Online After 50
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YOUR LIFE STORIES ONLINE

The One-Story Starter Kit

A simple, step-by-step guide to choosing and planning one meaningful life story.

You do not have to document your entire life. Begin with one story that matters.

1 Choose › 2 Write › 3 Gather › 4 Create › 5 Upload › 6 Share

One completed story is more valuable than a perfect project that never gets started.

By Gordon Deyell
Certified Guided Autobiography Instructor

WELCOME

Your story is worth preserving

You may have a lifetime of memories, boxes of photographs, or stories you have been meaning to write. The project can feel so large that it is difficult to begin.

This Starter Kit gives you a smaller and more manageable goal: **choose one meaningful memory and make a simple plan for preserving it.**

You do not need to:

- ☐ Write your entire autobiography
- ☐ Consider yourself a writer
- ☐ Master complicated technology
- ☐ Appear on camera
- ☐ Make your story public

The five simple steps

1. Choose one memory.
2. Shape a short story.
3. Gather a few visuals.
4. Decide how to share.
5. Choose your next action.

Small stories can carry great meaning. You only need one good place to begin.

Choose → **Write** → **Gather** → **Create** → **Upload** → **Share**

STEP 1 · CHOOSE

Discover a story you want to preserve

Complete this sentence:

One story I would not want my family to lose is...

Story starters

Use these prompts if you need help:

- ☐ A place from my childhood I remember clearly
- ☐ An ordinary day I still remember
- ☐ A family tradition I hope will continue
- ☐ An object or photograph with a story
- ☐ A person who taught me something important
- ☐ A challenge that revealed something about me
- ☐ A decision that changed my life
- ☐ A lesson for a younger generation

> Choose the memory that creates the strongest feeling or clearest picture in your mind.

STEP 1 · CHOOSE

My three-story shortlist

Story idea 1
Working title:

Why it matters:

Story idea 2
Working title:

Why it matters:

Story idea 3
Working title:

Why it matters:

My first story

The story I will begin with is:

I chose it because:

This is a good first project because:

- ☐ It focuses on one person, place, event, or turning point.
- ☐ I can describe it in a few minutes.
- ☐ I have—or can find—a helpful photograph or object.
- ☐ I feel comfortable working with this memory now.

> You are not choosing the most important story of your life. You are choosing a good story with which to begin.

STEP 2 · WRITE

Begin your short story

A short personal story can be approximately **300–500 words**. Use your natural voice, as though you were sharing the memory with someone you trust.

Part 1: Where and when?

Where did the story take place? When did it happen? What could you see, hear, smell, taste, or feel?

Part 2: Who was there?

Who was involved? What should the reader know about them? What was your relationship to them at that time?

> You do not need to remember every date or detail. Be honest about what you remember.

STEP 2 · WRITE

Complete your story plan

Part 3: What happened?

What is the central event? What happened first? What changed, surprised you, or stayed with you?

Part 4: Why does it matter?

Why do you still remember this experience? What did it teach you? What would you like your family to understand?

Reflection sentence starters

- Looking back, I now understand...
- What stayed with me was...
- I did not realize it then, but...
- I hope my family remembers...

> Clarity and honesty matter more than perfect grammar.

STEP 3 · GATHER

Choose photographs or simple visuals

You do not need the perfect historical photograph. A related place, object, letter, map, keepsake, or simple title card can support your story.

Visual 1
What I might use:

What it adds:

Visual 2
What I might use:

What it adds:

Visual 3
What I might use:

What it adds:

Visual check

- ☐ I own the image or have permission to use it.
- ☐ It does not reveal information I want private.
- ☐ I know where the digital file is saved.
- ☐ I have given the file a clear name.

Suggested filename: 01-Childhood-Home.jpg

> One to five clear, relevant visuals are enough for a first story.

STEP 4 · SHARE

Decide who should see your story

You remain in control of what you share, how you share it, and whether it is online.

☐ **PUBLIC**
I am comfortable allowing anyone to find and view this story.

☐ **FAMILY OR TRUSTED PEOPLE**
I want to share it only with selected people or through a link.

☐ **PRIVATE**
I want to preserve it now and decide about sharing later.

Before I share

- ☐ I feel ready to share this memory.
- ☐ I have permission to use photographs.
- ☐ I understand I can change or remove it later.
- ☐ I considered the privacy of other people.
- ☐ I removed details I do not want to disclose.

People I may want to share this story with:

Completing a digital story does not require making it public.

STEP 5 · NEXT ACTION

Choose one manageable next action

My next action

- [ ] Write the first 100 words.
- [ ] Find one photograph.
- [ ] Record myself reading one paragraph.
- [ ] Create a simple title card.
- [ ] Ask permission to use a photograph.
- [ ] Set up a folder for my story files.
- [ ] Choose a date to continue working.

My own next action:

_____

_____

I will do this by:

_____

My project checklist

- [ ] Choose one memory.
- [ ] Write a 300–500-word story.
- [ ] Gather one to five visuals.
- [ ] Record my story, if desired.
- [ ] Create a simple digital story.
- [ ] Choose a YouTube visibility setting.
- [ ] Add it to a simple webpage, if desired.
- [ ] Save a backup copy.

> **You do not need to know every step before you begin.** Complete the next small action, then choose the one after it.

YOUR LIFE STORIES ONLINE

Ready to turn your plan into a finished digital story?

Your Life Stories Online is currently in development.

It is a patient, step-by-step program that helps adults over 50 turn meaningful memories into short written and digital stories—and share them privately or publicly through YouTube and a simple webpage.

The program will help you:

- ☐ Choose and write a focused story.
- ☐ Prepare photographs and visuals.
- ☐ Record without appearing on camera.
- ☐ Create a narrated-photo video.
- ☐ Choose a YouTube privacy setting.
- ☐ Build a simple story webpage.

Limited coaching-supported spaces

The first course offering will include a limited number of coaching-supported spaces.

Join the interest list for development updates, advance notice of the first dates, and an early opportunity to request one of these spaces.

KEEP ME INFORMED

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About Gordon

Gordon Deyell is a Certified Guided Autobiography instructor, educator, and course creator who helps adults over 50 preserve and share the meaningful stories of their lives.

Begin with one story that matters.