

WRITING FAMILY STORIES & RECORDING MEMORIES

If you could speak to any of your ancestors what would you like to ask them?

What would you like to know about their lives?

As you contemplate that think bout what your descendants might like to know about you.

Certainly the big events in their lives but also the 'remember when' moments we share around the room when families and friends get together.

So where do we start?

Start with a list and then fill in the holes

For a while just keep a notebook handy and jot down things that you think might be of interest. Keep in mind that these could be stories or memories of any length, it may eventually become a book but that is not necessarily the first aim.

Think about times with your grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins, your own immediate family.

How you met your spouse; Your school days; Your employment over the years; Fun times with siblings/cousins; Things you love to do; Things you don't like doing. Also include events that happened in your area, country and the world. How did these affect your life?

The list can be as long as comprehensive as you like.

Write as it comes and edit later

Select one of the items on your list and just write about it. Leave it and come back to it later and refine it as you go. It does not need to be done at one sitting, Just write.

Stories can be saved in small pieces or combined together in a book:

Tell a story about a photo, go into all details you can think of. Include place, date if possible, the reason for the photo. Information on who is in it.

Tell a story about an object: take a photo, tell how in came in your possession, where did it come from and

what details do you remember about it, what was it used for, what is it made of, where was it manufactured. Adding this detail makes the object personal.

Tell a story about where you grew up, who were your friends, what do you remember about school. Add all the detail you can think of.

Every story needs a start, an interesting middle, and an ending

Set the scene, tell the story, give details of what happened, what you learnt or feelings you had.

Create a timeline to help order the story. What other things were happening?

Timelines are useful because you place your event in a place and time that explains or gives meaning to your story. The example is a simple timeline I made for my great grandparents. It helped to have a sense of what was happening in their lives, both with family and events in the world.

SAVE YOUR STORIES

There are various ways you can save your story:

Family timeline

Year	Family events	Other events
1893	David and Margaret m Mooroopna VIC	Depression
1894	Joseph b Jul Mooroopna VIC	Depression
1895		Drought
1896	David b Jul Mooroopna VIC	Drought
1897	Margaret's father remarries	Drought
1898	Margaret's half sister b Mooroopna VIC	Drought/Bush fires
1899	Claude b Aug Mooroopna VIC	Boer War/Drought
1900		Boer War/Drought
1901	Lucy b Jul Pine Lodge VIC	Federation/Drought
1902		Boer War/Drought
1903		
1904		
1905	Frances b Shepparton VIC	
1906		
1907		
1908	Alice b Tallygaroopna VIC	
1909		
1910		
1911		Drought
1912		Drought
1913	Bertha b Matong NSW	Drought
1914		War commences
1915	Joseph enlists at Cootamundra NSW	Drought
1916		Drought
1917		
1918		War ends
1919		
1920		Recession

- ◆ In written form
- ◆ Recorded video
- ◆ Recorded audio
- ◆ Computer
- ◆ Printed book
- ◆ FamilySearch Memories
- ◆ Add to online trees
- ◆ Share with family
- ◆ facial expressions and body language
- ◆ clothing
- ◆ background such as trees, houses, roads, studio
- ◆ any activity taking place

SOME WRITING PROMPTS

Did you grow up with any family traditions? What is the history behind the tradition? Do you practice any family traditions now?

What's the whackiest or most interesting story you've heard passed down in your family or discovered in your research? Is it true? Are there variations of the story?

Ask a child, grandchild or sibling what one thing they would like to know or learn about their family history. Ask them why they want to know that piece of information.

Do you have a favourite quote or family saying? Write the story of how that quote or saying came to be.

Select a family heirloom (watch, quilt, Bible, etc.) and write a narrative from its perspective. Where has it been? How did your ancestor acquire it, and what would it have encountered throughout the years? What important family milestones might it have witnessed?

Imagine a route your ancestor took frequently in his or her daily life. Describe that route in detail. What did they see? What noises could they hear? Where were they going?

Write a brief biography of yourself—everything an descendant might want to know about you. After all, someday your descendants will want to know as much about you as you do about your ancestors!

Pick an ancestor's hometown and do some research on how it was during your ancestor's time. Use historical pictures/postcards and city directories to learn about the town.

Photographs

Select a photo from your family history archives. If possible, identify the people in the photo, as well as the date and time period. Describe the contents of the photo:

The central room in most family homes is the kitchen. Recall your mother's kitchen, your grandmother's kitchen or even your great-grandmother's if it still a vivid memory. Describe it in great detail. Write about the events that occurred in that kitchen or choose one particular event and write about it. What emotion and feeling does this kitchen hold for you? Now think about your kitchen. How is your kitchen alike or different?

Make a list of all the occupations and/or jobs held by members of the family, starting with yourself and working backwards through the generations. Choose whichever one inspires you and write for a few minutes about what that person's job/profession meant to him/her and to the community at large. Include any particular accomplishments you know about (include unproven family lore, IDENTIFIED as such). Attach any photos and/or articles or other relevant documentation you have at hand (or make a note to include such things when you can locate them).

Websites (just a sample)

[Family History non-writers guide](#)

[18 Writing Tips—Tell stories with confidence](#)

[Writing your family history](#)

[Walking on eggshells: Writing about Family Members in Your Stories](#)

[Turn an Obit Into A Story - Family History Writing Challenge](#)

[The value of Family History Stories](#)

[Why Write your family Stories](#)

For more ideas:

Google:

Family History writing prompts

Oral history questions

Just begin!!