



Obituary Exercise

An obituary is a type of death notice, typically appearing in a newspaper or online. An obituary shares a brief biography of the deceased. When reading an obituary, it's possible to form an impression of someone, even if you've never met them before. It's a glimpse into the life and legacy of an individual, usually written by those closest to them.

When we think of obituaries, we usually think of a sad occasion that comes after the death of a loved one. It's uncommon to consider how to write an obituary for yourself. However, writing your own obituary is a form of creative writing and self-reflection. It's a powerful way to connect with all of the actions that led you to where you are today, as well as where you want to go in the future.

Taking some time to complete an obituary exercise for yourself lets you live life in the way that you want to be remembered. This is a flexible exercise that is such to push you from your comfort zone.

What's the purpose of doing an obituary exercise?

Why do an obituary exercise? Most people don't give any thought to their obituary until they're approaching the end of their life, if at all. While it might seem morbid, there are many reasons to think about how you want to be remembered.

How often do we face the harsh reality that life is limited? There is an end date for us all, and there's no way to outrun that reality. Being mortal comes with a lot of limitations, but it doesn't mean you can't put your time to good use. When you complete an obituary exercise for yourself, you gain a much-needed perspective about the things that matter most.

Why do an obituary exercise?

- **Self-reflection:** Firstly, it's a powerful way to self reflect on your life. How far have you come? Are you happy with where you're currently at in life? If you were to die tomorrow, would this be a legacy you're proud of?
- **Connections:** What relationships and connections matter the most to you? Who will be most affected when your time comes? Most importantly, how can you continue building genuine connections.
- **Legacy:** What legacy have you left on your community and those around you? What would people say about your life and what you leave behind? You might need to do some additional work to craft the legacy you want.
- **The path forward:** Finally, completing an obituary exercise is an effective way to pave a path forward. Now that you know where you've been, you can decide where you're going. This is often an inspiring moment of insight.

Essentially, creating an obituary for yourself in the present is the best way to live the way you want the world to remember you. Your words are your own. Nobody else gets to define your legacy and impact. Not only is this a death positive way to reflect on your own mortality, but it challenges you to do more with the time you have.

Step 1: Familiarize Yourself with Obituaries

To begin, take some time to familiarize yourself with obituaries. If you've never written one before, you might not know what they're like. You can find countless obituaries online and in newspapers. Most local publications have an obituary section, which is a great place to start.

In general, most obituaries include the following:

- Basic info: The name, age, and location of the deceased.
- Relationships: The names of those who died before the deceased or who are still living (typically parents, children, spouses, siblings, etc.)
- Career and life: What life did the individual lead? What was their role within the community and at their workplace?
- Legacy: Many obituaries also share the legacy of the deceased, or what they leave behind.

Your obituary can be as simple or complicated as you want. This is a creative exercise, and there are no rights and wrongs.

Step 2: Ask Yourself Key Questions

Next is the hard part. It's time to break down your external barriers to get to the heart of the real you. Since you're writing your own obituary that you don't need to share with anyone, try to push yourself out of your comfort zone. When asking yourself these questions, don't hesitate with your answer. Go with what feels right to you, not what you think others expect from you.

You can ask any questions that feel important to you, but here is a great starting point:

- How will people remember you?
- Who was the real you?
- What things did you say yes to in life?
- What was your greatest achievement?
- Who will miss you the most when you're gone?
- What was your role within your family?
- How did you make the world a better place?

Jot down some notes after reading these questions. You might self-reflect with a bit of journaling to find the answer that feels right to you. From there, move to the next step.

Step 3: Tell Your Story

Now it's time to put it all together. Begin telling your story in a way that makes sense to you. Bring the answers to the questions above to life by weaving them together with your own narrative. You don't have to go in order. Follow the sequence that makes the most sense to you.

If you don't know where to start, begin at the beginning. Share a bit about your childhood, and move along your timeline from there. You don't need to include everything. Consider this obituary to be a highlight reel of your life. If you were to look back on the years, what would be your shining moments?

Finally, say a few things about your legacy and the way you want to live. Even if you're not quite there yet, it's okay to speak as though you've already lived the life you want to lead. Connect with who you are, even if you're still a work in progress.

Example Obituaries

Writing your own obituary isn't always easy, especially if this is your first time trying this type of exercise. Read these examples of self-written obituaries below for inspiration along this creative journey.

Susan M. Morris, age 50, passed away peacefully surrounded by family on March 12, 2014. Born in Charleston, West Virginia, she was one of the brightest students of her age growing up. Even now, her classmates remember her ability to always have the answer to any question.

After graduation, she married her husband, Jim Morris, and gave birth to two children, Andrew and Sal. Susan was a loving mother, and she had an uncanny ability to reach everyone around her in a positive way. Her family plans to continue her legacy of care and kindness by donating to the local children's shelter in her honor.

Fred Soren, age 80, passed away peacefully in his sleep. Fred was born on January 2, 1940. He graduated from Mountain High School in his hometown of Salt Lake City, UT, where he was a star athlete and friend to all. His athletic legacy continued in college, but it never overshadowed his passion for engineering. Recruited after college, he became an invaluable part of the Utah State Department.

Fred and the love of his life, Cindy, have a daughter together, Sarah. Always a doting father, Sarah remembers the times she spent with her dad growing up fondly. There was never a dull moment when Fred was there, and he was respected by all. A new park is built in his honor in his hometown. His family also requests donations to be made in lieu of flowers to the sports program at his alma mater.

Take the Lead in Your Story

We are all crafting our own legacies every day. The actions you take and the relationships you build define the impact you leave behind. However, most of us don't take the time to consider not only how far we've come, but whether we're creating a narrative that means something to us.

Writing an obituary for yourself is a way to recognize your own life story and make sure it's the one you want to tell. You don't need to be an experienced writer or storyteller to get started. Only you know where you've been, and only you decide where you're going. Our time is limited, so don't be afraid to take action.