

Writing an Obituary for Your Loved One

Writing an obituary is an important way to honor your loved one's life and to announce their passing. While it may seem emotionally challenging, it celebrates their achievements and legacy. It may also help you process the grief experienced after your loved one's death.

Most obituaries contain the following information:

- **Biographical facts and photographs**
Include your loved one's full name, birth date and place and most recent residence. Add a current or favorite photograph.
- **Date and location of death**
You may choose to add the cause of death.
- **Survivors**
List your deceased loved one's spouse, children and their spouses, parents, siblings and other close relatives. Add predeceased loved ones in birth order after listing living family members.
- **Background facts**
Include accomplishments like education, employment, affiliations, hobbies, and charitable or military service.
- **Final services information**
Provide the date, time and location of funerals, memorials, viewings or wakes. Add the funeral provider's contact information.
- **Suggested memorial contributions**
Offering loved ones a way to take action can help them to heal. Request contributions to memorial accounts or charities. Add the address or website for donations to organizations that were important to your loved one.

Other helpful suggestions include:

- Request obituary templates and costs
Ask newspapers or your funeral service provider about obituary templates and fees. Newspapers often have style requirements and word limits.
- Prepare a Death Notice
A death notice contains factual information that appears in the newspaper's classified or legal section. Newspapers often print both obituaries and death notices.
- Start with a statement
Begin with a simple sentence such as: "Tom Smith of San Jose, father of four and technology information specialist, died March 15th from cancer."
- Keep it accurate
Be sure all dates, names, contact information and arrangements are correct. Proofread to check spelling and grammar. Ask a friend to review your final submission.
- Tell the story of a life well lived
An obituary is a final opportunity to tell the story of your loved one. Focus on passions and achievements. Describe awards, career activities, hobbies, and volunteer activities.
- Consider multiple versions
Use one for the newspaper obituary, another as the basis for a eulogy, and a longer version for an online memorial or scrapbook.
- Consider Online Memorials
Create an online memorial so others may share their memories and offer support. Include pictures or videos.

Losing a loved one is never easy but writing an obituary can be. Take this opportunity to honor their unique life and share their final legacy.