

Write Your Life Story

- GET STARTED TODAY -



Forget Me Not Life Stories

Founded in Tauranga, New Zealand in 2009, Forget Me Not Life Stories has worked with many clients around the country to help them capture and preserve their treasured family stories.

The Forget Me Not Life Stories team includes talented and creative writers, editors and designers around New Zealand who are passionate about personal history and storytelling.

See more about the team at:

www.forgetmenotlifestories.co.nz





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The following is a guideline of suggestions to give you ideas for content and structure for your life story. It is by no means prescriptive. The best way to write your life story is to tailor it to your own tastes, after all, everyone is unique.

Introduction

At Forget Me Not Life Stories we believe that every person has something extraordinary about them and a story to tell. There is no such thing as an 'ordinary life'. So many people hold stories and special moments in their lives close to their hearts.

Our aim is to make it easy to transform a head full of memories and a boxful of photos into an enduring family legacy and we're here to support you in your quest to capture and preserve your story.

Writing your memoirs and capturing your ancestry can be a soothing and cathartic experience where your efforts can result in an invaluable gift to your family.

While starting out can feel a little daunting, we've gathered some tools to help. If you're already well underway with your story but not sure if you have everything covered, the following will be a great checklist.

Our services on offer:

Mentoring:

For 'DIY' people who wish to do most of the work themselves.

Complete Lifestory:

This full service includes interviewing, transcribing, drafting, editing, image collection and scanning.

Design and Print

Laid out in a visually pleasing, creative manner, images touched up and colour corrected to create a printed book you can be proud of.



Before You Start... *Some things to think about*

So, you've decided to write your own or your loved one's life story? Congratulations, it's no small undertaking. We hope some of the tips in this chapter will help you with the organisation and presentation of your book.

DIY Life Story Writing Tips

- Reflect on and discuss with your loved ones what the *Turning Points* were in your life. (See pages 6 and 7 for more information)
- Try to relate to how these events influenced your years. Think about your behaviours, thoughts and body reactions to demonstrate feelings, rather than simply labelling feelings, for example: "I felt scared".
- When your Turning Points have been established, work them into the chapters and sub-headings that you would like included in your book.
- Beginning at the beginning is not a must. Start with impact! You can begin anywhere in your or your loved ones life – perhaps the best highpoint – then go back. Just like in the movies and novels!

“
*Telling your stories
is like collecting little
gems to give to the
next generation*”

Leah Abrahams



Turning Points

A simple exercise that can help you determine the book's structure

The Turning Points of your life are the events, experiences and insights which shaped your life and its direction.

They may have been big events such as Covid-19, marriage, war, moving to a new city or retirement. Or they may have been small events that had far-reaching outcomes, such as reading a particular book or going on a hike.

Some events are positive in their effects and others are negative.

Questions to ponder

What was the earliest Turning Point in your life, what happened and why was it important? How old were you?

What have been the other Turning Points in your life?

Which ones put a stamp on your life that influenced your future direction?

What people were involved with you at each point?

Were there any important events in your environment, natural or man-made crises, storms, fires or floods which affected your life's direction?

Were there any lucky events with positive outcomes?

Which people influenced the direction of your life in a major way, such as a parent, grandparent, teacher, friend or leader?

Did changing jobs or meeting a new person have lasting positive or negative effects on the direction of your life?

On the chart, estimate the date or your age and list each major event or turning point in your life. Judge your feelings on the event based on how positive or negative that experience was to you. This chart is a useful tool to structure your life story into chapters.

Turning Points and High Points in my life

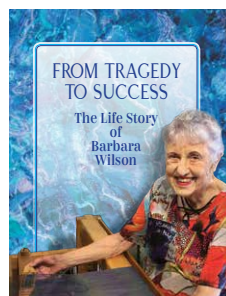
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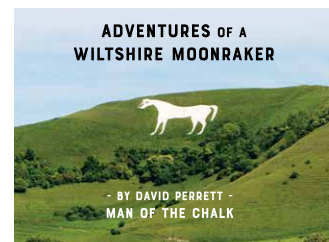
Organising Content

Size and document setup

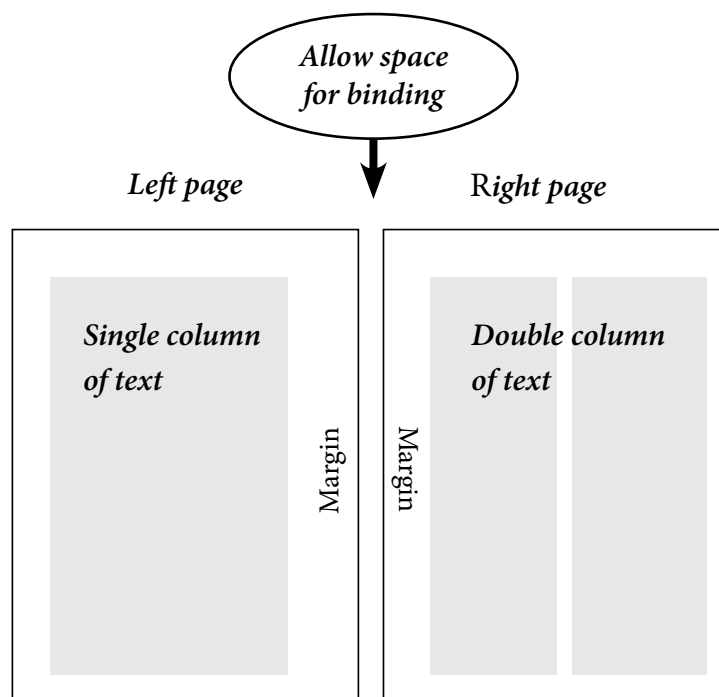
- If you plan to do the design and layout yourself, you will need to decide on paper size and what kind of binding you prefer. The binding will influence your margins so it is important to leave ample space.
- If you decide to use A4 with a simple spiral type binding then the above is easy.
- Margins can be set up in Microsoft Word under page layout.
- Binding preference
 - ☐ Spiral
 - ☐ Glued
 - ☐ Stapled
 - ☐ Stitched
- If your life story will have a large number of photographs, don't try and do the design yourself in Microsoft Word as the document will become huge and unwieldy. Use a specialist design software programme or seek assistance from a graphic designer.



☐ Portrait A4



☐ Landscape A4



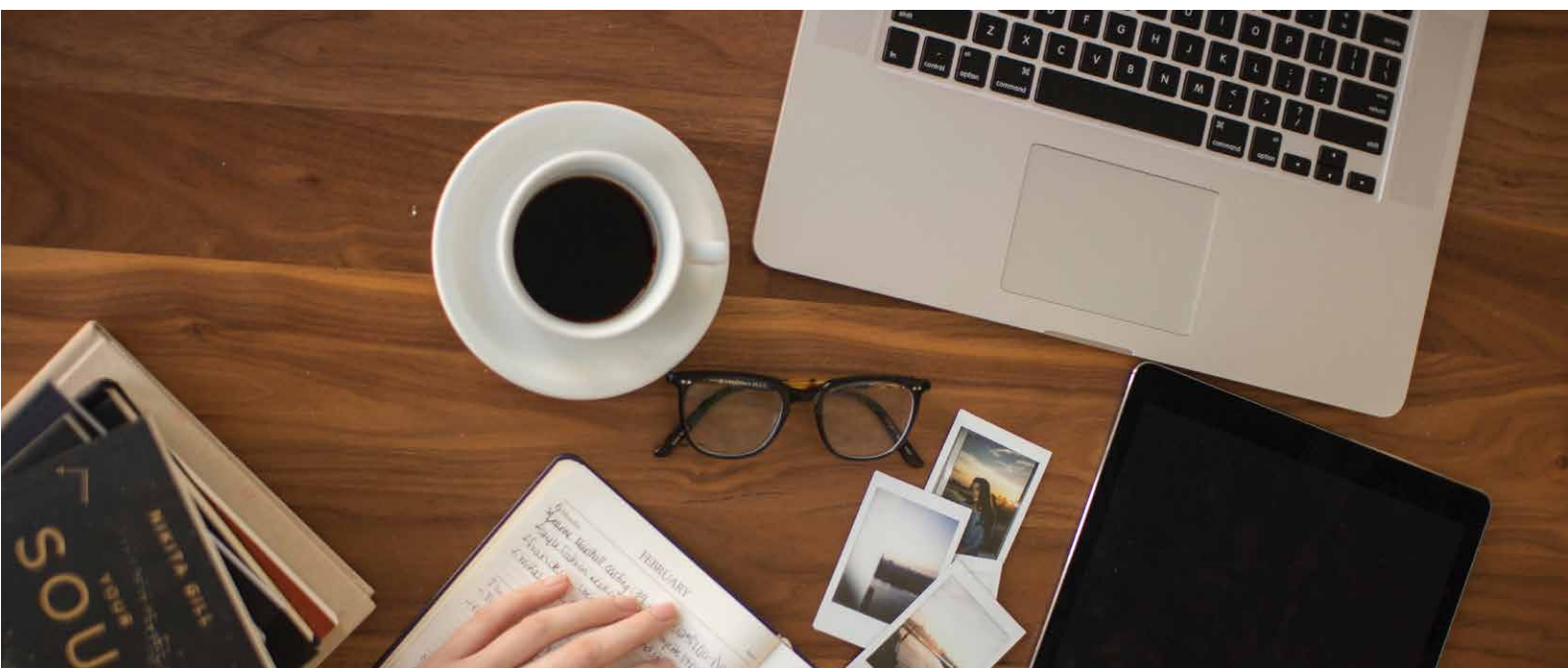
Photos and Documents

- Find and organise all the documents that you wish to have included. These may be photos, certificates, family tree and ancestry, hand written treasured books, letters, postcards and legal documents to name a few.
- With the aid of sticky labels, tag images and documents on the back with the chapter they relate to and the name of the caption (with date where appropriate). The photographs will need to be scanned to be included in your story.

Writing and Editing

- Be consistent with punctuation, style and layout.
- Be disciplined in your writing. Set yourself a target of how much you will write each month and stick to it, otherwise it will be a 'forever' project.
- PROOF-READ, PROOF-READ, PROOF-READ then proof-read again!

Most importantly, have fun! You'll derive huge joy from this exercise, and it will hopefully give you or your loved one a newfound purpose and project.





Prioritising Your Memories

The following questions are memory joggers which might help you to organise the chapters and sub-headings under which you would like to record your story. Obviously, you will likely replace many of these with your own chapter and sub-heading names.

They consist of a broad range of subjects tailored to trigger memories. The spaces provided are to write notes, keywords and memory ideas that you can elaborate on and refer to later. Not everyone will have an answer to all the questions so only answer the ones that really mean something to you.

Alternatively, you may prefer to reflect on the Turning Points in your life and base your story around those. If you have already written your life story, this can be used as a content checklist...

Ancestry/Heritage

Where did your ancestors come from?

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What is your favourite memory of your grandparents?

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How were your grandparents different from your parents?

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What were some of the prevailing attitudes and beliefs in your family?

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What was your parents' relationship like?

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How did your parents show affection and approval?

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How did they show disapproval?

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Which of your parents and grandparents could read and write?

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What did you especially admire about your parents?

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Notes

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Home and family life

Where were you born?

☐ Hospital ☐ Home ☐ Other

Can you relate any stories about the history of your first or last name?

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What did you look like when you were young?

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What was your earliest memory? What do you remember most about your childhood home?

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Who was in your household (including pets)?

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Did you have chores to do?
Did you get an allowance?

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Who made the decisions in your family?

☐ Your father? ☐ Your mother?

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Role of children in your family? Role of elders?

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What is your most vivid childhood memory?

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How were you disciplined as a child?

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Did you have any nicknames?

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Favourite hobbies/subjects? Did you have any special talents? What do you remember about childhood toys and games?

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Food, meals, cooking, favourite recipes?

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How did you celebrate holidays and birthdays?

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How did people socialise? Drop in?
Come from far away (stay over)?

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Did your family drink or serve alcohol?

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Did your family have leisure time?
Did you take vacations?

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What about church, religion?
Did you say grace at meals?

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Did you have a favourite radio show?
When did you first watch television?

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What brand-name products, advertising jingles and comic do you recall?

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Were you influenced much by events in the outside world?

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Courtship and marriage

At what age did you begin dating?
What did people do on dates?

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How did you and your spouse meet?

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What did you love most about
your spouse when you met?

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How did you propose (or get proposed to)?

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What were your expectations of marriage?

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Wedding: when, where, how old were you,
and what did you wear?

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Describe the ceremony, the reception
and the honeymoon.

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Do you have any advice for young couples?

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Children and grandchildren

When and where were your children
born and in what circumstances?
How did you choose their names?

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Describe the personalities of your children.

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What are you proud of in your children?

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How does your approach to child-rearing
differ from that of your parents?

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Other memories and observations

Are you the same person now as you were when a child, or are you much different?

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What family heirlooms do you possess?

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Why are they valuable to you?
What is their history?

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What are your attitudes towards government, politics and civic life?

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What historical events or movements affected you the most?

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What do you remember about the advent of the telephone, car, air travel, TV etc?

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Would you like to share your views on current events?

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Is there something you think no one knows about you?

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Do you think about dying?

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Words of wisdom/hope for the future

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How has the world changed from the time you were a child?

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What lessons have you learned?
What are the most important things in life?

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What are some of the principles and values
you have used to guide you?

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What are your coping mechanisms?

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How has your life mattered?
What have you meant to others?

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Of what are you most proud?
What do you regret?

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Do you feel more or less complete with
your life, or are there future projects or
goals you would like to complete?

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What would you change if you
had your life to live all over again?

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Are there any family traditions
you'd like to see carried on?

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Words of wisdom/hope for the future

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If you overheard your grandchildren
talking about you, what would you like
them to be saying?

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What advice do you want to give to your
grandchildren and great-grandchildren?
What are your greatest hopes for them?

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Life review/summation questions

What life values, spiritual beliefs, principles, legacies and cultural and family traditions were passed down to you by your ancestors and parents?

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Which ones would you like to pass on to your loved ones?

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What has been your impact on others?

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What are your regrets, achievements, requests for forgiveness, expressions of gratitude, goodbyes?

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What else would you like your family and loved ones to know about you?

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What has been the best day of your life?

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When did you take a stand and speak out about something you cared deeply about?

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What have you felt most passionate about in your life?

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Migration story questions

Why did they move?

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Who helped them move?

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What was the trip like?

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What were their expectations in the new place/country?

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How did they assimilate?

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What did “making it” in the new location mean to the family?

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Were there any rogues, mischief-makers, heroes, courtships, or lost fortunes?

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Notes

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Things I’d like to cover

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Yes It's Time!

Time to tell the story of your life

We hope you've found these tips helpful.
Remember if you find you need some extra help,
we're at your service.

Contact us

www.forgetmenotlifestories.co.nz

*Give your past a future today and
preserve your unique life story.
It's never too early to tell your story,
but it can easily become too late.*

FORGET ME NOT
Life StoriesTM

SAVING LIVES... ONE STORY AT A TIME

