you in writing your life story.

- ✓ Get paper and pen, settle back, and write out a paragraph or two on each question (or however much you want).
- ✓ Skip any questions you want. These are just suggestions.
- ✓ Add paragraphs on anything else that comes to mind as you go.
- ✓ Don't try to do too much at once. Take it a little at a time.
- ✓ When you come to the end of the list, you're done!
- ✓ Write as clearly and legibly as you can. Take your time.
- ✓ Spell out names and places clearly, so I get them right.
- ✓ Gather a collection of 10 or 15 photos that go along with your story, and write info on the back of the photos so I know where to put them.

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QUESTIONS:

Your birth:

- When? Where? Who was present?
- Were you oldest, youngest, middle?
- How many siblings did you have? Names? When were they born?
- Did your parents lose any babies or children?

Your father:

- Who were his parents?
- Where/when was he born?
- What country were his ancestors from?
- What was his childhood/youth like?
- What was his education?
- Did your father serve in the military?

Your mother:

- Who were her parents?
- Where/when was she born?
- What country were her ancestors from?
- What was her childhood/youth like?
- What was her education?

- How did your parents meet?
- Were either of them previously married?

Remember, skip any questions that don't interest you. These are just suggestions!

Your childhood home(s):

- Describe each of your childhood homes, with years lived there.
- Did your home have water/electricity/indoor plumbing/central heat?
- Tell about any relocations.
- Did other family members live nearby?
- If a farm: What kind of crops grown? What animals?
- If in town: What kind of house? What kind of neighborhood?
- Did the town have a railroad? Was it on a river?

Your elementary schooling:

- Describe each elementary school you attended—where, how big, what grades, your teachers, etc.
- What were your favorite/least favorite subjects?
- Did you like to read? What were your favorite books?
- Who was your best friend?
- Describe your most memorable teacher.
- What year did you graduate from 8th grade?
- Is there anything else you want to share about school?

Write for an hour or two, and then take a break... Don't try to do too much at once!

Life at home:

- What was life like at home?
- Were any foreign languages spoken in your home?
- Are there any special objects in your home that you remember fondly?
- What did your mother cook? Describe the food of your childhood.
- What did you like to do on weekends?
- What did you like to do in the summer? Winter?
- Who did you mostly play with?
- What were your favorite games and toys?

- Did you have radio/TV? What were your favorites?
- What chores did you do?
- Who was the disciplinarian in your home?
- Did you have pets? Describe.
- How did you celebrate Christmas?
- Any other holiday celebrations?
- Did you go to church? Describe.
- Did your family have a car? Describe.
- Did your family go on trips or vacations?
- Did you visit grandparents or other relatives? Family reunions?
- How did your siblings compare in personality to you?
- What was medical care like?
- What did you worry about as a child?
- Were there any serious illnesses, injuries, or epidemics in your childhood or your family?
- Were there any physical characteristics that ran in your family?
- Did any siblings die during your childhood, or anyone else you loved?
- Do you remember younger siblings being born?
- Do you remember older siblings getting married?
- Is there anything else you want to share about your childhood?

Secondary education:

- Did you go to high school? Describe when/where/etc.
- Who was your most memorable teacher?
- Did you play sports?
- Did you play any musical instrument or sing?
- Were you in any extracurriculars, like drama or band?
- Did you have girlfriends/boyfriends?
- What year did you graduate from high school?
- Was there a senior prom?
- What music did you like?
- Did you like to dance, or skate, or ride horses?
- If you went to college: describe when/where/what studied/when graduated.

Be sure to gather any pictures or other items that you would like to include.

Your parents:

- What did your father do for a living? Did he change jobs?
- Did your mother work outside the home?
- Did your parents have a happy marriage?
- Did your parents have hardships in their married life?

Life after leaving school:

- What was your life like after you graduated? Where did you live?
- What kind of job did you have?
- What did you do for fun? What did you do on weekends?
- If married:
 - When did you meet your future spouse, and how? How old were you?
 - Had you or your spouse been married previously?
 - Describe your spouse's background (birthplace, parents, etc.).
 - Describe your courtship. How long did you see each other before becoming engaged and married? What did you do on your dates?
 - Describe your wedding—where, when, who was in it, who was there.
 - Did you have a honeymoon?

If married:

- What was life like as newlyweds?
- Describe your first home.
- If children:
 - How long before you had your first child?
 - Describe when and where you had each of your children.
 - How many children did you have? How many are still living?
 - Describe typical life in your home when your children were growing up.
 - What was the neighborhood like where you raised your children?
 - Is there anything else you want to share about raising a family?
- What job(s) did you or your spouse have? Were there any career changes?
- Did you ever move to a new home during the course of your marriage?
- Did you worship anywhere as a family?
- How did you celebrate Christmas or other special occasions?
- Did you have family reunions or see grandparents?
- Was divorce or widowhood or remarriage a part of your story?

If not married:

- Describe your career.
- Describe your interests outside of work.
- If you traveled, describe your trips.

- Describe your various homes.
- Did you worship anywhere? Were you involved in your church?
- How did you celebrate Christmas or other special occasions?
- Did you have family reunions or see grandparents?
- What was your relationship with your parents? Siblings?
- Did you have close relationships with nieces/nephews?
- Where did you live throughout the course of your working life?

Later life:

- Describe the deaths of your parents or siblings, or other significant losses.
- Describe you or your spouse's retirement.
- Describe life after retirement.
- If you had children: Describe their education, their marriages, their occupations, their children, where they now live.
- Have there been any health issues or scares?
- What are you most proud of in your life?
- Do you have any regrets? Is there anything you wish you would have done differently?
- What are your hopes for the future?
- What do you hope your children/grandchildren will remember about you after you're gone?
- What words of wisdom, scripture verse, or other quote would you hope to leave with your children?

Now gather some photos to go along with your notes, and anything else you'd like to include. Send it all to me, and you are done!

My rate is \$20 per hour. I can produce approximately 2-3 typed pages per hour, if the penmanship is clear and easy to read. (A page with no photos has about 600 words.)

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