

GUIDE TO WRITING AND ORGANIZING AN OBITUARY

A SIMPLE STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO HELP FAMILIES WRITE A LOVING TRIBUTE

This resource is for families and friends who want clear, gentle guidance while preparing an obituary. Use the steps, examples, and fill-in templates to make this process easier during a difficult time.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED BEFORE YOU START

- Full name (and nickname, if you'd like to include it)
- Age, city and state of residence, and date of passing
- Birth date and birthplace; parents' names
- Important life details: education, work, military service, church or community involvement
- Family list: spouse/partner, children, grandchildren, siblings (living and those who preceded in death)

- A few personal details: hobbies, personality, favorite sayings, special memories
 - Service information: date, time, location, officiant, and any repast details (if available)
- Tip: If you don't have every detail, that's okay. Start with what you know and add more later.

A SIMPLE STRUCTURE TO FOLLOW

- 1) Announcement** — Name, age, city/state, and date of passing.
- 2) Life story** — Birth, family background, education, work, service, faith, and community.
- 3) Personal touch** — Personality, hobbies, favorite memories, or sayings.
- 4) Family** — Those who preceded in death; those who survive.
- 5) Service details** — Time, place, and any special instructions.
- 6) Closing** — Thanks/acknowledgments or memorial donation preferences (optional).

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STEP-BY-STEP PROMPTS (you can answer these in your own words)

- **Announcement:** “[Full Name], age [Age], of [City, State], passed away on [Date].” • Life story: “[First Name] was born on [Birth Date] in [Birthplace] to [Parent(s)]. They attended [School] and worked at [Work/Role]. They were active in [Church/Community].”
- **Personal touch:** “They loved [Hobby], were known for [Traits], and will be remembered for [Memory].”
- **Preceded in death:** “[First Name] was preceded in death by [Names/Relationships].”
- **Survived by:** “They are survived by [Spouse/Partner]; children, [Names]; grandchildren, [Names/#]; siblings, [Names]; and a host of family and friends.”
- **Service details:** “A [Service/Memorial] will be held on [Date] at [Time] at [Location].”
- **Closing (optional):** “The family would like to thank [Caregivers/Hospice]. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to [Organization].”

FILL-IN-THE-BLANK TEMPLATE YOU CAN COPY AND EDIT

Replace the brackets with your information. Keep or remove any parts that don't fit your family's wishes.

[Full Name], age [Age], of [City, State], passed away on [Date of Passing]. [First Name] was born on [Birth Date] in [Birthplace] to

[Parent(s)]. [He/She/They] attended [School(s)] and worked as [Role] at [Workplace]. [He/She/They] was a member of [Church/Organization] and involved in [Community/Service]. Known for [Traits/Hobbies], [First Name] will be remembered for [Short Memory]. [First Name] was preceded in death by [Names/Relationships]. [He/She/They] is survived by [Spouse/Partner]; children, [Names]; grandchildren, [Names/#]; siblings, [Names]; and many loving relatives and friends. A [Service Type] will be held on [Service Date] at [Time] at [Location], [City/State]. The family wishes to thank [Caregivers/Hospice]. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to [Organization].

SAMPLE OBITUARY (example)

Jordan Elise Carter, age 64, of Decatur, Georgia, passed away on November 6, 2025. Jordan was born on March 22, 1961, in Chicago, Illinois, to Michael and Denise Carter. She graduated from Northside High School and spent more than 30 years as a pediatric nurse, caring for children with gentleness and humor. She was a member of New Hope Baptist Church and volunteered with the community garden. Jordan loved baking, crossword puzzles, and cheering at her grandchildren's games. She will be remembered for her warmth, her quick laugh,

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and the way she showed up for others. Jordan was preceded in death by her father, Michael Carter. She is survived by her mother, Denise Carter; her children, Alicia (Marcus) Green and Devon (Amira) Carter; her grandchildren, Miles and Zahra; her sisters, Renee Carter and Tiana (Luis) Morales; and a host of cousins and friends. A celebration of life will be held on November 15, 2025, at 11:00 a.m. at New Hope Baptist Church, Decatur, Georgia.

The family thanks the team at Sunrise Hospice. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Children's Health Fund.

STONE & FORMATTING TIPS

- Write in third person ("she," "he," or "they").
- Use full names on first mention; last name only or first name after.
- Check all names, dates, and places twice.
- Keep sentences short and clear. It's okay to keep it simple.
- If you're unsure about religious or cultural customs, ask a family elder or clergy member.

QUICK PROOFREADING CHECKLIST

- Correct spelling of every name and city/state.
- Accurate dates (birth, service, and passing).
- Surviving and preceded family lists are correct and in the order you prefer.

- Service time, address, and directions are clear.
- Any donation information is accurate and optional.

OTHER COMMON ITEMS INCLUDED IN A FUNERAL OR MEMORIAL PROGRAM

- **Order of Service** (welcome, prayer, readings, music, eulogy, acknowledgments, recessional)
- **Thank-You / Acknowledgments** from the family
- **Poems, Scriptures, or Readings**
- **Obituary or Life Story** (short or long version)
- **Photo Pages or Collages**
- **Pallbearers & Flower Bearers** (if applicable)
- **Memorial or Burial Details** (interment, repast location)
- **Donation / In-Lieu-of-Flowers** information
- **Special Tributes** (letters, notes from grandchildren, or favorite quotes)

You can keep the obituary brief or write a longer life story—both are meaningful. Take your time, and lean on family and friends to help gather details.