Obituary Writing Worksheet

Fill in as much as you can before you start writing. You don't need every field — use what feels right. Once the facts are gathered, the writing comes much more naturally.

Part 1 — The Essential Facts

Full legal name

Preferred name or nickname
If they went by a name other than their legal name

Date of birth

Date of passing

Age at passing

Place of birth
City, state or country

Place of passing
City, state; hospital, home, or hospice

Part 2 — Family

Obituaries traditionally list the spouse or partner first, then children (with their spouses), grandchildren, siblings, and living parents.

Spouse or partner's name

Children's names
Include step-children if relevant

Grandchildren
Names, or "X grandchildren" if a count is preferred

Siblings' names

Parents' names (if living)

Pre-deceased family members
Those who passed before them — spouse, siblings, children, parents

Part 3 — Their Life Story

This is the heart of the obituary — the part that makes it theirs. Take your time with these.

Education
Schools attended, degrees earned, vocational training

Career and work life

Jobs, military service, businesses owned, years served

What were they passionate about?

Hobbies, causes, faith, travel, sports, gardening, cooking — anything they loved

How would the people who loved them describe them?

Their personality, their humor, what made them uniquely themselves

A memory or story that captures who they were

A phrase they always said, something they always did — even one specific detail brings them to life

Organizations, faith communities, clubs
Church, volunteer groups, civic clubs, fraternal organizations

Awards, honors, or notable achievements

Part 4 — Service Details

Visitation date, time and location

Service date, time and location

Officiant's name
Pastor, priest, celebrant, or family member

Burial or interment location
Cemetery name and city

Reception details
Location and time, if applicable

Part 5 — Final Details

Charitable donation requests
Organization name and website or mailing address

Pallbearers' names
If applicable

Special music, readings, or requests
Songs, scriptures, poems, or anything they wanted included

Additional notes
Quotes they loved, extra memories, anything important to include

Six Writing Tips

- Write in third person. "She loved mornings on the porch" rather than "You loved…"
- Lead with the most important. Their name, when they lived, and who they were to you.
- Aim for 200–500 words. Longer is fine for a long life well-lived.
- Let someone else read it. A second set of eyes catches errors and tones that feel off.
- Start in the middle. The opening often comes last. Write what you know first.
- Perfection isn't the goal. It has to be honest and true to who they were.