

Writing Your Family Stories

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Story Projects provide structure and guidance to make writing fun, easy, and fast.

Add life to your family tree using these Story Projects:

- Springboards
- Steppingstones
- Captured Moments

Before You Begin: Some General Writing Tips

- Try writing the way you speak. Imagine you are talking to or writing a letter to a supportive family member or friend.
- You don't need to write for hours at a time. Consider writing in blocks of 15-30 minutes.
- Set a timer and keep writing without stopping or editing yourself until time is up. When time is up, you may decide to continue. If so, try writing for another set amount of time, without stopping or editing.
- Know that you can always go back to your writing to edit and revise. The important thing is to first freely capture your thoughts and feelings.
- Try to ground your writing in details (tap into the five senses: sight, smell, touch, sound, and taste).

Story Project #1: SPRINGBOARDS

Simple statements or questions that help focus your writing.

Basic How-To:

Select your Springboard, set your timer, and start writing!

Remember, keep writing and don't edit yourself.

You can always come back later to revise or expand.

Some Suggested Springboards:

- Who am I? (or, Who is/was [name]?)
- Why am I here?

- I remember . . .
- I don't remember . . .
- What I want to be remembered for
- What family means to me
- A turning point in my life
- The story behind my name
- The person in my family I most act like and how

Tips:

Create your own Springboards, based on topics (e.g., people, places, events) of interest to you or questions you have about yourself and your family.

Consider asking other family members to complete one or more Springboards.

Story Project #2: STEPPINGSTONES

Key moments/realizations that irrevocably altered your life.

Basic How-To:

First, create a list of Steppingstones from your life. A number you might want to aim toward is 10 or 12. Here's the first one for you: I was born. Note: You just want to create a short "title" for each Steppingstone.

Some Steppingstone examples:

- I was born
- Our family moved...
- I chose to study [what] [where]...
- Tragedy hit when ...
- Our family grew ...
- I learned to become a better person when ...

Use these questions as criteria to help:

- Did this event/realization irrevocably change my life? As I look back on it, did my life take a different track or path as a result of this event/realization?
- Is this event/realization still shaping my life as I am living it today?

Tips:

Your list may stand on its own, or you may choose to explore further. For instance, choose one Steppingstone and write a Captured Moment of it. Or, use a Steppingstone as a Springboard. Another option would be to create a family set of Steppingstones: your immediate family, your current generation, or further back, previous generations.

Story Project #3: MEMENTOS & HEIRLOOMS

A window into your life through the history & significance of special items.

Basic How-To:

Select one of your family's prized possessions. Use any or all of the questions below to write your story.

- What does this item look like?
- What are its most important, interesting features?
- What is its history? (e.g., Where / who is it from? How long has it been in the family?)
- Why is this item significant / important?
- Are there, or have there been, any conflicts around this item?
- What do I want future generations to know about this item?

Tips:

- Create a photo journal of items and written descriptions.
- Involve the children in your family. (e.g., what are their prized possessions and why?)
- Write a letter "from" your memento / heirloom to future generations.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

More Story Projects

Keep adding life to your family tree! For additional variations to these three Story Projects, and 12 other Story Projects, see my book *Story by Story: 15 Projects to Write Your Family Legacy*.

10% discount on paperback and free shipping to continental United States if ordered from <http://www.voicedlife.com/book>. Use code *LFT2022*.

Also available through Amazon and other booksellers.

Sign up for my monthly newsletter at www.voicedlife.com and receive the Family Sayings project free, along with monthly writing prompts and ideas!

Writing Workshops

For more help writing your family stories, consider taking one of my workshops.

Including an exciting in-person retreat: **Genealogy & Family Stories: Build Your Tree & Create a Legacy**. Join me and genealogist Amie Bowser Tennant **August 15-19, 2022, at the Madeline Island School of the Arts** and treat yourself to a life-changing week of research, writing, and community. [More information here](https://www.madelineartschool.com/product/genealogy-trees-and-family-stories-a-genealogy-writing-workshop/). (<https://www.madelineartschool.com/product/genealogy-trees-and-family-stories-a-genealogy-writing-workshop/>)

[Details of all my writing workshops here](https://www.voicedlife.com/workshops). (<https://www.voicedlife.com/workshops>)