



How to Write an Obituary Step-By-Step

An obituary may be the first and last time your loved one appears in the newspapers. Written by someone close to the deceased, it is an intimate perspective regarding what is memorable about a life. You want to make sure the tribute does that person justice with what is, in effect, a brief biography.

We would like to help you accomplish that with this guide. Our aim is to allow you to create an obituary that is clear, colorful and concise, while keeping down the expense. Most newspapers charge for obituaries by the word or line, so keeping it a reasonable length makes economic sense.

Below, you will find a few essential and suggested points you may want to include. Most importantly, realize that this is only a guide. The obituary should reflect the wishes of those closest to the subject. Affectionate phrases can be used throughout the obituary, such as “beloved wife” or “devoted friend.” A favorite quotation or a few lines of poetry are often a nice addition. However, before it is published, remember to check all information with other family members.

Let’s take it step-by-step, and if you need more space, please use a separate sheet.

ANNOUNCEMENT: Full name (including any nickname)

- a) Age
- b) Occupation
- c) Day/Date
- d) Place
- e) Cause (Optional)

EXAMPLES:

- a) John Mathew Doe, 86, of Kerrville, Texas, retired owner of Wolf Brand Products and entrepreneur, died Saturday, January 17, 2013, at Veterans Hospital, of complications following a stroke.
- b) Mary Beth Smith, 71, of Junction, Texas, died Tuesday, February 1, 2013, at her home.

LIFE SUMMARY:

- a) Birth date
- b) Birth place
- c) Parents' names
- d) Main places of residence
- e) Schools attended
- f) Military service
- g) Achievements/awards
- h) Memberships (church/civic/fraternal/clubs/sports associations)
- i) Hobbies/interests/volunteering/community involvement
- j) Anecdotes or recollections

SURVIVING FAMILY:

- a) Spouse
- b) Children
- c) Parents
- d) Grandchildren
- e) Sisters/Brothers

SECONDARY FAMILY: (Optional) Secondary family members may be listed by relationship rather than name. You could mention, “Five grandchildren, three nieces,” for example. This will save space. A list of pallbearers is also sometimes included.

- a) Grandparents
- b) Great grandchildren
- c) Aunts/Uncles
- d) Cousins
- e) Nieces/Nephews
- f) Pets, often enormously important to owners, can also be mentioned.

SCHEDULES: (These include the funeral itself, vigils, prayer services, memorial gatherings, place of entombment and visitation information.)

Include these details on each:

- a) Type of service
- b) Time, day/date
- c) Place

MEMORIALS: (Where people can make contributions or donations.)

EXAMPLES:

- a) Memorial contributions may be made to...
- b) The... Memorial has been established for those wishing to contribute.
- c) Memorials may be made to the charity of your choice.
- d) Remembrances may be made in the form desired by friends.

PHOTOS:

Include a photograph of the person, usually a clear and well-cropped headshot that will show up well in black and white. Be sure to send this photo to us as soon as possible via email or you may bring your photo to us and we will scan it

for you. At the end of your tribute, you may wish to thank any people or groups for care given to the deceased. Obituaries are good opportunities for this sort of thank you.

FINAL STEPS:

Ask our staff about sending the tribute to newspapers in other cities where the deceased lived or worked.

Once the obituary is posted on our website, send a link to other family members and friends to make sure everyone is notified in a timely manner. Remember, if you have any problems writing the obituary; know that our staff stands ready to assist you with practical advice and professional help.

The aim is to make your obituary a lasting memorial worthy of a scrapbook – a tribute that gives family and friends something to be proud of long after the upheaval of loss.