

Obituary template

This is the outline most obituaries follow. Fill in what you know, and leave out anything that does not fit. Nothing here is compulsory. If a section does not belong in your family's story, delete it.

1. The announcement

[Full name], of [town], died on [date], aged [age].

Some families add "peacefully", "suddenly", or "at home". You do not have to say how they died, and many obituaries do not.

2. Their life, in order

Born in [place] on [date] to [parents], they [schooling, early life, national service, arrival in this country].

A few sentences is plenty. Dates matter less than direction: where they started and where they ended up.

3. Work and calling

They spent [number] years as a [work or calling], and were known for [the thing colleagues or neighbours would say first].

Include voluntary work, service, or caring for family. Paid work is not the only kind that fills a life.

4. Their family

They married [name] in [year]. They are survived by [children, grandchildren, siblings], and were predeceased by [name].

Name people in a consistent order. If the family is complicated, it is acceptable to write "and their wider family" rather than list everyone.

5. Who they were

Away from work they [hobby, faith community, club, garden, the small ritual everyone remembers].

This is the part people actually remember. One specific true detail is worth more than a paragraph of praise.

6. The arrangements

The funeral will be held at [place] on [date] at [time]. Family flowers only, with donations to [charity] if desired.

If arrangements are not settled, write "details to follow" and publish anyway.

Before you send it

- Check the spelling of every name, including middle names.
- Check dates against a document rather than memory.
- Ask one other family member to read it before it goes out.
- If a newspaper is printing it, ask their word limit and cost first.
- Read it aloud once. Anything that sounds unlike them probably is.

