

## Ten Tips for (Finally) Writing Your Memoir

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Writing your memoir can be a daunting task. How do you know where to begin, how much to write, what to focus on? Here are 10 tips to keep you on track.

### 1. You Don't Have To "Write" Your Memoir

You can use digital recorders, software and video to record your stories. You can also hire a ghostwriter to interview you, organize and write your memoir. You can even make this a family project and ask your adult children to support or even ghost-write for you. It makes for a unique family bonding experience.

### 2. Show Yourself Some Compassion

Writing a memoir can have its downs as you relive events in your life that you find difficult to divulge. Remember, a memoir is as much a telling of the truth of your life as it is a recording of pivotal moments.

Show yourself some compassion. This is life with all its downs and its ups, and together they make for a great memoir.

### 3. Show Your Enemy Compassion As Well

Try to find the good in the person who has done you wrong. Do they have any redeeming qualities? Can you imagine why they did what they did? Was there pain that person experienced that made him or her behave that way? The more understanding and even compassion you express for your enemies, the more interesting and compelling your memoir will be.

### 4. Don't Worry If You Can't Remember

Memories expose themselves to us in their own way and in their own time. You will find you can remember insignificant details like the fragrance of your mother's perfume but can't remember your grandmother's maiden name. Don't worry. The memories will come as you write and research your family.

### 5. Just Keep at It

Don't know where to start? Write that down. Don't know what to write? Write that down. Can't remember something you know happened? Write that down. Think you sound stupid? Write that down. As long as you keep your pen moving across the paper or your fingers typing away, at some point the words will start to flow and you will discover your voice.

## **6. One Day at a Time**

It took you years to live your life and have the experiences you had. It's unrealistic to feel that you can have ample results in a short period of time. Take it just a little bit at a time each day, and you will have something in a few short weeks and months that you can be proud of. Need some help? Find support in your friends, a teacher, a family member, someone who can guide you and offer advice, as well as hold you accountable to your commitment. Take the dream of completing your memoirs one day at a time and you will achieve it.

## **7. Turn Off the Inner Critic**

When your mind tells you, "But that's not right," "Maybe I'm saying it wrong," "I'm not good enough to do this," "I don't know how," "I need to eat something," "I have to vacuum the floor," stop, quiet your mind, and just let the words flow. Write whatever is on your mind, in your heart, from your memories, and don't worry about organizing it. Let your creativity loose. You can critique your work later when you're editing or you can let a professional editor or ghostwriter edit it for you. But for now, while you write, turn off the inner critic.

## **8. Let the Small Details Go**

When writing a memoir, your primary goal is simply to get it all down first. Then you can worry about the little details like dates, names, legal issues and so forth. Once you have it recorded, you can go back and look through it with help from an editor, a friend or a family member.

## **9. Emotions Are More Important Than Facts**

It's more important to express how you felt when you decided to trek through Australia with nothing but a backpack and basic supplies than remembering the exact dates when you stepped out the door and came back. The facts give your story its blank page but the emotions are what make the story.

## **10. Write It And Then Write It Again**

Writing never comes out exactly as you want it the first time. To get it just the way you want it, you will eventually rewrite much of it until it reflects an authentic expression of your life. So again, just let the words flow.

Remember, writing a memoir does not have to be hard. Just take it one day at a time. When you are stuck or discouraged, it helps to remember why you are doing this. Think of the legacy you will leave behind for your family. Think about the wisdom you can pass on to your grandchildren and their children. Think about how happy or touched others will feel after reading your memoir. Think about how your story will make a difference in their lives. Think about how satisfied you will feel completing it.