



5 Easy Steps to Recording Your Family Story



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I have had the privilege of publishing and being the editor for a number of books on Australian history, which gave me a true appreciation of recording people's stories.

My experience includes working on a freelance basis with the funeral director. I was required to write and present people's eulogies. I was always saddened that family and friends discovered facts about the deceased they never knew before.

**Why wait to have someone else tell your story? Why not write it now?
Tell your story – your way!**

1. Getting Started

Be aware that writing your history can take you on a journey much deeper, wider and longer than you anticipate! To best manage the process, take the time to plan

Write out your list:

- Who are you writing it for? Write down who you are writing it for – put it up on the wall –maintain your focus
- What do you want them to know? This is your story, your way – what is it you want them to know – family resilience, your values, how to make things happen, how to celebrate

Setting a time and place

- Set a time and place to write – choose the spot where you can go to regularly, be uninterrupted and where you can leave and return to at any time

Establishing the process:

- Recording
- Transcribing
- Editing

What will it look like when it is finished?

- Establish how you want to go about capturing your information – use a tape recorder, use online services such as Dragon, do you want it transcribed, who and how will the editing be done.
- What do you want it to look like when you have finished?
- Hard copy – book, with or without pictures, simpler form of booklet
- Soft copy – PDF format on a USB – Access through a private page of FB or *Dropbox* shared with family members – they decide if they want to print
- Possible to create an e-book they can view on their Iphone or tablet
- Possibility of having a short video explaining why you have done it – encouraging them to read the content

2. How Much?

Be aware that you will remember lots of things you never thought you could!
Creating a framework for your memories will help you to manage all the content.

Choosing your chapters

Decide how you want to record your story. Choosing a theme for your chapters is a great place to start. You might like to use:

- Years – childhood, school, teenage, working years, family years etc
- Places – cities or countries you have lived in over the years
- People – focus on particular members of your family or friends

Maintaining focus

When do you stop writing?

- Where does it start and finish?
- Could it be added to on a consistent basis?

Trying to record everything at once can leave you feeling scattered. To help you maintain your focus, choose one chapter and download as much information as you can. Set up files for each chapter so that if you remember something and want to capture it, you can add it into the appropriate area of the book. The format of the book can be worked on later. Remember that recording the information is just the first part and editing does take quite a bit of time.

Knowing when to stop can be tricky! During your planning, choose the point you will stop and stick to it. Get the first 5-10 chapters done first then decide about adding more information.

3. Making it Easier

Creating a space where you can focus on your writing really helps the process:

- Removing the distractions
- Creating the space
- When you get bogged down

Choose a particular time of the day or week – phones off, children removed, pets out of the way – or by your feet – decide if you want music in the background or not. Having a particular space really works too. Have notes around it to prompt you on the next step. It is best if this is a space that you don't have to pack up every time so you can return and write whenever you need to. It doesn't have to be at home. You can choose a quiet place like the local library, a favourite café, a particular room at a friend's home.

Create emotional space as well. Be clear, you are going on an emotional journey – give yourself the time and space you need. Sometimes you may notice you are avoiding. You find it easy to be distracted. Is the distraction a great way for you to move past an emotional spot in the story? If you can't remember something or don't

want to focus on it right now, plan when you will get back to it. Give yourself a reminder to return to it so that you don't end up with gaps in your story!

4. Including others

You don't have to do this on your own. You can ask others to help. Think about:

- Who can help?
- How can they help?
- When will they help?

Others love to become involved, you just need to ask. You may not want anyone else involved – you get to choose who and when they contribute. Things like transcribing; asking questions so you respond to them and recording your answers as way of collecting your stories; planning, and the ever important editing process. However, please be aware that

“The greatest drive is not sex or greed, but the need to edit someone else's copy!”

5. Completion

Think about the final product. How will the final copy be presented to the world?

- What format – a PDF file; printed version, on disc, with or without photos
- Distributing copies – what is the most efficient and cost-effective way

For those who may not be interested now, how can you store it so that they access it in the future?

Most importantly, remember why you are doing it. Remembering this can help you decide the best format. If at times, you find it hard to keep going, don't give up, keep focused! It really is a satisfying process. Think about the legacy you are leaving for your family, your children and the generations ahead.

Your story is in your hands. Have fun recording it!

I hope you find these notes helpful.

If you need assistance – remember I am only a phone call or email away!

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