

How to write your life story – 10 top tips

Writing your life story is a fantastic legacy to leave to your family and friends. Our lives are full of people, relationships and events, so how do you begin to write about these experiences? Here are some useful tips that I'd like to share.

Explore your memories	<p>Talk with relatives and friends about your life. Look through photos together. Read diaries and letters, listen to music and visit old haunts to jog your memory. Jot down notes and headings about the things you wish to write about.</p> <p>Keep a notebook by your bedside and when you are out and about so you don't forget new thoughts and ideas.</p>
Start with a strong memory	<p>Start with describing an event or experience you remember well – your wedding day, a special birthday, a trip abroad. Once you have a few pages written, you will feel more confident about keeping going.</p> <p>You don't have to start with the beginning of your life or write chronologically, just start anywhere.</p> <p>And don't be a perfectionist. Just get the words down first and worry about grammar and punctuation later.</p>
Make writing a habit	<p>When do you feel at your most creative? Are you a morning bird or a night owl? Where is the best place to write? Try and keep to a routine that suits you.</p>
Be clear about who you are writing for	<p>Is your story for your children, grandchildren, relatives or friends? Make it speak to them and keep them in mind as you tell your story.</p>
Write using your own voice	<p>Write from your own point of view. It is <i>your</i> story and <i>your</i> take on life and this is what will make it so unique and personal.</p> <p>Use your own words and expressions, so readers recognise your character and personality through the telling of your story.</p>
Bring your story to life through detail	<p>Evoke as much detail as you can - what was the weather like, what did you wear, what did you eat, how did you feel? Include snippets of conversation even if they are not a hundred per cent accurate. Add touches of humour. Have you captured the nub of the story?</p> <p>Write about things that your readers will want to know about – the fashions and music of the day, food, pastimes and hobbies, how much things cost ...</p>

Write what you want to write	<p>Don't try to write about everything that has happened in your life. Maybe focus on a few important episodes in your life, or even just one significant event or experience.</p> <p>You don't have to write about painful or difficult experiences. Write about things you want your reader to know about and leave out the rest.</p>
Take your time and enjoy the process	<p>Let thoughts and memories mull. Be prepared to put your story to one side for a while, then come back to it and make changes.</p>
Show your story to a friend	<p>Do you have a trusted friend or relative who can read your story and give you feedback? It's always useful to have someone look at what you have written with fresh eyes. What do they think? Does your story flow? Have you captured the most important aspect of each event?</p>
Check for mistakes	<p>Get someone who's good with words to proofread your story and correct your grammar and punctuation.</p> <p>Finally, divide your story into chapters with suitable headings and complete your project with a great story title.</p>

The next step – making your story into a book

Now that you have written your story, you may be looking to turn your manuscript into a professional book with favourite photographs and a specially designed front cover.

My advice is to find someone you can trust. You could ask them to edit a short sample of your story to see if you like the changes they suggest; then you can make your decision. Whoever you commission, make sure they take the time and have the patience to carefully explain how they can help you.

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