



### Life Books: A Creative and Fun Way to Express Yourself

Everyone has a personal story to share. Life books give you the opportunity to tell your story (for your own sake) and share your story with others (if you want to). A life book is all about you, and life books help you express who you are by documenting your history. They connect you with your past.

Regardless of how much or how little information you have; the goal remains the same: document as much as you can about your life and your history in your own personal life book. Your story is important. You are important!

#### Getting Started

A life book can begin with just a few items and can expand as you continue to collect items. Gather as much information as you can. You will not need stacks of photo albums or piles of personal documents in order to start creating your life book.

Talk with your social worker, your foster or adoptive parents, your birth family, extended family, friends, neighbors, mentors, teachers, tutors, therapists and anyone else who played a role in your life. Sometimes even people who only knew you casually might have some unexpected insight for you.

Let's call this group of people your support network. We all need people to support and encourage us. Talking with your support network about your past and present situation is the perfect place to discover information about yourself. Creating a life book is a team project, so make sure to get as many people involved that you can.

#### Life Book Pages

Now that you are ready to start your life book, the next step is to decide what items that you would like to include in your life book. Remember, this is your life book and you get to decide what you would like to include. Be creative, be

expressive, and be committed to starting and completing your life book. Below are some suggestions that you can consider.

- **Pictures, pictures, pictures!** The old saying is, "A picture is worth a thousand words." This is absolutely true. Gather as many pictures as you can. Ask your support network for pictures of you, your family, siblings, your extended family, your pet(s), your friends, your school, your house, and any other people or places that are important to you.
  - If you aren't able to find a lot of pictures, then ask your friends and family to start taking pictures of you and you in turn, can take pictures of them for your book.
- **Search.** Think of this as a scavenger hunt and look for awards, certificates, report cards, diplomas, certificates, artwork, poems, writing assignments, school projects, honors, or any other important items from your past and present that you would like to include in your life book.
- **Express Yourself.** Life books are a way to express who you are and how you're feeling. When you enter information into your life book, remember that this is your personal book and you should be able to include whatever feelings or experiences that you would like to add. You may be feeling sad, happy, frustrated, excited, angry, silly, no matter what feelings you are experiencing, this is your chance to express yourself! Think about answering some of these questions:
  - What talents you possess?
  - What do you do well?
  - What are your interests?
  - What would your friends say about you?
  - What are you most proud of about yourself?

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- **Time to express yourself!** Are you artistic? Do you have any hidden talents? If so, you could include poems, stories, artwork, website links, doodles, graphic designs, songs, letters, or any other creative expressive ideas that describe who you are and what is important to you.
- **Capture your past.** Your history is important because your history is who you were and impacted who you have become. Sometimes it's helpful to make a timeline of when things happened in your life. You can consider adding some of these items into your life book, although there will also be many things you don't know from the list below:
  - Where you lived throughout the years?
  - Who were you living with?
  - What schools did you attend?
  - What were some of your first words?
  - When did you first walk?
  - What was your favorite toy?
  - Who were your neighbors?
  - Who were your friends?
  - What were your favorite activities?
  - What were your favorite classes?
  - Who were your favorite teachers?
  - What was your favorite family vacation?
  - What is your earliest memory?
  - What were the names of your pets?
  - What are some of your silliest childhood memories?
  - What is your favorite kid's song?
  - What was your favorite kid's game?
  - What are some of your favorite holiday memories?
  - What were some of your family traditions?
  - What were some of your special days and celebrations?
  - Who are some people that you are thankful for?

These are but a few examples of questions you can ask your support network and include in your life book. Make sure to capture your past milestones and special events in your life book.

- **Add your own personal flare.** You can liven up your life book by adding stickers, colored paper, decorative borders, stamps; as well as other scrapbooking supplies. Talk with your support network to discover if there are any scrapbooking or life book classes that you could attend to get more ideas and suggestions.
- **Cards and letters.** Do you have a collection of letters or cards from family members and friends? Have you ever written letters to important people in your life that you have never sent? These are examples of sentimental items that you could add to your life book.
- **Special keepsakes.** Personal mementos are items that you have saved that mean the world to you. Including things like ticket stubs (from a favorite movie, play, sporting event, musical, or concert), bits and pieces of a flower from a corsage; a program from a wedding; a special note from your mentor, a birthday card, or any other special keepsake that you would like to preserve in your life book. If it's too big to put in your life book—like a special teddy bear, Christmas ornament, necklace, quilt, etc.—then take a picture of it and put that in instead.
- **Are you a Techie?** If you or someone you know has computer skills, you might want to consider creating your life book on your computer. You could make a video recording of your life or a slide presentation.

### **Saving Your Life Book**

However you decide to create your life book,

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## Life Books, continued

be sure to make at least one copy of your life book. This is your history and you will work hard to create it and you have to take the extra steps to preserve your history.

Consider saving a copy on a computer and making extra paper copies and keep your copy in a safe and secure place. Remember that whatever you include in your life book will instantly become a masterpiece!

### Time is on Your Side

Creating your life book will take time, energy, creativity and effort. A life book is more like a

journey than a destination. As a result, take the time to gather information from your past to create a life book that you will cherish for years to come.

Remember that your life book is just that, yours. You can choose if and when you want to share your life book with others. Your life book will likely contain private information that you may not feel comfortable sharing with other people. That is perfectly fine. You have control over whether or not you will share your life book with others.



## Free Online Life Book Resources

**Time Capsule Website:** <http://wmarie.com/timecap/step1.asp> On this site, you can enter in your date of birth and discover important events that occurred when you were born; such as famous headlines, toys, movies, famous people born on and around your birth date, the academy award winners, the UW president at the time of your birth and so much more.

**Behind the Name:** <http://behindthename.com> Have you ever wondered what a name means? This site provides you with in depth information about your name.

**Day of Birth:** <http://www.dayofbirth.co.uk/> This site will inform you of what day of the week you were born. You will discover how many days until your next birthday, how many seconds old you are plus many other interesting facts.

**Free Life Book Pages:** <http://www.ifapa.org/resources/publications.asp> The Iowa Foster Care and Adoptive Parents Association (IFAPA) provides free life book pages that you can download from their website.

**FosterClub:** <http://www.fyj3.com/funstuff/lifebooks.cfm> This website has free life book

downloadable pages that you could add to your life book.

## Foster Care & Adoption Resource Center life Library Resources

(You can find the following by going to this link [wifostercareandadoption.org/plugins/library/advancedsearch.asp](http://wifostercareandadoption.org/plugins/library/advancedsearch.asp) and then typing in the title or other keyword in the search box.)

**My life Story** by Bretts and Ahmad  
We all want to understand who we are. This resource is game-like software that helps children, ages 6 to 16 to make sense of their life's journey. There are over 40 interactive activities that are aimed at helping young people think, talk, and write about what has happened to them, and how they can move toward their lives' goals.

**The Complete Life Book** by Jim Mooney  
The purpose of this book is to provide youth and adults with resources to writing life books.

**All About Me, My Life in Words and Pictures** by Mary Jane Proft  
This life book is designed for children, foster and adoptive parents and caseworkers. Mary Jane Proft is a Wisconsin foster and adoptive parent.