

Complete Autobiography Format Template

Manuscript Formatting Guidelines

Standard Format: - **Font:** Times New Roman, 12pt - **Line Spacing:** Double-spaced - **Margins:** 1 inch on all sides - **Alignment:** Left-aligned (not justified) - **Paragraph Indent:** 0.5 inch first line indent - **Page Numbers:** Bottom center or top right, starting after title page - **File Format:** .docx or .pdf

Front Matter

1. Title Page

[YOUR AUTOBIOGRAPHY TITLE] *[Subtitle if applicable]*

by

[Your Full Name]

[Year]

2. Copyright Page

Copyright © [Year] by [Your Name]

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or used in any manner without written permission of the copyright owner except for the use of quotations in a book review.

ISBN: [If published - leave blank if unpublished]

[Publisher name and location, if applicable]

3. Dedication (Optional)

For [Name/Names]

[Optional brief dedication message]

4. Epigraph (Optional)

"[Meaningful quote that sets the tone]" — [Author Name]

5. Table of Contents

Table of Contents

Prologue.....1

Part I: [Section Title] - Chapter 1: [Chapter Title]

.....5 - Chapter 2: [Chapter Title]

.....15 - Chapter 3: [Chapter Title]

.....28

Part II: [Section Title] - Chapter 4: [Chapter Title]
.....42 - Chapter 5: [Chapter Title]
.....56 - Chapter 6: [Chapter Title]
.....71

Part III: [Section Title] - Chapter 7: [Chapter Title]
.....85 - Chapter 8: [Chapter Title]
.....100 - Chapter 9: [Chapter Title]
.....115

Epilogue.....130

Acknowledgments.....135

About the Author.....138

6. Foreword (Optional)

Foreword

[Written by someone other than you - a notable figure, expert, or someone significant to your story. Typically 500-1500 words explaining why your story matters.]

7. Preface or Author’s Note (Optional)

Preface

[Your own explanation of why you wrote this book, what readers should know before reading, or context about the writing process. Typically 300-1000 words.]

8. Prologue (Optional)

Prologue

[A compelling opening scene, pivotal moment, or framing device that hooks readers before the main narrative begins. Can be a flash-forward, key memory, or thematic introduction.]

Main Content Structure

Chapter Format

Chapter [Number] [Chapter Title]

[First paragraph - no indent for opening paragraph of each chapter]

[Body paragraphs - indent first line 0.5 inch for all subsequent paragraphs]

[Continue narrative with clear paragraph breaks...]

Chapter Structure Options

Option 1: Chronological Chapters - Chapter 1: Early Years (Birth - Age 10) - Chapter 2: Coming of Age (Ages 11-18) - Chapter 3: Finding My Path (Ages 19-25) - Chapter 4: Building a Life (Ages 26-35) - Chapter 5: Midlife Transitions (Ages 36-50) - Chapter 6: Wisdom Years (Age 50+)

Option 2: Thematic Chapters - Chapter 1: Family Roots - Chapter 2: Education & Growth - Chapter 3: Career Journey - Chapter 4: Love & Relationships - Chapter 5: Challenges & Triumphs - Chapter 6: Legacy & Reflection

Option 3: Part & Chapter Structure

Part I: Origins (1950-1970) - Chapter 1: Immigrant Dreams - Chapter 2: A Brooklyn Childhood - Chapter 3: Finding My Voice

Part II: Becoming (1970-1990) - Chapter 4: College & Awakening - Chapter 5: First Love, First Loss - Chapter 6: Career Beginnings

Part III: Transformation (1990-Present) - Chapter 7: Crisis & Reinvention - Chapter 8: Building Community - Chapter 9: Full Circle

Chapter Opening Formatting Examples

Standard Chapter Opening

Chapter 1 The Beginning

I was born on a Tuesday in March, the kind of gray morning that makes you forget winter ever ends...

Chapter Opening with Epigraph

Chapter 3 Leaving Home

"The ache for home lives in all of us, the safe place where we can go as we are and not be questioned." — Maya Angelou

The bus pulled away from the station at dawn...

Chapter Opening with Date/Location

Chapter 5 Breaking Point

New York City, 1987

The phone call came at 3 a.m., the way life-changing news always seems to arrive...

Back Matter

1. Epilogue (Optional)

Epilogue

[Wrap up loose ends, provide updates on what happened after the main narrative ends, or offer final reflections. Typically 500-1500 words.]

2. Acknowledgments

Acknowledgments

[Thank everyone who contributed to your life and your book - family, friends, editors, mentors, supporters. Can be personal and heartfelt. Typically 300-800 words.]

Example opening: “This book would not exist without the support, encouragement, and patience of many people...”

3. About the Author

About the Author

[Third-person bio - 100-300 words about your background, accomplishments, current life. Include photo if desired.]

Example: “[Your Name] was born in [location] and has spent [number] years working in [field]. Their experiences include [highlights]. They currently live in [location] with [family details].”

4. Photos/Illustrations Section (Optional)

Insert Photo Section

[Place 8-16 pages of photographs in the middle of the book or at the end. Include captions with names, dates, and brief context.]

Photo Layout Examples: - Family portrait, 1965 - First day of school - Wedding day, June 1982 - With colleagues at [Company], 1995

Formatting Special Elements

Scene Breaks Within Chapters

Use centered asterisks or extra line spacing to show time/location shifts:

[End of scene paragraph...]

[New scene begins...]

Dialogue Formatting

“This is how dialogue should look,” she said. “Each speaker gets a new paragraph.”

“Exactly,” I replied. “And dialogue tags are part of the same paragraph as the speech.”

Flashbacks or Memories

Consider using italics for brief flashbacks or memories to distinguish them from present narrative.

Letters, Documents, or Quotes

Indent and/or italicize full letters, documents, or extended quotes to set them apart visually from your narrative.

Complete Manuscript Checklist

Front Matter: - [] Title page with book title, author name, year - [] Copyright page - []

Dedication (if applicable) - [] Table of contents with accurate page numbers - []
Foreword (if applicable) - [] Preface/Author's Note (if applicable) - [] Prologue (if applicable)

Main Content: - [] Chapters numbered consistently - [] Chapter titles clear and compelling - [] Consistent formatting throughout - [] Scene breaks clearly marked - [] Dialogue properly formatted - [] Page numbers on all pages (except title page)

Back Matter: - [] Epilogue (if applicable) - [] Acknowledgments - [] About the Author page - [] Photo section (if applicable)

Overall Formatting: - [] Consistent font throughout (Times New Roman 12pt) - [] Double-spaced body text - [] 1-inch margins on all sides - [] First line of paragraphs indented 0.5 inch - [] No extra spacing between paragraphs - [] Headers/footers consistent

Length Guidelines

Overall Manuscript: - Short autobiography: 40,000-60,000 words (160-240 pages) - Standard autobiography: 70,000-90,000 words (280-360 pages) - Extended autobiography: 100,000+ words (400+ pages)

Individual Chapters: - Average: 3,000-5,000 words (12-20 pages) - Can vary based on content and structure

Front/Back Matter: - Prologue: 500-2,000 words - Epilogue: 500-1,500 words - Acknowledgments: 300-800 words - About the Author: 100-300 words

Professional Manuscript Tips

1. **Save Multiple Versions:** Keep dated backups of your manuscript
2. **Consistent Naming:** Use clear file names (e.g., "Smith_Autobiography_Draft3_Nov2025.docx")
3. **Track Changes:** Use comment features for notes to yourself or editors
4. **Print Preview:** Check formatting before printing or submitting
5. **PDF for Submission:** Convert to PDF when submitting to agents/publishers
6. **Keep Master Copy:** Maintain one master Word document with all revisions