

A Guide For Writing Your Autobiography

The following guide outlines will help you to recall important details of your life story and to write them in a clear, logical order. Here is how to use the guide outlines.

A. There is an outline page for each chapter of your autobiography. The outline page has questions on it. To start writing, you simply take a piece of writing paper, put the page number in the upper right hand corner. Now you are ready to start writing the answer to the first question in Chapter I of your guide outlines.

B. Answer the questions asked on this guide, starting with the first question and working through to the last.

C. After you have answered a question on the outline, check off that number. Then you can always tell by a quick glance at your guide where to begin writing again.

D. Number each page BEFORE you start writing it. That way you won't forget and then later get the pages mixed up. You may want to consider a double-number system- Pages in Chapter 1 would be numbered 1-1, 1-2, 1-3, etc., Chapter 2 pages would be 2-1, 2-2, 2-3, etc.

E. Since you are numbering the pages, there is no limit to the length of the answer you can write. You can make it as long or as brief as you want.

F. Don't worry about wording, fancy handwriting, or spelling-the important thing is to get your autobiography on paper. Write like you talk. You're telling your story to your family. Make it sound like you're telling your story to your family. Make it sound like you're talking to them. Put in your favorite sayings. Later, if you want to change wording or spelling, you can rewrite a page. But first get your stories written.

G. Put in dates and places. These are your family's history. If you don't write them down, your grandchildren may never know when or where an event took place. (Estimate if necessary and indicate it has been estimated, i.e. est 1935 or about 1935)

H. If you can't remember a name, date, place, or event, leave some space for it and go on writing. Later, when you recall the information you can go back and fill in the space you left.

I. If later you remember an incident that you didn't write down, write it on a separate sheet of paper and insert it in the section where it belongs.

J. If a certain outline question doesn't apply to your autobiography, simply check it off or cross it out and proceed to the next question.

K. When you finish checking off the last question of the last chapter, your life history will be completed. You can have your book bound, if you wish.

Your Autobiography will be a unique gift to give your family-a gift that they will cherish forever, a gift that will enrich their lives, but most of all, A GIFT THAT THEY WILL NEVER HAVE UNLESS YOU GIVE IT TO THEM!!

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PART I-EARLY CHILDHOOD:

1. When were you born?
2. In what town, state, territory, or country were you born?
3. Were there any unusual circumstances about your birth?
4. Were you born in a house, log cabin, dugout, covered wagon, hospital, or taxi cab?
5. Who was your mother?
6. Who were her parents?
7. What do you remember about her family?
8. Who were her brothers and sisters?
9. If you can, describe how your mother's parents, brothers and sisters looked.
10. What kind of people were your mother's family?
11. What special family customs, skills, talents, or traditions did they have?
12. Where was your mother born?
13. When was she born?
14. Where did your mother grow up?
15. What did she like to play or do most when she was a girl?
16. Where did she go to school?
17. How long did she get to attend school?
18. What kinds of jobs did she have?
19. Repeat questions #5 through #18 for your father.
20. How did your parents meet?
21. When did they marry?
22. Where did they live when first married?
23. What kind of work did your father do to support his bride?
24. Did your mother work when first married?
25. How many brothers and sisters do you have?
26. List yourself, your brothers and sisters, in the order you were born, listing birth dates.
27. Who did your brothers and sisters marry, how many children did they have, and where are they living?
28. What is the first thing you can remember?
29. What kind of toys did you have?
30. What were your favorite toys?

31. What were your favorite nursery rhymes and bedtime stories?
32. What events and playmates do you remember from your preschool days?
33. What was your favorite food when you were little?
34. Tell of any accidents or health problems as a child?.
35. When did you first start doing chores around home?
36. What kinds of chores did you first have to do?
37. What is the first holiday you can remember?
38. What holidays were celebrated by your family?
39. How was each holiday celebrated.
40. What do you remember about the house you lived in as a young child?
41. Where was the house located?
42. How long did your family live there?
43. Did you move during your preschool days? If so, how many times?
44. What do you remember about each new home you lived in during your preschool days?
45. What early church experiences do you remember?

PART II-SCHOOL DAYS:

1. What are the first thoughts you can remember about going to school?
2. When did you start school?
3. What school did you go to?
4. Was it a private, parochial, or public school?
5. Did you attend Kindergarten or go directly into the first grade or your first primer?
6. Do you remember what you wore on the first day of school?
7. What were your feelings on your first day of school?
8. How did you get to school?
9. How far was it?
10. How big was the school?
11. How many rooms did your school have?
12. About how many students were in your school?
13. Were there separate schools for elementary grades, junior high, and high school, or were all the grades in one school?
14. Describe your first classroom.

15. What were your initial impressions of your first teacher?
16. What was her name?
17. After you got to know her (or him), what did you think of your first teacher?
18. Describe what you did during a typical school day.
19. Did you use chalk and slate, or pencil and paper?
20. What kinds of books did you use in school?
21. Who were your best friends during your early school years?
22. What were your favorite subjects in school?
23. What did you do during recess?
24. What kind of school yard was there?
25. What did you have for lunch?
26. Did you carry your lunch to school?
27. What did you do during summer vacations?
28. How long did you go to that first school?
29. Did you move around from school to school or stay in one school for several years?
30. What are the most fun times you remember from your early school years?
31. What are the most disappointing times you remember from your early school years?

(Remember to tell events as they were. One of your purposes is to give your children and grandchildren a realistic picture of your life so that they can better understand their lives.)

32. Did you attend junior high school?
33. Describe where the junior high was and how it looked.
34. What were your favorite junior high courses?
35. What classes did you dislike most in junior high?
36. Do you have any special memories (good or bad) about particular junior high teachers?
37. How many years did you attend junior high school?
38. If you quit early, what were your main reasons for quitting?
39. Did you work while you attended junior high school?
40. At what jobs did you work?
41. How many hours did you work?
42. What did you get paid for working?
43. What did you usually do with your pay?

44. What were your favorite pastimes and foods during your elementary and junior high school years?

45. What were the clothing styles when you were in elementary and junior high school?

PART III-TEEN YEARS:

1. Did your family celebrate birthdays?

2. How did they celebrate birthdays?

3. Was there any special celebration for any of your teenage birthdays?

4. How did you feel about becoming a teenager?

5. What was expected of you as a teenager?

6. Did you attend high school?

7. If so, what high school did you attend?

8. Describe how that high school appeared to you?

9. Where was your high school?

10. How did you get there?

11. How long did it take you to get to school?

12. About how big was your high school?

13. About how many students attended it?

14. How long was each school term?

15. How long was the school day?

16. Did you have the opportunity to choose any of your courses?

17. What were your favorite studies, and why?

18. What were your most disliked studies, and why?

19. What teachers most influenced your thinking, and why?

20. Who were your favorite high school teachers? Why were they your favorites?

21. Did you strongly dislike any of your high school teachers? if so, why?

22. Did you have a job while you attended high school?

23. How many hours did you work after school?

24. What kind of work did you do?

25. How much did you get paid?

26. What did you usually do with your pay?

27. What did you do during summer vacations from school?

28. What chores were you expected to do at home during the school year

29. What chores were you expected to do at home during school vacations?
30. How long did you attend high school?
31. If you quit before finishing, why did you quit high school?
32. Who were your best friends during your teenage years?
33. What were the most fun times you had in high school or your teen years?
34. What were the most unpleasant times you had in high school or your teen years?
35. How do your teen years compare with present teenagers' lives?
36. What did you do after you no longer attended school?

PART IV-YOUNG ADULT:

(If you attended college, answer questions 1 through 31. If you didn't attend college, skip to PART IV YOUNG ADULT (CONTINUED).

1. Why did you decide to attend college?
2. What college did you attend?
3. Why did you choose that particular college to attend?
4. Where was the college located?
5. How many students did it have when you attended?
6. What were the approximate costs to attend college?
7. How did you meet those costs?
8. Did you have a job while you attended college?
9. What was your job?
10. How much pay did you get per hour?
11. What did you usually do with your pay?
12. What was your major in college?
13. Why did you choose that major?
14. If you had a minor, what was it?
15. What were your favorite college courses?
16. Who were your favorite professors, and why?
17. Do you feel that one particular professor influenced your decisions or life? How and why?
18. Where did you live while you attended college?
19. How many years did you attend college?
20. If you quit college, why did you quit?

21. If you graduated, when did you graduate?
22. What special memories do you have of your college graduation?
23. What are your favorite memories of college?
24. Did you attend graduate school?
25. Where did you attend graduate school?
26. How long did you attend graduate school?
27. What advanced degrees, if any, did you earn?
28. How did you live while in graduate school?
29. How did you pay your expenses while you were in graduate school?
30. What are your thoughts about the value of college in a person's life?
31. What advice would you give your children or grandchildren regarding college?

PART IV-YOUNG ADULT (CONTINUED)

1. By the time you were a young adult, what changes had taken place in the ways of life since the time when you were little?
2. Were there any major changes in your family's way of living?
3. What modern conveniences, if any, had your family acquired by this time?
4. Were there any apparent trends such as people moving to cities or away from the cities?
5. What was happening nationally at that time?
6. What was happening internationally at this time?
7. Were there any wars? If so, what wars were there?
8. Did you or any of your family have to go to war?
9. If so, how long were you or your family member away at war?
10. Where were you or your family member stationed during the war?
11. What happened to you or your family member during the war?
12. After you finished your schooling, what was your first job?
13. Was it a full or part-time job?
14. How did you get your job?
15. Where was your job?
16. How did you get to work and home again?
17. How long was your working day?
18. If you weren't working away from home, what were your duties at home?

19. How long did you live at home?
20. When did you leave home?
21. How did you feel when you were out on your own?
22. As a young adult, what plans or dreams did you have for your future?
23. Why did you think of those plans or dreams for your future?
24. Did you think you would be able to accomplish them?
25. What did you do, if anything, toward accomplishing your plans or dreams while you were a young adult?
26. Looking back, what do you think was most important to you at this point in your young adult life?

PART V-DATING TO EARLY MARRIAGE:

1. How old were you when you first became aware of the opposite sex?
2. What kinds of courting customs were there when you were dating?
3. Who was your first sweetheart?
4. Where was your first sweetheart from?
5. Describe your first date.
6. Tell about other sweethearts and dating activities.
7. When did you meet your future spouse?
8. Where did you meet your future spouse?
9. Where did you go when you were courting?
10. When did you begin to realize that you were in love?
11. How did you become engaged? 12. When did you become engaged?
13. How did your family feel about your engagement?
14. How did your future spouse's family feel about your engagement?
15. How long were you engaged?
16. What were the reasons for setting the particular date for your wedding?
17. Did you decide that you had to have so much savings, or a certain amount of land, or a job before you would marry?
18. How did you plan your wedding?
19. Who helped most in planning your wedding?
20. Were there any pre-wedding showers or parties?
21. When was your wedding?

22. Where were you married?
23. Who performed the ceremony?
24. What kind of ceremony was it?
25. Who were the bride's and grooms attendants?
26. Describe your wedding clothes.
27. How did you feel during the ceremony?
28. Is there any particular part of the ceremony that you especially remember?
29. Who were the guests you remember?
30. Was there a reception or party after the ceremony?
31. What do you especially remember about the reception or party?
32. Where did you spend your honeymoon?
33. What do you especially remember about your honeymoon?
34. Where did you live when you were first married?
35. Was it a house or an apartment?
36. What kind of furniture did you have?
37. How did you obtain your household linens and dishes?
38. Did you have a budget to live on?
39. Do you remember what your budget was and how you managed on it?
40. What was the most difficult part of managing the household expenses?
41. What do you remember as being the most difficult part of adjusting to married life?
42. What were your biggest marital quarrels about?
43. How did you resolve marital arguments?
44. Do you have a formula for working out marital problems?
45. In the early years of your marriage, what qualities did you most admire in your spouse?
46. What do you feel helped you most during the early years of your marriage?
47. Were there any serious illnesses or economic hardships during your early married life? If so, describe them.
48. What special memories or stories do you have of the early days of your marriage?

PART VI-STARTING A FAMILY:

1. What were your plans or dreams for raising a family?
2. How many children did you want to have?

3. How many girls did you want?
4. How many boys did you want?
5. What methods of family planning or child-spacing were available to you?
6. What kind of preparation did you have for being a parent?
7. What were your ideas about the kind of parent you wanted to be to your children?
8. When did you suspect that your first child was on the way?
9. How did you tell your spouse (or how did your spouse tell you) about the pregnancy?
10. How was the news received by your family and your spouse's family?
11. Did you (your wife) go to a doctor right away?
12. Were there any pregnancy complications?
13. If so, how were they treated?
14. What kind of pre-natal medical treatment was there in those days?
15. How did you get ready for the baby's arrival?
16. Where did you get baby clothes?
17. What kind of baby clothes and diapers did you have for your baby?
18. Did you (your wife) have to give up a job because of the pregnancy?
19. If so, what did this do to your budget or standard of living?
20. Where was your first baby born?
21. What preparations were necessary for the birth?
22. If the birth was at home, what preparations were made?
23. Who helped out with the birth?
24. Did a doctor or midwife attend the delivery? Who was he or she?
25. Were there any complications during the birth? If so, what?
26. What was the total cost of the birth?
27. When was the baby born?
28. Was it a girl or a boy?
29. What did you name her or him?
30. How did you pick out the name?
31. What were your feelings when you first saw your baby?
32. How long was your (your wife's) convalescence after the birth?
33. What changes did the birth of the baby bring into the household?

34. How long did it take for your new family to settle into a comfortable routine?
35. What were the first noticeable personality traits of your new baby?
36. How would you describe the baby's behavior and health?
37. When did the responsibilities of being a parent become realities for you?
38. What did you most enjoy about being a new parent?
39. What are some of the stories you remember about your early experiences as a parent?
40. When did your second child arrive?
41. How was the arrival of your second child different from that of your firstborn?
42. Were there any birth complications?
43. What did you name your second child? What did you choose that name?
44. What were your feelings about the birth of your second child?
45. How did your first child react to the arrival of your second child?
46. What special stories do you remember about your second child?
47. Were there any more children in your family?
48. When was each child born?
49. What name did you give to each child and why did you choose that name?
50. What special stories do you remember about each child?

PART VII-RAISING A FAMILY:

1. Did you have to move to a larger house or apartment as your family grew?
2. Did you (or your spouse) have to change jobs or get extra work to provide for your family?
3. How did you and your spouse manage to feed and clothe your children as they were growing up?
4. What were your children's favorite meals?
5. What were your children's favorite games or pastimes?
6. What styles of clothing did your daughter(s) wear?
7. What styles of clothing did your son(s) wear?
8. What kinds of chores did your children have to do?
9. What childhood illnesses did the children have?
10. How did you cope with the illnesses? (Give details so your children or grandchildren can compare with treatment available today.)
11. Where did your children attend school?
12. Compare the changes that had taken place from the time when you went to school to when your children attended school.

13. What kinds of vacations did your family have?
 14. What kinds of holiday celebrations did your family have?
 15. Which holidays did the children like most?
 16. Which holidays did you enjoy most?
 17. What did you think was important for your children to learn as they were growing up?
 18. How did you discipline your children?
 19. What kinds of worries did you have as a parent?
 20. What did you think was the most difficult part of raising your family?
 21. What did you want for yourself while your children were growing up?
 22. How did you feel when your children began to have ideas of their own?
 23. How did you feel when your children reaches their teen years?
 24. Where did you get advice when you had worries about your children?
 25. Were there any wars while your family was growing up?
 26. If so, how did the war affect your family life?
 27. What were your worries about the war?
 28. How did your family live during the Depression?
 29. What kinds of problems were there and how did you deal with them during the Depression?
 30. When did each of your children leave home?
 31. How did you feel when each child left?
 32. Looking back, when do you think are the best ways of raising children?
 33. What advice would you give to people raising children today?
 34. What are the major differences between the times when you were raising your family and raising a family now?
- (Remember, you want to tell things as they were but not if it will hurt someone).

PART VIII-EARNING A LIVING:

1. What has been your principal job, career, or way of earning your living?
2. How many jobs did you have before your main job?
3. (Answer questions 3a through 3j for each job you had)
 - 3a. Describe the type of job you had.
 - 3b. What were the working conditions?
 - 3c. How did you get the job?
 - 3d. How much were you paid?

- 3e. Were you able to live on that pay?
- 3f. How long did you work at that job?
- 3g. What did you think of that job?
- 3h. Why did you stop working at that job?
- 3i. How did you feel when to stopped working at that job?
- 3j. What was your next job?
4. What was the reason you entered your main job field?
5. What made you decide to remain with that job field to make it your lifetime work?
6. How has your work changed over the years?
7. How have your co-workers changed over the years?
8. Have you noticed changes in skills and attitudes in your co-workers over the years? if so, in what ways?
9. How have working conditions changed over the years of your working career?
10. Describe a typical working day at your job.
11. What low points did you reach during your working career?
12. What caused these low points?
13. How did you overcome those low points?
14. What high points did you reach during your working career?
15. What did you consider the main accomplishment of your working career?
16. What did you consider the most valuable things you've learned from your years of working?
17. Judging from your own experience, what would you advise young people today who are looking for work?
18. What would you tell young people to look for in a job?
19. What encouragement would you give young people who are trying to find a job or decide upon a career?
20. Looking back, what do you think is most important for people to remember about working?

PART IX-RETIREMENT:

1. When did you first think about retirement?
2. What was your attitude toward retirement when you were young?
3. When you were a young adult, at what age did people retire?
4. When you were a young adult, how and where did retired people live?
5. When you were a young adult, what did retired people do?
6. When did you seriously start thinking about and planning for your retirement?
7. How have general attitudes toward retirement changed in our country during your adult years?

8. How have general retirement circumstances changed during your adult years?
9. When did you retire?
10. Did you have some specific retirement goals or dreams?
11. Have you been able to work toward or accomplish any of those goals or dreams?
12. How did you feel when you retired?
13. What emotional adjustments did you face when you retired?
14. How did you deal with each of those adjustments?
15. Has anything about retirement been especially difficult for you? If so, describe it and what you've done about it?
16. Is retirement anything like you thought it would be?
17. Can you make ends meet on your retirement income?
18. How have you been able to adjust your budget with prices continually rising?
19. Do Social Security or your pension benefits prevent you from working to earn extra income?
20. Do you belong to any active groups that are trying to gain rights and considerations for retired people?
21. If so, what groups and how did they go about gaining their goals?
22. Do you belong to any recreation groups or travel clubs? If you do, which ones and what do you do with the group?
23. Are you in good health?
24. If so, how did you maintain good health?
25. If not, what health problems do you have?
26. How did you deal with your health problems?
27. What advice would you give to your children and grandchildren regarding health?
28. Looking back, what advice about retirement would you give your grandchildren regarding each of the following topics?
 - a. pension benefits
 - b. Social Security
 - c. general finances
 - d. housing
 - e. health insurance
 - f. employment
 - g. transportation
29. What have been the worst things about retirement to you?
30. What have been the best things about retirement to you?
31. What do you look forward to accomplishing in the years ahead?

PART X-CREATIVITY:

Though you may not think of yourself as being creative, every person is outstanding in some way. One of my friends, for example, is extremely talented at listening to people and asking questions. Another has been adept at surviving as a typist in business. Another has made the world's most durable rocking chairs and swings for his grandchildren. My grandmother wouldn't think of herself as an artist, but her crocheted afghans, tablecloths, and doilies are priceless to the family. So think about your special abilities and talents and then write about them as you see them.

1. What do you think has been your most important accomplishment.
2. Why did that turn out to be your most important accomplishment so far?
3. How did it come about that you accomplished it?
4. How long did it take you to accomplish it?
5. What do you consider to be your outstanding talent, ability, craft, or skill?
6. How did you discover your talent or ability, or how did you get involved with that particular craft or skill?
7. How long did it take you to learn your craft or skill, or how long to perfect your talent or ability?
8. Who were your most important teachers in developing your talent or ability, or learning your craft or skill?
9. What has been the most exciting or most outstanding result of your talent, ability, craft, or skill?
10. If you have written any stories or poems, include them here. If they're too long for this section, put them in the appendix.
11. If your work is too large to include here or to put in the appendix, where do you keep it?
12. Where can your children, grandchildren, or great-grandchildren see your work?

PART XI-HIGHLIGHTS AND SPECIAL THOUGHTS:

1. Looking back now, what do you consider to be the most difficult time or event your life?
2. What made it the most difficult time?
3. How did you deal with that difficult time?

(Remember to write frankly and in detail. Knowing what you did may help your children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren to solve their difficulties more effectively.)

4. If you had it to do over again, would you make any changes in the way you handled that difficult period?
5. Again looking back, what do you consider to be the best time of your life?
6. What made it the best time of your life?
7. Who have been your best friends over the years?
8. How did you become friends with each one?
9. What do you think are the ingredients of true lasting friendships?
10. Throughout your life, what books have you found to be your favorites? Why?

11. What have been your favorite stories, and why?
12. What have been your overall favorite plays, movies, or television programs? Why were these your favorites?
13. What sayings, thoughts, or proverbs have you used that have helped you throughout your life?
14. Where did you learn those thoughts, sayings, or proverbs?
15. What do you think has been your overall guide or formula for living?
16. Looking back, who or what do you think has been most influential or inspirational in forming your way of living?
17. What do you think is the most important guideline, philosophy, or rule a young person today should live by?
18. Why do you think so?

PART VII-TOPICAL AREAS:

You may want to consider writing additional information about the following categories, if they apply to you, and you haven't written about them previously.

1. Work experiences, careers
2. Hobbies
3. Political experiences
4. Religious experiences
5. Friends
6. Health
7. Challenges, problems, tragedies
8. Travel
9. Humorous experiences
10. Family members
11. Social life
12. Places of residence
13. Military service
14. Personal traits