

# Obituary Worksheet

A fill-in-the-blank template. Your Vargas-Cabrera advisor will help polish it.

## Before you start

There is no wrong way to write an obituary. Longer isn't better; honest is better. Let it sound like your loved one. Write a rough version, read it aloud, and adjust. If you get stuck, your Vargas-Cabrera advisor will sit with you for free and help shape it. Publication timing: 2-3 days before the service for local papers, 1-2 days for online.

## The opening line — three common approaches

1. Formal: '[Full name], [age], of [city], passed away [peacefully at home / after a long illness / unexpectedly] on [date].'
2. Warm: 'Our beloved [mother / father / grandmother / friend], [first name] [last name], passed away on [date] at the age of [age].'
3. Distinctive: '[Name] — [one-sentence defining characteristic: ex. 'who made every stranger feel like family' / 'who spent sixty years teaching Richardson first-graders to read'] — passed away [date] at [age].'

## Biographical details

- Date and place of birth
- Parents' names
- Spouse's name (if applicable) and wedding date
- Children's names (in birth order usually)
- Grandchildren and great-grandchildren (numbers are fine if many)
- Siblings (alive and deceased)
- Education (highest degree or most defining)
- Career / primary work
- Military service (branch, years, medals)
- Places lived

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## Character — what made them them

The best obituaries include specific details, not generic adjectives. Instead of 'loved her family,' try 'never missed a grandchild's baseball game, and packed peanut-butter sandwiches for every one of them.' Instead of 'devoted to her church,' try 'sang alto in the First Baptist choir for forty-three years and made the coffee every Sunday.' Use this space to brainstorm 3-5 specific details:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

## Service information

- Date and time of service
- Location (church, funeral home, graveside)
- Reception afterward? Where?
- Private interment / burial?
- Live-stream link if service is online

## Memorial donation line

'In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to [organization name], [address or website].' Common choices: the deceased's church, a hospice, a disease-specific foundation, a school, or a favorite charity. Also acceptable: 'Flowers are welcome.'

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## Survivors list (traditional order)

Spouse → children (with spouses) → grandchildren (with spouses) → siblings → parents (if living) → other significant relationships. Children can be listed with cities if geographically scattered. Pets can be included when they were central to the person's daily life.

## Sample obituary (100 words — short)

Eleanor M. Richardson, 84, of Richardson, TX, passed away peacefully at home on April 3, 2026, surrounded by family. She is survived by her husband of 62 years, Robert; their four children, Sarah Richardson-Kim of Plano, Michael Richardson of Dallas, James Richardson of Houston, and Rebecca Chen of Austin; and nine grandchildren. Eleanor taught second grade at Mohawk Elementary for 35 years and never stopped teaching. A memorial service will be held Saturday, April 12 at 2 p.m. at First Presbyterian Church of Richardson. In lieu of flowers, donations to the Richardson Public Library are welcome.

## Where to publish

- Vargas-Cabrera website (free)
- Legacy.com (free when posted through us)
- Dallas Morning News — paid, approximately \$250-\$500 depending on length
- Star Local Media (Richardson Echo, Plano Star-Courier) — paid
- Home-town paper if the deceased lived elsewhere previously
- Facebook memorial page (free)

## Final word

Your Vargas-Cabrera advisor will read your draft, suggest polish, and arrange publication free of charge. There are no paid upsells on obituaries. Call (214) 738-4276 when you're ready.