

PREPARING A EULOGY

First, please know that whatever you prepare will be just fine. As a friend or family member, you know your loved one best, and your words of remembrance will be honoring to them. Below are some tips in case you are having trouble getting started. You do not need to be a great writer or speaker to do well. It is most important to include basic family and biographical information in your personal way. Just in case you become emotional on the day of the memorial, a neatly written or typed eulogy can easily be read on your behalf by the pastor (or someone else of your choosing).

Consider the Tone and Audience: A good eulogy need not be uniformly somber, just appropriate. Used cautiously, humor can help convey the personality of the deceased and illustrate some of his or her endearing qualities. The tone can also be partially determined by the way the deceased passed away.

Write the eulogy with the deceased's family and loved ones in mind. Dwell on the positive, but be honest. If the person was difficult or inordinately negative, avoid talking about that or allude to it gently, as in "He had his difficulties, some of which were a constant battle." Make sure you don't say anything that would offend, shock, or confuse the audience.

Briefly Introduce Yourself: Even if most people in the audience know you, just state your name and give a few words that describe your relationship to the deceased.

Include the Important Basics: Though your eulogy doesn't have to read like an obituary or give all of the basic information about the life of the deceased, you should touch on a few key points.

Biographical Information: Provide some basic biographical information about the person, such as where he was born, his educational background, and information about his marital life (if there is any). Here's what it might look like:

- (He/she) was born (place, date of birth, parents). (Name) graduated from (high school name) and received (name of degree) from (name of college). (He/she) was married to (spouse's name) (time of marriage optional).

Additional Information: Expand your eulogy to include more information about the deceased. Try to think of three adjectives to describe the person, and make this come through in your description of the person's life. Rather than saying the person was generous, show how the person demonstrated the charitable behavior.

- Example: "Sandra was a librarian until she retired in 2008. She was passionate about helping the students in the library, and about spreading her love for reading throughout her community. She was honored with the Santa Monica Librarian of the Year award in 1995."

Survivor Information: You should list the names of the person's children, grandchildren, and other important family members. You should include the residence of these family members. Remember that if there are many grandchildren instead of just one or two, that listing the number is more appropriate.

- Example: "Sandra is survived by three children: Jenny Gray, of Springfield; Mark Smith, of Philadelphia; and Jessie Adams, of Chicago. She is also survived by ten grandchildren and three great-grandchildren."

Be Concise and Organized: Give the eulogy a beginning, middle, and end. Avoid rambling or speaking down to people. The average eulogy is about 3-5 minutes long. That should be enough for you to give a meaningful speech about the deceased. Remember that less is more.