How to write a eulogy

You don't have to be a writer. You just have to have loved them. This guide will help with the rest.

01 Gather before you write.

Spend ten minutes jotting down memories, phrases they used, and small details. Ask a few family members or friends for one story each. Page 2 has room for all of it.

02 Pick one thread.

You can't tell a whole life in five minutes, and you don't need to. Choose one idea that sums them up, like "she never met a stranger," and let your stories point back to it.

03 Use the simple structure.

Open with who you are and one line about them. Tell a story or two. Share what they taught you. Close with a goodbye. Page 3 walks through each part.

04 Keep it short and real.

Three to five minutes is plenty, about 400 to 700 words. Humor is welcome. So are tears. Write the way you talk, not the way you think a eulogy should sound.

05 Read it out loud, then print it big.

Practice once or twice. Print it in a large font with wide spacing. Pause when you need to. Everyone in the room is on your side.

IF YOU'RE STUCK, START HERE

"For anyone who doesn't know me, I'm your name *,* their name *'s* relationship *. If you knew* first name *, you know they* something everyone would recognize *."*

STEP ONE · GATHER

Memories and details

Short notes are perfect. You'll shape them later.

Three words that describe them

Something they always said

What they loved (people, places, music, hobbies)

A habit or quirk everyone would recognize

A story that makes you laugh

A moment that shows who they really were

What they taught you, on purpose or not

STORIES FROM OTHERS

WHO	THEIR MEMORY, IN A FEW WORDS

STEPS TWO AND THREE · SHAPE IT

Your eulogy, in four parts

The one thread. If people remember one thing about them, it should be:

1. THE OPENING

Who you are, and one line that sounds like them. About 30 seconds.

2. THE STORY

One or two stories that show your thread. Specific beats impressive. About 2 to 3 minutes.

3. WHAT THEY TAUGHT US

What you'll carry forward, and what you hope others will too. About 1 minute.

4. THE GOODBYE

Speak to them directly, return to the thread, or end with a line, a lyric, or their favorite saying.

STEPS FOUR AND FIVE · SAY IT

Before you speak

FINAL CHECK

- [ ] Read it out loud and timed it (3 to 5 minutes)
- [ ] Left out anything private or hurtful
- [ ] Asked someone to step in if I need a minute
- [ ] Checked names and facts with family
- [ ] Printed it large, with page numbers
- [ ] Brought water and tissues to the podium

IF YOU GET EMOTIONAL

Stop, breathe, and look down at your page. Take a sip of water. Nobody minds a pause. It tells everyone how much they meant to you. If you need to, hand it to your backup reader and sit down. That's okay too.

LINES TO BORROW

OPENINGS

"I've been trying to figure out how to fit name *into five minutes. It can't be done, so I'm going to tell you one story."*

CLOSINGS

" Name *, thank you for* what they gave you *. We'll take it from here."*

PLANNING YOUR OWN?

In My After Party you can choose who you'd like to speak at your gathering, and leave them a few stories you hope they'll tell. It's a kindness to the person giving your eulogy, and it means your story gets told your way.

Who I'd like to give my eulogy

A story I hope they'll tell

After Party is a planning tool. It does not provide legal, financial, or medical advice. Faith communities and funeral homes may have their own guidelines for length and content, so ask the officiant before the service.