**Writing an Autobiography**

Every person has an interesting story to share about their life. Writing an autobiography is a great idea to share your story with the world.

* Do you have something interesting and important featuring in your life that can be shared with people?
* Do you think your story might inspire somebody, somewhere around the world?
* Do you want your life’s story to be passed on to future generations?

If the answer to all the above questions is “yes”, then it’s time to begin writing an autobiography.

Here is a quick course that can help you[**start crafting your life story**](https://www.udemy.com/write-your-life-story/?tc=blog.howtowriteanautobiography&couponCode=half-off-for-blog&utm_source=blog&utm_medium=udemyads&utm_content=post38070&utm_campaign=content-marketing-blog&xref=blog). Leaving your life story for the reference of future generations is a great idea to inspire them towards success.

**What is an Autobiography?**

An autobiography is a self- authored story of a person’s life. It is an account of one’s life written or recorded in some way by that person.

Since A.D 400, people have been writing autobiographies. In the early days, memoirs were often confused with autobiographies, but today that dichotomy is much clearer: a memoir typically records one area of the author’s life – such as his or her career – and usually only describes events that the author has directly witnessed.

In Islamic society, the first autobiography was written by Abdallah Ibn Buluggin, last Zirid king of Granada. Notable autobiographies in the 18th century included Edward Gibbon’s and Benjamin Franklin’s.

The best way to write an autobiography is to treat your life as an interesting story. Starting from birth, enhance the story’s appeal as you take the reader or listener through the different stages of your life.

Both biography and autobiography tell the story of an individual person’s life. The difference is that an autobiography is written by the subject of the story while a biography is written by a third person. A biography is generally preferred over an autobiography to be published as a book or produced as a movie.

Autobiographies are often confused with memoirs. An autobiography is the inspiring story of a person’s entire life and the societal setting thereof, while memoirs have a narrower focus on the narration of a particular span of time within the subject’s lifetime. It mostly deals with individual’s memories, feelings and emotions. Memoirs are generally much shorter in length because they tend to concentrate on a particular theme rather than the entire life of the person. [**If you’re interested in writing a memoir, this is a great course to check out.**](https://www.udemy.com/write-your-memoir-in-a-weekend-putting-life-in-life-stories/?tc=blog.howtowriteanautobiography&couponCode=half-off-for-blog&utm_source=blog&utm_medium=udemyads&utm_content=post38070&utm_campaign=content-marketing-blog&xref=blog)

**Overcoming Problems with Writing Autobiographies:**

Not everyone can recollect with accurate sharpness the many details of their past. They tend to rely on other person’s views to recollect their past. In fact, most people will have false memories of the past that come from other people’s recollections as opposed to their own.

People always tend to have the opinion that they are perfect and, hence, will imagine that everything false is on the other person’s side of the story. This often leads to false narration of an event or incident in history.

Autobiographies are also generally biased; unknowingly or deliberately, people tend to concentrate only on their strengths and forget their weaknesses. They emphasize on the good qualities to create a favorable impression on the reader.

However, you can overcome these problems. Here are a few tips:

* **Proof read.**

Always proof read specifications like dates and times, and the people involved in any event. This will help prevent falsely recalled events. Inaccuracy is the worst affliction of autobiographies because it depicts the author as being inattentive to detail and therefore unfit to recount historical facts.

* **Consult the people involve.**

The people involved in each important event can be consulted, and doubts about these events clarified. This will help avoid the use of statements that are biased towards the author and unfavorable towards others related to or involved in the event.

* **Analyze your content from a third person’s point of view.**

This will help avoid any situation being narrated only from your own perspective. Generalize the situation, if that helps. Analyzing content this way takes work, so be prepared to practice.

Autobiographical Styles

The autobiography should be written in your own voice, but the tone used to write it should be analyzed. The autobiography can be either professional or friendly, depending on your target audience. Below are three of the key autobiographical styles used by famous people:

* **Narrative**

In this type of writing, events will be narrated as a “perfect” story without giving much importance to emotions or moods. It is the most accurate and objective form of writing an autobiography.

* **Descriptive**

This type of writing can be engaged when you want your readers to build up a picture of something in their minds. It can be because of its beauty, its ugliness or simply because it is different.

* **Emotional**

This type of writing is used when you have a strong emotion for something and you want a similar response from your readers. Here, the writing is characterized by strong verbs and short sentences. For example: “That day, something inside me died. I wept.”

If writing skills don’t come naturally to you, these skills can be acquired when you take a course to[**learn the basic skills of writing**](https://www.udemy.com/becoming-a-writer-exercises/?tc=blog.howtowriteanautobiography&utm_source=blog&utm_medium=udemyads&utm_content=post38070&utm_campaign=content-marketing-blog&xref=blog). Such course help you by guiding you to choose the style of writing your autobiography that best suits your personality. This style will then create a powerful impact on the reader and their response to your outpourings.

**What to Include in Your Autobiography**

Every autobiography is different, but here are the common parts many autobiographies include:

* **Your Childhood**

Recollect information about events that made you emotional – events that taught you something interesting and important. Add events that are funny and an important part of your childhood. Use humor to engage the reader and make them feel that they know you intimately.

Childhood life is one of the most interesting parts of any life story. People will be keen to compare your childhood personality with the one you now have,  so add some spice to what you wanted to convey. It will set the tone for the reader to understand subsequent changes as your life is unveiled.

* **Your Culture**

Country and culture play an important role in anybody’s life; they help define you and build your personality. It shows how you were brought up, the pluses and minuses of your place of birth and the situation you grew up in. People will always be interested in the cultural practices of countries that are unfamiliar to them.

Culture includes the customs of your family, the holidays you preferred, celebrations and rituals you practiced, the food you ate and the clothes you wore. Include special glimpses into things like the most precious gift you got or popular foods served during special celebrations. These details will be lapped up by a hungry audience that wants to know more about a culture that is different from their own.

* **Your Family Background**

As is present in the biography of a person, your place and time of birth, your parents’ views, an overview of your personality, your likes and dislikes, and important events that shaped your life should always be included in your autobiography. This will give a mental picture of your life to the readers as a sort of backdrop to the main part of the story.

People usually tend to think that writing all this will be monotonous for them and boring for their potential readers, but you will soon find your life to be unique from anyone else’s as you undertake this task. Add in information like interesting snippets from the lives of your ancestors, their achievements and the popularity of your place of birth. This will inspire readers to gather even more information from other sources.

* **The Theme**

The theme of your life is to be defined before the story is written. Your goal – and your ultimate achievement of that goal – can be the theme. You should also remember to include something that takes the focus from the past and present, and puts it on the future. A particular event that had a huge impact on your life can be your theme. Find and mark that one day and or one event that twisted your life out of shape and made you think about your future. In general, the end or beginning of somebody’s life has a tremendous impact on many people’s lives. It is around this theme that the story should be woven like rich tapestry of many colors and flavors.

Add more spice – As the saying goes “Diversity is the spice of life”; find out what makes your life or experience “spicy” and be effusively verbose about this event.

The story may focus on one single event or one particular day or one particular person acting as your theme; or it may be a list of many events that revert back to a central theme. Tie up all the events that restate your central theme; this will help your readers hold on to some thread that runs through the entire story.

* **The Conclusion**

Conclude the autobiography with an experience gained, a lesson learned and a resolution you decided to take after that. Explain to the reader how that resolution set the tone for whatever you achieved in your life from that point forward. This classic format uses the “hero” theme that is endearing to most people. Everyone loves an underdog who was given lemons and ended up making lemonade!

The conclusion should give the readers a feeling of pleasure that they have read a good autobiography, but that’s not all: it should give them a sense of hope for their own futures – a sense that they too can aspire to greater things just like you have.

**Steps on How to Write an Autobiography:**

To begin with, start by answering 4 main questions.

1. Who are you – what is your personality?
2. What does life mean to you?
3. What are the critical or important events that have impacted your life?
4. What is your outlook about your future and that of your readers?

The answers to these questions will afford you a fair idea of what is to be included in your autobiography. To have an even more in-depth idea, start by following the steps below:

**Step 1: Mapping out your life**

* **Create a timeline.**

Research your life and create a timeline for your life. This ensures that all the important dates and events are included. Create a list of places, people, and events and experiences that are to be included in your biography.

Include a brief verbal image of you, your family background and your parents. This will help readers build an opinion on how you developed into the person you are today.

* **Identify the best people.**

Make a list of those people who influenced your life. Think beyond your immediate family. Your friends, boss, ex-girlfriend or boyfriend could have taught you important lessons in life. List all those important people whom you think should take up a role in your autobiography.

* **Pull out the best stories in your life.**

Try to divine all the beautiful stories in your life. People always like to read about others’ lives and relate it to their own. A few of the stories that make people look more interesting are:

1. Childhood stories – Your naughtiness, the scolding you received, people running behind you, your school days, punishment for being naughty, etc. attract people and endear them to the reader.
2. Love stories – Stories of falling in love or even never finding your true love are likely to invite people to read your autobiography.
3. Crisis stories – Any story that talks about a crisis overcome or a challenge won over is sure to win the hearts of readers. As mentioned, people love an underdog story where a normal person displays tremendous will power and courage and overcomes the odds.
* **Write in your own voice.**

If the story is formal and too professional, it will make readers lose interest quickly because it will sound dry and pedantic. So, writing in your own voice is a great way to hold people’s interest. Write to reveal your personality; write in simple words as if you are narrating to your friend rather than to strangers.

**Step 2: Crafting the narrative**

* **Build a structure.**

As soon as you have decided on the content of the book, construct a plot showing how it should look as a progression. Study the [**basics of writing a book**](https://www.udemy.com/beginning-writers-workshop/?tc=blog.howtowriteanautobiography&utm_source=blog&utm_medium=udemyads&utm_content=post38070&utm_campaign=content-marketing-blog&xref=blog) using this course, and it will help you understand how the formation of a perfect structure develops. As with any other book, your autobiography also demands a perfect structure.

Structure your paragraphs to have a central fact; create suspense throughout your story; have a perfect climax for the story; and end with a resolution and a forward look into the future.

* **Decide on the start of the story.**

The beginning of the story should create a great sense of excitement in the reader. Decide where and how to start your narrative. The autobiography can start with the present situation and can progress as a series of flashbacks – or it can open with your childhood days and grow into a full-fledged story, just as you have.

* **Stay focused.**

Other than narrating your life’s events, always focus on values and lessons that you have learnt from those events. This is the area where people can be inspired by you to improve their own lives.

* **Segregate it into different sections.**

Divide your life into chapters to form the structure of your book. Readers will be attracted by the way they can “close a chapter” and “start a new chapter” when they read. Always try to close a chapter with suspense and open the next with the answer. In this way, people will be interested in reading more and more of your story.

**Step 3: Editing and polishing the book**

* **Double-check your facts.**

Check all dates, descriptions of events and names. Although it’s about your life, don’t include modified or fabricated conversations with people – or altered versions of events that actually happened. Ask permission from other people to include their names in your autobiography, because some might not want that.

* **Edit the draft.**

Correct your spelling and grammar. Check the flow of events and reorganize wherever necessary. Make your sentences more interesting and impactful.

* **Share the writing with people.**

Allow people to go through your autobiography. What was important or funny for you might be dull or unwanted for others. Feedback from several people may help you to refine your ideas and style. Consider hiring a copy editor to help as well. At the end of your writing, a copy editor will add professional polish to your life story.

* **Choose a title.**

A short, simple, yet attractive title is always preferable. Do not choose words that are difficult to understand or remember. If the title is as memorable as the story, people will find it easy to remember it when they recommend the book to their friends and acquaintances.

**OPTIONAL Step 4: Publishing your story**

* **Self-publish your book.**

Consider publishing your book on your own. Having your writing designed and printed is of great use when you want to circulate it within your close circle of family and friends.

* **Literary agent.**

Research for a literary agent and submit your query letter. Send information on yourself, your book and its focus, and also your analysis on how it will circulate. Provide some sample chapters to the agents who are interested and sign a contract with the best agent.

* **Publish your book online.**

Online publishing has an advantage of extensive reach. There are no restrictions on territory so your book can be purchased and read in any part of the world. Research online publishers, submit your query letter, edit the copy, wait for approval and have your work published online – it is one of the best feelings you could possibly have to see yourself on a virtual shelf in Amazon and a dozen other online bookstores. [**This is a great course on publishing.**](https://www.udemy.com/publish-your-book-guaranteed/?tc=blog.howtowriteanautobiography&utm_source=blog&utm_medium=udemyads&utm_content=post38070&utm_campaign=content-marketing-blog&xref=blog)

**Final Tips**

* Understand your audience: Always understand their need and their knowledge. Do not assume things about the lack of knowledge of your intended audience.
* Use simple words and phrases: Think from reader’s point of view. Do not imagine that everybody will know what you know. Readers will be fed up if the story narration demands scrambling for a dictionary each time they come across a big word or surfing the net for new topics that you haven’t described at least in brief. Use only simple words and phrases that everyone can understand, and when introducing a new concept or subject, explain it so they know what you’re talking about.
* Include every small detail: Do not let your readers search for details. Don’t jump from one part of life to other without any continuity. Readers will be confused when there is no flow. Try including all the small details that your reader needs to understand the situation they’re reading about.
* Be honest: Always stay honest while writing an autobiography. Add spice to facts but never change any facts. Ask family and friends who have been featured in your biography to proofread the story before publication.
* Do not edit your autobiography yourself: When editing your autobiography, you can actually leave the article with many errors. Editing an autobiography is a tough process even for a professional editor. Read it aloud and check for awkward phrasing – and then have a professional come in and do the rest.
* Keep your autobiography interesting: Descriptive narration will always entertain and captivate people. Creating a mental picture using words can grab the interest and attention of the people reading your book. Cut out any unnecessary information and avoid using overly long sentences.
* Make a good impression: Give a positive impression of the unique characteristics you have – and set yourself apart from others.
* Have a perfect photo: This is the first impression you are giving to others. Think twice before you select a photo – this is how people will see you and start reading. Don’t try a style or pose not in sync with your personality.
* Don’t include lives of other people in your biography. Always stay focused on your own life. Introduce the story of others’ lives only if it is relevant to the story of your life.
* Write what pleases you: write about things that interest you. If you are not interested in what you write, nobody will be interested in reading it.
* Never use autobiographies to throw dirt on others.
* Use writing tools: If you feel that you don’t have a natural flair for writing, consider some autobiographic templates to help you. Take up a course on[**overcoming the struggle in writing**](https://www.udemy.com/how-to-overcome-writers-block/?tc=blog.howtowriteanautobiography&couponCode=half-off-for-blog&utm_source=blog&utm_medium=udemyads&utm_content=post38070&utm_campaign=content-marketing-blog&xref=blog) if that’s what’s bothering you.
* Always maintain a certain level of sophistication in your writing. This will help the readers recognize your skill at communicating your thoughts.
* Avoid using five words in a place where three will do. Short sentences are always preferred.

**Conclusion**

An autobiography has a higher impact on an audience than any other publication. People are always keen to know about the life history of others. While writing an autobiography, care must be taken not to hurt other people or disillusion them.

An autobiography is a fabulous asset for future generations. People will always remember such an asset – and appreciate you for creating it. Writing an autobiography is an art. Learn that art and use it to your advantage!

After you write your autobiography, why not try your hand at fiction writing. [**This is a great course on novel writing**](https://www.udemy.com/novelwriting/?tc=blog.howtowriteanautobiography&couponCode=half-off-for-blog&utm_source=blog&utm_medium=udemyads&utm_content=post38070&utm_campaign=content-marketing-blog&xref=blog) that might interest you.