Welcome!

You have everything you need to write the story of your mother’s life right now. That’s because every story you write is a draft – your Discovery Draft when you discover what you know and what you don’t - and then the drafts your write for different audiences, with new information, or as you age and see your mother in a new light.

The trick is to sit down and write the first time. Most people will find tons of distractions but you can do it in two hours. Honest! Just get out of the way of a great story.

Writing Recipe

Write the facts of your mother’s life from beginning to end, in less than 2000 words, where you are just a footnote.

This story is not about your relationship or your issues with your mom. It’s not about your judgements or your dad or the town. It’s not about you! “The facts” are the stories you know about how and where your mom grew up, what her parents were like, how she met your dad. Don’t worry if you think you don’t know her story – you know enough. As you write down one memory another will take its place. Later you can find out more, because you will know what you’re looking for.

You can find more information and examples of mother stories in our archive at www.mymothersstory.org Maybe you’ll post a draft of your story there for future generations to read.
Mind Spark Questions

These questions are to spark your memory for facts, anecdotes, and images of your mother. Write fast. You will not have an answer for each question – that’s not the point. What you’re looking for is first thoughts, regardless whether they’re right or wrong (you can fact check later) and something that might jog a story or image. If a question causes you to think of an event or story write down some key words so you can come back later to write it out in full and keep answering questions.

You will probably feel lots of emotions stirring things up. Just remember: they came to pass. The emotions are not tied to today – they are attached to your memories and this exercise is like house cleaning them and making them available for your stories.

Mother’s Full Name
Her birth date
Her birth place
Her parent’s names

Parents – is there anything of note here, something extraordinary?
- Appearance, temperament
- Occupations
- How old were her parents when your mother was born?
- What was her relationship with her father like?
- What was her relationship with her mother like?

What was a unique/interesting/weird thing about where/how your mother grew up?

Siblings
- Name them in order if you can.
- Who was her favourite?
- Did she fight with any?
- What games did they play?

What was her favourite toy?
What did she look like as a child?

School
- Elementary, high school, college, university – name and place
- Which classes did she enjoy?
- Which classes did she hate?
- What highest grade did she finish?
- Why did she leave school?

Did she have a best friend?
- What adventures did they have?
- What did they talk about?

When your mother was a child, what did she dream of becoming as an adult?

Romance
- How did she meet your father?
- What year did this happen? How old was she? How old was he?
- Did she have other romances? Before, after, during?

Did she have a wedding?
- When was it?
- What was it like?
- Did they have a honeymoon?

Babies
- Name and birthdate of babies (including abortions and miscarriages if known).
- Did she like babies?
- Did she stay home with her babies or work outside the home?

Work
- What jobs did she have as a teen?
- What jobs did she have as an adult?
- What jobs did she like?
- Did she have jobs she hated?

Homes
- As an adult where did she live?
- Describe the outside of her homes – split level, suburban, walkup apartment, palace
• Who chose her homes - your mom or dad or someone else?
• How did she decorate?
• How did she clean?
• Did she garden?
• Was there a constant in all her homes – music, flowers, dirty dishes?

Food.
• What was her favourite food to eat? What was her favourite food to make?
• Was she a good cook?

What were her hobbies? If she had a spare minute what would she do?

Against what or whom was her greatest struggle?

What did she think was her greatest achievement?

What would the world consider her greatest achievement?

What was her greatest passion?

What was her greatest fear?

What was the bravest thing you remember her doing?

Is there a time when she “spoke her truth”. Where was she? What happened? What did she say?

What was her favourite joke? Describe her telling it.

Describe a moment when she laughed.

What is the funniest thing you remember her doing?

How did she explain sex to you?

Did she have a favourite piece of jewelry or clothing?

What perfume did she wear or what smell reminds you of her?

What was her favourite song?

When did she sing this song?
Who was her favourite musician or singer?

How did she dance?

Did she have any role models?

When do you think was the first time she said “I love you” – to anyone?

How did your mother express love?

How did she express anger?

After her children left home, did she finally do things she’d always wanted to do or do something very different?

Thinking of her as a young girl, how do you think she was changed at the end of her life?

Where is your mother now?

If she has passed away, how did she die? What year?

How old were you when she died?

What event or fact of your mother’s life is the hardest to talk about?

What is the biggest question you have about her now?

Are you surprised by any answers you’ve given here?