

Use this document to assemble all the information and material you'll want to have at your finger tips to help you prepare the eulogy.

Go through each of the three steps, section by section adding notes, missing out those you don't need, or want, to use. Some sections you'll be able to complete by yourself. For others you'll want input from other people. Ask for it, and the sooner the better!

Do not worry about writing complete sentences, or stopping your train of thought to get the spelling right. What's most important now is getting your ideas, and those of others, down. You can sort out the way it's written later.

It's highly likely you won't use everything you gather in the final version of your eulogy. However to make sure you have enough to select the best and most appropriate from, collect as much as you can.

Ideally you want sufficient for a 3 to 7 minute speech. That's between about 390 and 1000 words.

## Step One: Information Gathering

### Biographical History

Date of birth:

Place of birth:

Names of parents:

Place in family: eg. only child, first child of four, third child of five.

Names of siblings:

Significant events as a child: eg. moved cities, travelled abroad, was part of ?, witnessed ? ...

Name of spouse/partner and/or significant others:

Names of children:

Names of grandchildren:

### Stories from family, and/or close friends

What stories best capture the personal qualities, interests and passions of the deceased?

They could be amusing. It could be a repeat of a story told over and over by the deceased themselves.

Maybe it is a round up of their top five loves, or top five peeves, or both! Perhaps it's a story known only to a few until now.

Whatever stories you choose to share, make sure they're ones everybody will understand, and appreciate.

Story 1

Name of person the story comes from:

Relationship to deceased:

Story 2

Name of person the story comes from:

Relationship to deceased:

Story 3

Name of person the story comes from:

Relationship to deceased:

Stories from the workplace, clubs, church or groups the deceased belonged to

Story 1

Name of person the story comes from:

Relationship to deceased: Eg. colleague, boss, fellow team member ...

Story 2

Name of person the story comes from:

Relationship to deceased:

Story 3

Name of person the story comes from:

Relationship to deceased:

## Achievements

Make a note of any academic, community service, social or personal achievements.

What achievement was the deceased most proud of?

What achievement was the least well known?

## Sayings

Were there habitually used phrases to express surprise, exasperation, love, gratitude, a value, or to describe something excellent, or its opposite, something bad?

Note each of them down.

## Poetry, songs, quotations

Is there a poem, an extract from the lyrics of a song or some other quotation that would be appropriate to use?

Make a note of that, ensuring you have the correct information about it: title, author, and source.

## Poem/extract/quotation

Title:

Author:

Source:

## Theme

A theme, or a central idea, unites material by pulling it all together.

When you look back through your notes, is there a dominant theme?

Are the majority of the collected stories about, for instance, the importance of family, leadership, loyalty, humour, hospitality, kindness, service, endurance, courage, selflessness, change, searching for truth, or humility?

If you can identify a clear theme, use it.

## Step Two: Organising the eulogy

To be effective your eulogy needs to be structured. It needs an opening, where you introduce yourself, a middle where you share biographical details, stories, talk about achievements, and the impact the person you're honoring had on your life and those of others. Then it needs a close.

Open a new document. Give it a title and save it. Then complete each of the sections below using the information from the notes you've gathered together.

I've written an example for each section to give you an idea of how it might go, and so you can see how they flow one after another to create a structured speech.

## Opening

What to include: the reason for gathering, introduction of yourself, and your relationship to deceased. Acknowledgements of people there, and thanks for coming.

### Example:

We've gathered today to celebrate the life of a remarkable man: Michael Jones.

For those of you who don't know me, I'm Fred, Michael's kid brother – the youngest one.

Thank you for coming. It means a great deal to our family to have you all here.

We particularly want to acknowledge those who've travelled from afar: our sister, Mary and her family from Perth, Australia, and Bob Smythe, Michael's mate from his kindergarten days, who came from Johannesburg, South Africa.

## Brief biography

What to include: date of birth, names of parents, place in family, names of siblings and significant family events

### Example:

Our parents, Muriel and Dave, wanted a large family. Michael, born 8<sup>th</sup> June 1951, was the first of our tribe of five: two boys (top - him, me - bottom) with three girls sandwiched in between: Mary, Alice and Emma.

Being the eldest he learned what it was to be responsible, to be the minder, to set a good example from a very young age.

## Stories

What to include: a mix of stories from family, friends and/or the workplace that everyone will understand and appreciate

### Example:

What a wonderful big brother! There are so many stories to share about him.

I'm going to start the ball rolling with one from Chrissie, his much adored wife, and mother of their three children: Ryan, Kelly and Meg.

Do you know how they met? This is pure Michael. Total genius. And only he could pull it off.

It was 1973 and one lunchtime he was at the entrance of the cafeteria at the university they both went to holding a clip board.

As she approached, he stepped forward. 'Hi', he said, 'Do you have a few minutes? Could I ask you a few questions about how being physically attractive shapes personality? It's a survey I'm doing for my master's thesis.'

Ryan remembers how his father always read them bed time stories, and how he became all of the characters: the nastiest baddie, the sweetest child or the sternest teacher.

Kelly recalls the hours and hours he spent encouraging and actively supporting her desire to become the best middle distance runner she could be.

Meg is forever grateful for a father who always listened before he made his mind up. As we know, it didn't necessarily mean that he'd change his opinion. But, as Meg says, you knew you'd been heard.

All three speak of his joy in becoming a grandfather. More kids to share stories with, to encourage, and to listen to. We know Michael loved being a granddad.

We also know Michael was one of those truly fortunate people who genuinely loved his job. So much so he used to say, he'd never done a day's work in his life. Therefore all of years he put in building and nurturing Mr Jones, his PR company, were in fact, a very long vacation!

Those who are passionate about what they do, draw similar people around them. Michael frequently said how blessed he was to have the Mr Jones team on his side. It is wonderful to see so many of

you here today. I know some of you, Rachel, Alan and Sam, have been there from the very early days.

## Achievements

What to include: meaningful public and private achievements

### Example

Looking back through Michael's life there have been so many significant personal achievements: public and private.

In the public arena we know he was, to use his words, 'really chuffed', whenever Mr Jones received a major industry award. There have been many over the years. However the Sabre Award was a favorite. It belongs to us all, he'd say. And he meant it.

Privately, he was grateful everyday for Chrissie and their marriage. It brought him riches beyond even his wildest imagination: companionship, love, laughter, kids, and later grand kids. Gathering everyone together for thanksgiving was his idea of bliss, and then hell if they didn't leave when they were supposed to.

Completing a marathon after his accident, that was huge.

Making time to create a garden was a mammoth achievement - as was its rewards. A place of beauty and peace, especially over the last few months.

## Summary of impact on the speaker's life or those he/she is speaking on behalf of

### Example

Michael. I can not remember a time in my life when he was not an influence on me. Through him I learned about service – to oneself and the greater community. Michael always said making the most of ones gifts or talents was a duty. You needed to refine and use them to make yourself fit to give of your best to everyone, including yourself. That was the only way, he said, to properly live.

I learned about being human: about striving, failing, starting again, apologising, about being stubborn, or laughing so hard you nearly fell over, about what having the gift of the gab could do, and the power of love.

Most of all I learned what to value. Real wealth is never things. It's relationships. It's people. Us.

### Close

What to include: perhaps a poem, or a quotation, an offer of hope, comfort and encouragement.

### Example

Michael was an enormous presence in our lives. While we are going to miss him, sometimes terribly, we will also try to remember to:

"Say not in grief: "He is no more",  
but to live in thankfulness that he was."

For his sake, your own, and each others, keep talking. Keep sharing the stories!

## Step Three: Editing and rehearsing

Once you've entered your notes, go back through them again, from the beginning.

Edit, (add, delete, amend), and rearrange your material as needed to make it flow smoothly. You'll find this process much easier if you say what you've written out loud.

As you move through the document, listen carefully to what you're saying. And at the same time ask yourself these questions:

- Does it make sense?
- Does it lead the listener from one point to the next easily?
- Are the stories appropriate for everyone to hear?
- Is the tone of the words I've used right for the occasion?
- Have I covered everything I feel I should have?

### Time your speech

When you have the order and flow of material as you want it, say the complete eulogy out loud, as if you were actually delivering it, and time it.

If you have gone over the time allowance you were given, look for areas you can cut.

For instance, if you have put in four stories, take the weakest one out. Or if you've told the same story twice but in different ways, cut one. And then try saying it again out loud.

Repeat the process, until you come in on time.

Please do not be tempted to speak faster to fit! Gabbling will make you very difficult to listen to.

This speech calculator may help. It will you give an indication of how long your speech is based on the speech rate, (the number of words you speak in a minute), and the number of words you have in your eulogy. Go to: <http://www.speechinminutes.com/>

### Collecting feedback

The next step is sharing your eulogy with a few close family members and/or friends whose good judgement you can trust and rely on. This is particularly important if you are the only person speaking because your words represent others as well as yourself.

Read the eulogy aloud, and ask for their feedback. Re-edit as required.

### Rehearsal

Once you have the words as you want them, your next task is rehearsing.

Please do not fall into the trap of thinking that because you've finished the writing, you've finished the speech.

Your eulogy will be more effective, and easier to give, if you have rehearsed it thoroughly. That means repeating it over, out loud, as many times as you can. Say it by yourself, and for your friends and family.

If it's possible, arrange to practice in the venue too.

### Format your speech document

Use the following guidelines to format your eulogy for easier reading once it is printed out.

1. Choose a clear font, for example; Georgia, Helvetica, Arial or Verdana. (This is Verdana, size 14.)
2. Select a font size between 14 - 20.
3. Change the line spacing to 1.5 to make it easier to re-find your place when you return to the text after looking away from it to make eye contact with those listening to you.
4. Number the pages in the top right corner so you can see at a glance which one you're on.
5. Print your speech out single-sided.

Rehearse with the formatted document. If there are any changes needed, make them.

### More resources

For preparing and choosing the words:

- [Inspirational quotations and funeral readings](#): an eclectic mix spanning differing times, cultures and beliefs.
- [Poems to read at funerals](#): a collection of much-loved poems

For delivering your eulogy:

- For more assistance to ensure you give your eulogy well please scroll down to my notes under the heading "At the venue" on this page: <https://www.write-out-loud.com/eulogy-write.html>
- For more about [the importance of rehearsal](#)
- For more about [how to read aloud well](#)
- For more on [dealing with public speaking anxiety effectively](#)