

# Getting Started Writing a Memoir

By Victory Crayne

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1. **Outline.** Create an outline of the time period in the memoir. You don't have to write your entire life.
2. **Write time moving forward.** Write the events with time moving forward. Don't jump around in time with flashbacks. Keep the reader informed of the time and place of the events in each chapter.
3. **First draft.** Your first draft may be focused on getting the facts down. However, do not stop there or your story will read like a history lesson and run the risk of being boring to readers. Next, revise your draft to be more entertaining for your readers.
4. **“Go deep” on emotional experiences.** While you are still working on a chapter and have those events in your mind, pick places to explore deeper. These will often be the times when you were experiencing strong emotions.

One suggestion: Write what you are afraid to write. Readers will probably tell you those were the best parts.

If it's your life, try to recall how you thought then. Look at some photos from that time. Write that part as if it was happening to your younger self right now. If you cry or have emotions while you're writing, you will naturally choose stronger words and make those scenes come alive.

Add some description of the settings. Add dialogue, with some facial expressions and body language. Even if you don't have the exact words, can you imagine what could have been said by the people in a conversation?

5. **Reveal inner struggles.** Try to reveal your goals, problems, fears, emotions, struggles, lessons learned, what problems remain, etc.
6. **Show conflicts and tension.** Your book will be more interesting if you show conflicts between the people and tension in the chapters.
7. **Show changes.** Can you show how you and the other people changed?

If this feels like you're writing a novel, well, in a way you are. The more you can make your memoir read like a novel, with an exciting story of conflicts and emotion, the more people will enjoy reading it.

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I help those who write novels and memoirs get closer to achieving their dreams.