

Master Autobiography Planning Workbook PDF

Complete Pre-Writing Guide for Your Autobiography

Introduction: Why Planning Matters

Before you write a single word of your life story, planning helps you:

- Organize decades of memories systematically
- Identify the most meaningful stories worth telling
- Create a clear roadmap so you never get lost
- Save time by knowing exactly what to write next
- Reduce overwhelm by breaking a huge project into manageable steps

This workbook contains everything you need to plan your autobiography from start to finish.

Section 1: Brainstorming Your Life

Exercise 1: Life Inventory – Major Events

List every significant event you can remember. Don't filter—just write.

Year/Age	Event	Location	Key People Involved	Why It Matters

Prompt Questions:

- Birth, siblings, early home
- School milestones (first day, graduation, awards)
- Family events (marriages, divorces, moves, deaths)
- Career changes, first job, promotions
- Travel, relocations, cultural experiences
- Health challenges, accidents, recoveries

- Spiritual awakenings, philosophical shifts
 - Relationships (friendships, romances, mentors)
 - Personal achievements (skills learned, projects completed)
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Exercise 2: People Who Shaped You

List individuals who significantly influenced your life.

Name	Relationship	How They Influenced You	Specific Memory

Questions to Consider:

- Who taught you important lessons (positive or negative)?
 - Who believed in you when you didn't believe in yourself?
 - Who challenged your worldview?
 - Who made you feel seen, heard, or loved?
 - Who do you still think about often?
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Exercise 3: Turning Points

Identify moments when your life changed direction.

Turning Point	Before This Event...	After This Event...	What Changed Inside You?

Examples: A conversation, a loss, a risk taken, a failure, a discovery, a decision.

Exercise 4: Emotions & Sensations

Memories are tied to senses. Jot down sensory-rich moments.

Sense	Specific Memory (Be Detailed)
Sight	<i>"The way sunlight came through my grandmother's kitchen window at 3 PM..."</i>
Sound	<i>"The hum of the highway outside my first apartment..."</i>
Smell	<i>"The scent of old books in my high school library..."</i>
Touch	<i>"The feel of my dog's fur the day we brought her home..."</i>
Taste	<i>"My mother's chicken soup when I was sick..."</i>

Section 2: Interview Questions for Yourself & Others

Self-Interview Prompts

Answer these as fully as possible:

1. What's the earliest memory you have? Describe it in detail.
2. What's a family story that's been told repeatedly? What's your version?
3. What's something you believed as a child that you now know isn't true?
4. What was your biggest fear growing up? Is it still your fear?
5. When did you first feel truly proud of yourself?
6. What's a regret that still lingers? What did it teach you?
7. What's a moment you wish you could relive? Why?
8. What's the kindest thing anyone has ever done for you?
9. What's the hardest thing you've ever forgiven?
10. What do you hope people remember about you?

Family/Friend Interview Questions

Use these to fill memory gaps:

1. What's your favorite memory of me from childhood?

2. What was I like as a teenager?
 3. How would you describe our family dynamic?
 4. What's a story about me I may have forgotten?
 5. What's something I've taught you?
 6. How do you think I've changed over the years?
 7. What's a strength of mine you've always admired?
 8. What's a challenge you saw me overcome?
 9. What's one word you'd use to describe me?
 10. Is there anything you've always wanted to ask me?
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Section 3: Defining Your Autobiography's Core

Exercise 5: Purpose & Audience

- **Why are you writing this?** (Legacy, healing, assignment, publication)
- **Who is it for?** (Family, yourself, a teacher, the public)
- **What's the central message?** (What do you want readers to understand?)

Complete:

"My autobiography is about _____, and I'm writing it because _____. I hope my readers come away feeling _____."

Exercise 6: Themes & Threads

Identify recurring themes in your life. Circle the top 3–5:

- Resilience & Overcoming
- Identity & Belonging
- Love & Relationships

- Loss & Grief
- Growth & Transformation
- Faith & Spirituality
- Creativity & Expression
- Adventure & Discovery
- Justice & Advocacy
- Learning & Curiosity

Now, for each chosen theme, list 2–3 stories that illustrate it.

Section 4: Scope & Structure Planning

Exercise 7: Timeline Sketch

Draw a simple line from birth to now. Mark high and low points, turning points, and quiet periods.

Birth → Childhood → Teens → 20s → 30s → Present
↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
Event Event Event Event Event Event

Exercise 8: Chapter Ideas

Based on your timeline and themes, brainstorm possible chapters:

1. Chapter Title: _____ Time Period: _____
Key Events: _____
Theme: _____
2. Chapter Title: _____
Time Period: _____

Key Events: _____

Theme: _____

(Repeat for 8–12 chapters)

Section 5: Pre-Writing Checklist

Before you start writing, ensure you have:

- Completed all brainstorming exercises
 - Interviewed at least 2 people for additional perspectives
 - Gathered photos, documents, or memorabilia for reference
 - Defined your purpose, audience, and core message
 - Selected your autobiography type (full, memoir, thematic, etc.)
 - Created a rough timeline
 - Identified 3–5 central themes
 - Drafted chapter ideas
 - Set a realistic writing schedule (e.g., 500 words/day)
 - Chosen a writing tool (Word, Google Docs, notebook)
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Final Step: Your First Writing Prompt

Don't start with "I was born." Start here:

Write about a single object that holds deep meaning for you.

Describe it in detail. Where did it come from? Why does it matter? What memories does it hold? Let this object open a door to one small story.