

How to Write an Obituary

If you want to write an obituary for a lost loved one or in pre-planning for yourself or other family member this information should help get you started.

Set a price limit if you are on a budget. Newspapers charge by the column inch and it can get to be expensive very fast.

Find out the deadline for submission for the date(s) you want the obituary to run. Submit the obituary to the Funeral Home or if it is less expensive or easier submit it yourself electronically to the newspaper.

Decide what you want to include. If you don't have all of the information you need, you'll want to make phone calls and gather these facts as soon as possible, preferably before you start writing.

A basic obituary usually includes:

--Full name of the deceased

--Age

--Date of Birth

--City and state of residence where the deceased was living when they passed away

--Name of significant other (alive or deceased)

--Time, date and place of viewing, burial, wake and memorial service arrangements (If you don't have this information yet, you can always write something like, "funeral arrangements are being made by ABC Funeral Home and will be announced at a later date." That way those who are interested can contact the funeral home for more information.)

If you plan on repeating the obituary, you can include the details in a future issue.

Optional things you might want to include:

--City and state of birth

--City and state of other residences--You may want to include this if most of the person's life was spent living in a different place from where they died, they lived in a town or city that was important to them or if they were well known or did something notable in a previous town.

--Parents' names and residences--Some people only include these if they're still alive, but others give tribute to a deceased parent (ex: "daughter of the late John Smith").

--Children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren's names and residences--If this list gets too long, you can eliminate the names and locations (ex: "five grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren").

--Other family members (nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles, etc.) and special friends-- Again, this can make your obituary quite long (and can get political if you include some names, but not others), so you may want to leave these people out unless you have a small family or are prepared to pay for a costly obituary.

--Special pets

--Activities--Include churches, clubs, organizations, volunteer groups, hobbies and other things that were important to your loved one.

--Vocation and places of employment

--Notable accomplishments

--Degrees and schools attended

--Military service

--Date of marriage

--Personality traits and anecdotes

--How they died--(Use good judgment, if someone died while in the war or during a major catastrophe, you may want to include that information.)

--Where people should make a memorial contribution. If you'd rather people not send flowers, tell them where they can make a contribution. Again, think about what your loved one, not you, would want.

Write the obituary. Here's a basic template that you can use to get started. Also included is a sample obituary below to help out.

Basic Obituary Template

--NAME, AGE, of RESIDENCE, died (passed away, went to heaven, etc.), DATE (cause of death optional).

--HE/SHE was born (PLACE, DATE OF BIRTH, PARENTS). NAME graduated from SCHOOL and received DEGREE from SCHOOL. HE/SHE was married to SPOUSE'S NAME (date of wedding optional).

--INSERT OPTIONAL BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION HERE: Employment history, accomplishments, organizations, activities, etc.

--HE/SHE was survived by CHILDREN, GRANDCHILDREN, etc. (Make sure to separate each entry with a **semicolon** or it can get messy. See our example below.)

--Funeral arrangements will be held - TIME, DATE and PLACE.

Here's a sample obituary

Mary Alice Smith, 88, of Miami, died Wednesday.

She was born to the late Donald and Rita Green, Nov. 11, 1919, in Macon, Ga. Mary graduated from Brown High School in 1938 and received a BA in English from the University of Georgia in 1942. She married the late John Smith in 1943, and they lived together in Macon, Ga., before relocating to Miami in 1960.

Mary was a high school English teacher until she retired in 1984 and was passionate about making a difference in the lives of her students. She founded the Miami Reads program for underprivileged children in 1968 and was honored with the Dade County Teacher of the Year award in 1966 and 1970.

Mary was an active member of First Baptist Miami Church, Miami Rotary Club and the Dade County Book Club. She loved to travel, and took 20 cruise trips with her husband in her lifetime.

Mary is survived by four children: Jane Doe and Samantha Andrews, of Ft. Lauderdale; Jennifer Brown, of New York City; and Mike Smith, of Miami. She also is survived by eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

In lieu of flowers, the family is requesting that donations be made out to Miami Reads.

A viewing will be held at 7 pm. Friday at Green Family Funeral Home. Burial will be held at 1 pm. Saturday at Parkview Cemetery.

Hope this information is a help to all.