

# WRITING YOUR STORY

Congratulations you have now completed all your worksheets. You should now have enough information to make a start on writing your story. You can set out your story any way you like. If you feel confident, you can use themes, or you can start your story at a significant event and then move back and forward in time accordingly. This will take a bit more time and thought so plan before you start. The simplest way is to follow the chronological sequence of the worksheets, this method is explained below.

## 1. Organise your worksheets

Make sure all your worksheets are in the right order in plastic sleeves in your folder:

1. Preface
  2. Birth and Background
  3. Childhood Memories
  4. Childhood Memories- School Years
  5. Young Adult Memories
  6. Adult Memories- Marriage
  7. Adult Memories- Children
  8. Adult Memories
  9. Final Words
- (Other- to be slotted into the appropriate stage)

Add to those sleeves any additional sheets you may have used to jot down more information.

Have you got photos or memorabilia you want to include in your story? If they are hard copies, slide them into the appropriate sleeve. If you have digital copies, there is instructions below in STEP 5 on what to do with these.

## 2. Organise your computer files

It is best to type up your story in a programme like Microsoft Word.

There are two ways of doing this:

a. You can type all your story in one document **BUT** be sure to have **clear** headings for each chapter of your story.

b. You can create a new document for each worksheet/chapter of your story.

Below is a recommended system for setting up your computer files. This will help you keep your computer files organised and easy to find. The numbering system will keep your documents in a chronological order (rather than alphabetical order). The names given to each document are in line with the names on your worksheets. You are welcome to change the name of your chapter headings at any time to reflect what you would like to call each chapter eg “Adult Memories Marriage” could become “My Wedding Day”.

- i. Create a **Folder** called LIFE STORY
- ii. Start a new **Document** for each worksheet.

Name your documents as follows-

- 0.1 Preface/Introduction
- 1.1 Birth and Background
- 2.1 Childhood Memories
- 2.2 Childhood Memories- School
- 3.1 Young Adult Memories
- 4.1 Adult Memories- Marriage
- 4.2 Adult Memories- Children

- 4.3 Adult Memories
- 5.1 Final Words

Depending on how much information you have, another option is to break your story up into more detailed chapters-

- 0.1 Preface/Introduction
- 1.1 Birth
- 1.2 Background- family history/grandparents
- 1.3 Background- Parents
- 1.4 Background- Siblings
- 2.1 Childhood Memories
- 2.2 Childhood Memories- School
- 3.1 Young Adult Memories
- 4.1 Adult Memories- Marriage
- 4.2 Adult Memories- Children
- 4.3 Adult Memories
- 4.4 Adult Memories- Empty Nester
- 5.1 Final Words

Save these documents into your LIFE STORY folder.

Formatting- don't worry at this point about fonts, text size, margins

### 3. Write your story

- a. Open your document '1.1 Birth and Background'
- b. Look over the dot points/short sentences/paragraphs you wrote down. You now want to turn these into full sentences or paragraphs. You may want to group your dot points into common themes and put them into a logical sequence first eg the story of my birth, my father, my brother John etc.  
Be sure to include any relevant information from other worksheets such as 'Other'.
- c. Take a look at the following examples of how you can turn your dot points into a story:

#### Example 1a

I was born [NAME] on the [DOB] at [WHERE]. [SIGNIFICANCE OF NAME]

*I was born Elizabeth Rose Simpson on 17<sup>th</sup> April 1971 at the Sydney Women's Hospital. I believe I was given the middle name Ruth, after my great grandmother who passed away a few weeks before I was born.*

#### Example 1b

I was born [WHERE] on the [DOB]. I was named [NAME] which [SIGNIFICANCE OF NAME]

*I was born in the Sydney Women's Hospital on 17<sup>th</sup> April 1971. I was named Elizabeth Rose Simpson. Rose was the name of my great grandmother who passed away a few weeks before I was born.*

#### Example 2a

My father, [NAME], was born in [WHERE] on the [DOB] to [FATHER'S NAME] and [MOTHER'S NAME]. My mother, [NAME], was born in [WHERE] on the [DOB] to [FATHER'S NAME] and [MOTHER'S NAME]. They met [WHERE] and married [WHEN AND WHERE]

*My father, Philip George Simpson, was born in Nottingham, England on 24<sup>th</sup> January 1935 to Joan Elizabeth Simpson. My mother, Patricia Betty Jesson, was born in Sydney on 5<sup>th</sup> March 1937 to Reg and Helen Jesson. They met when my father was boarding at my mother's grandparent's house and married at Turrumurra Baptist Church on 18<sup>th</sup> November 1965.*

Read over your sentences and consider- What is missing? In Example 2a the following questions could be asked:

- Why isn't my father's father mentioned?
- Why did my father have his mother's surname?
- When and why did my father come to Australia?
- Where did my mother grow up?
- Why was my father boarding at my mother's grandparent's house?

By adding in some extra information your story will now be more complete. Example 2b shows how the story now reads with some extra contextual information.

### **Example 2b**

*My father, Philip George Simpson, was born in Nottingham, England on 24<sup>th</sup> January 1935 to Joan Elizabeth Simpson. My father grew up in a children's home in England. He was born illegitimate, and his mother was not able to care for him. He never knew his father. At the age of 12 he was asked if he would like to go to Australia (in post-war Britain money was tight, and many organisations could not afford to look after the children in their care). Believing he was an orphan he agreed to go, becoming part of the infamous child migrant scheme. In Australia he lived in Dalmar Children's Home until he turned 16. Dalmar helped him to get his first job and boarding accommodation. A few years later he boarded with Reg and Helen Jesson. My mother, Patricia Betty Jesson, was born in Sydney on the 5<sup>th</sup> March 1937 to Reg and Helen Jesson. Mum grew up a few streets away from her grandparents. She regularly visited her grandparents and got to know my father. **(They met when my father was boarding at my mother's grandparent's house and... has been omitted)** They married at Turrumurra Baptist Church on 18<sup>th</sup> November 1965.*

A few Tips:

- Write in first person ie "I"
- If someone in your story is called by a name different to their birth name- write their full name first with their nick name or shortened name in brackets. From then on you can use the nick name eg George Robert Smith (Bob)
- Avoid abbreviations eg 10 yrs = 10 years
- Numbers: generally 1-10 are written as words, 11+ are written as numbers
- When adding a quote you can format this in a number of ways eg "Quote" or *Quote* or **Quote** . The most important thing is to be consistent.
- To format speech: Mum said, "...." or mum always told us...
- If using songs, photos etc that are not yours, especially if taken off the internet or out of a book, it is important to include a reference as to where it came from. You may also need to consider copyright issues.

#### **4. Repeat Step 3 for all of your worksheets.**

- Back up regularly
- At first you may feel awkward with your writing. That's fine, you are not a professional writer. The more you write, the better you will write. You can always go back and tidy up your earlier writing later.
- Your first version will be a draft, it does not need to be perfect. Just write, then edit.

## DO YOU WANT TO PUBLISH YOUR LIFE STORY?

### 1. Consider whether you want to include photos and where you want to place them.

- a. Photos can be:
  - scattered amongst your text
  - placed singularly or in a group on a page
  - over a number of pages in the middle or at the end of your book
- b. For a printed book all photos need to be in a **jpg format, scan hard copies.**
- c. Store jpg photos in a computer folder LIFE STORY PHOTOS
- d. Number your jpg photos- by default photos are given a rather long number. You can assign a simple number or name by right clicking on the file name and typing your preferred number or name.
- e. Indicate where you would like the photos to go in your story and what each caption (if any) will be  
eg Photo 7- "Jack, David and I on holidays in Coffs Harbour 1975".
- f. Save final photos onto a USB

### 2. How would you like your book cover to look?

Think about this while you develop your story. You don't need to finalise this until you have finished writing.

Consider:

- a. Book Title
- b. Would you like to include the authors name?
- c. Would you like to include a quote?
- d. Would you like a photo of the cover? This could be a photo of yourself or a picture of something that is significant to you
- e. Preferred colour(s)

I will guide you through the design cover and offer some options.

### 3. When you have finished writing go through the following checklist:

- Have you written a Preface/Introduction?
- Have you written your Final Words?
- Have you read through your entire story?
- Have you checked for spelling mistakes, particularly place names and people's names?
- Are all your photos in a jpg format and on a USB (for printed book)
- Have you included photo locations?
- Have you got some ideas for your book cover?