



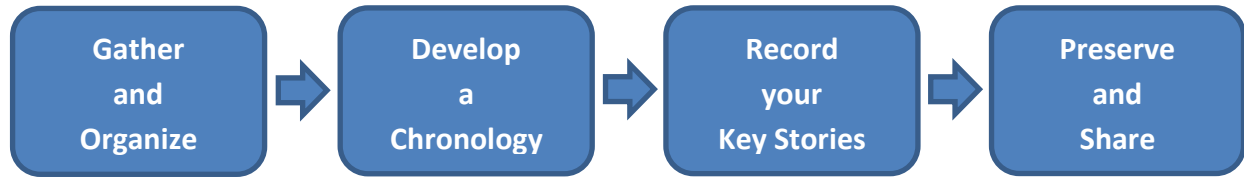
## Principles

- **Tell your story. Don't leave it for others to relate.** An unknown author said, "When writing the story of your life, don't let anyone else hold the pen." You're the best person to write your story and the sooner you get started the better.
- **Keep it short.** More of your posterity will benefit from your life story if you keep it short and to the point. If you've been a prolific journal writer, photographer, or scrap booker, then think abridgement, Reader's Digest version, and summary. If you haven't been a great journal writer, then you're in luck.
- **Focus on the key events and experiences that shaped your life rather than the day-to-day humdrum.** Your posterity will greatly benefit from getting acquainted with your character, values, and passions. Be prompted about the stories your posterity needs to hear.
- **Be honest, factual, and genuine.** Keep your record true to the facts. Your posterity is likely to benefit the most if you strive to be honest and genuine by including both the highs and the lows and your strengths and struggles.
- **Store it where it can be preserved and shared.** Keep your own copy and upload your key stories, pictures, audio clips, and documents to FamilySearch where these precious records can be preserved and shared with all your posterity.
- **Take it one story at a time.** The prospect of writing your life story can be daunting. Instead of getting overwhelmed, consider documenting the key ten or twenty experiences of your life. Most of us know very little about our ancestors. What would we give to have the ten stories that shaped their character and life?

## Methodology

There is no single methodology for recording a life history. Do what works best for you. The following approach is centered around the aforementioned principles and is focused on the key stories that shaped your character and would be of greatest benefit to your posterity. These steps are more simultaneous than sequential. As you go through this process, there are two primary objectives:

- 1) Create a short chronology which will serve as a timeline of key dates and events throughout your life. This chronology will allow you and your posterity to reference the stories you record of your life. The chronology might be appropriate to upload in your FamilySearch as a Life Sketch. (Note: The Life Sketch section on FamilySearch is limited to 10,000 characters or around 1500 words).
- 2) Record, preserve, and share the key experiences that have shaped your character and beliefs including those life lessons you want to share with your posterity.



### Gather and Organize

- Gather your family history artifacts including photos, journals, letters, e-mails, awards and certificates, video and audio clips, scrapbooks, social media posts, blogs, etc.
- Organize these chronologically and/or by topic (e.g., high school, college, military service, missionary service, career service, family events, etc.)
- Organize your family history artifacts into hanging folders or some other storage method. Select digital storage space (e.g., shared folders on Google Drive, Drop Box, Google Photos, etc.) to organize your digital photos or media.
- As you organize your family history artifacts, you will begin to remember experiences and events from your past. Create a computer document or notebook and record these experiences.
- Pay particular attention to the key experiences or events that you feel prompted to write about. As you recall these memories, go ahead and brainstorm the details of the experience and record them in the computer document or notebook. (Don't worry about formatting, grammar, or word choice as this will only hinder the brainstorming process).

### Develop a Chronology

- Your life chronology will serve as a timeline for you and your posterity can reference when reading the key stories of your life. The chronology can also serve as a Life Sketch for FamilySearch. If you prefer, you can also write a short narrative for your Life Sketch using your chronology. (Remember FamilySearch limits the Life Sketch to 10,000 characters or about 1500 words.)
- As you are gathering and organizing your family history artifacts, begin a chronology of your life in a computer document or notebook. Think of your chronology as the resume of your life which can provide a big picture overview on which you can hang the detailed stories that helped shape your character.
- Your chronology might include the following information: birthdate and birthplace, schools attended, marriage date and place, birthdates and birthplaces of children, missionary service, military service, church/community service, career highlights, family reunions and vacations, etc.
- Again, as you draft the chronology of your life, pay particular attention to the stories or events that shaped your character and beliefs and that you feel prompted to write about. As you recall these memories, go ahead and brainstorm the details of the experience or event and record them in a computer document or notebook.
- You may also want to interview yourself using the suggested questions in [Tips for helping elderly family members preserve and share their history](#).

### Record your Key Stories

- From the experiences you recorded as you created your chronology, start writing one story at a time. You can begin either chronologically, topically, or with the most important experiences. With each experience, you may want to do a more detailed review of your family history artifacts. This review may include reviewing photos, audio, and videos, reading through journals, letters, e-mails for the experience you're recording.

- As you are reviewing your family history artifacts for each experience you're writing about, you may stumble on other memories or experiences you want to record. If so, simply pause and brainstorm all the details you can, document those details in a computer file or notebook, and set it aside till you're ready to write about that experience.
- While the key experiences should be the core of what you write about, it is also important to weave in other details to provide context and background information that will also be interesting to your posterity.
- Set your draft aside and return to it later and refine it. Repeat this process until you have a final product.
- As you sort through your family history artifacts, select a small number of pictures, audio, video, or other documents that may be associated with each story you want to record.
- Add any new found details to your chronology.

#### Preserve and Share

- Create a free [FamilySearch account](#).
- Watch the [training helps](#) for FamilySearch Memories.
- Follow the FamilySearch [Submission Agreement](#) and [Upload Guidelines and Policies](#).
- Once you have a final product of a given story and one picture that best represents the story, upload the picture and story to your FamilySearch Memories under the stories section.
- Upload additional pictures, audio, and documents associated with the story and ensure you fill out all the metadata fields (e.g., description, link to story, event date and place, identify people in the photos, etc.)
- FamilySearch doesn't allow for video clips at this time. If you have video clips, you can save these to a shared space such as YouTube and paste the link in the text of the story in FamilySearch.
- While you are living, only you, your spouse, your parents, and your children can view your memories in FamilySearch. After you pass away, everyone with a FamilySearch account can view this information.
- While you're living, take the time to share these stories with your family at family home evenings, over e-mail or social media.
- Make sure you always maintain your own copy and a backup of everything you place on FamilySearch. Possible storage and backup solutions include your home computer, external hard drives, and shared folders such as Google Drive, Drop Box, or Backblaze.