

Obituary worksheet

Fill this in before you try to write anything. Separating the fact-gathering from the writing is the single thing that makes an obituary easier, and it keeps a date or a spelling from being missed when several relatives are contributing. Ask one person to confirm the finished sheet.

The facts

Everything a newspaper or funeral home will ask you for.

FULL NAME, INCLUDING MAIDEN NAME		NAME THEY WERE CALLED
AGE	CITY AND STATE	DATE OF DEATH
DATE OF BIRTH	PLACE OF BIRTH	
PARENTS' NAMES	SPOUSE AND MARRIAGE DATE	
EDUCATION, TRAINING, OR MILITARY SERVICE		
WORK, TRADE, OR BUSINESS, AND FOR HOW LONG		

The person

This is the part readers actually remember. Be specific and small. One true habit beats five adjectives.

What did they do on an ordinary Sunday?

What did they always say, or always keep, or refuse to do?

What were they better at than anyone else in the family?

Faith community, clubs, volunteering, teams, or causes

Family

Confirm every spelling with one relative. Misspelled names are the single most-regretted error in a published obituary.

Survived by — spouse, then children with their spouses, then grandchildren, then siblings

Number of grandchildren and great-grandchildren

Preceded in death by — include a child or grandchild who died earlier, which matters to surviving siblings

Service details

SERVICE TYPE

DATE AND TIME

LOCATION

OFFICIANT

VISITATION DETAILS

RECEPTION LOCATION

DONATIONS IN LIEU OF FLOWERS — EXACT ORGANIZATION NAME

FUNERAL HOME AND ITS PHONE NUMBER

Fill-in-the-blank draft

Copy the sheet above into this shape. Delete anything that does not apply. Nothing here is required.

1. [Full name], [age], of [city, state], died on [date]. [Optional: at home / after a long illness / unexpectedly.]
2. [He/She/They] was born on [date] in [place] to [parents]. [School, military service, or training.] [Work, and for how long.]
3. [Married [name] on [date]. They were married [number] years.]
4. [One paragraph of the specific things from page one. This is the paragraph people will read twice.]
5. [He/She/They] is survived by [family]. Preceded in death by [names].
6. A [service type] will be held on [date] at [time] at [location]. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to [organization].

Before publishing: cause of death is always optional. Consider leaving out an exact birth date printed alongside a mother's maiden name, and avoid naming an address that will be empty during the service. Newspapers charge by the line, so ask for the word limit before you write to length. More templates and completed examples at tributeready.org/obituary-templates

