

Family History Book Template

Scope, chapters, sources and an editing checklist

A planning template for a family history book: who it's about, a chapter plan, a source log and an editing checklist. The [family history book guide](#) explains each step, including layout and printing. For the interviews themselves, print the [family interview kit](#).

Before you start

- Scope (one person, one branch, one place or one journey):

- Working title:

- Who makes the final decisions:

- Who the book is for:

- When we'd like a first draft: _____

Opening

- Who is this book about?

- What image or scene opens the story well?

- What time period does the first chapter cover?

Timeline

- Births and other key dates:

- Moves, migrations, school and work changes:

- Marriages, separations and other family changes:

- Historical events that shaped daily life:

Chapter planner

Choose the chapters that fit your material:

- Origins and earliest known relatives
- Childhood home and neighborhood
- Work and skills
- Love, marriage or partnership
- Parenting and caregiving
- Migration or displacement
- Faith, rituals and traditions
- Food, music and daily life
- Hard years and turning points
- Values and what the family wants remembered

Chapter:

- What this chapter is for:

- Who will tell it, or which interview it comes from:

- Photos, letters or objects to include:

- Names, dates and places to check:

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Questions to ask yourself for each chapter

- Which scene shows this person best?
- Which object carries the strongest memory?
- Which phrase belongs in the book word for word?
- What would a grandchild not know without this chapter?
- What context does a reader need for the story to make sense in ten years?

Source log

Note these for every story, photo or quote:

- Who supplied it, and their relationship to the story
- Approximate date or age
- Place
- Type: interview, diary, photo, letter or memory
- Whether it's checked or a family account
- Permission: who may read it, and whether it may be printed

Page ideas for photos and objects

- Family tree or branch map
- Map of where the family has lived
- A recipe page with the story behind it
- Tools, heirlooms or keepsakes with captions
- Short quotes from several relatives on one page
- Then-and-now photo pairs

Editing checklist

- ☐ Every chapter has a clear purpose
- ☐ Names, dates and places are consistent
- ☐ Every photo that matters has a caption: who, where, roughly when
- ☐ Every quote says who said it
- ☐ Repeated stories are merged
- ☐ Uncertain details are marked as uncertain

Before printing

- Which chapter still feels thin?

- Which relative will check names and dates?

- Which stories should stay out of the printed copy?

- Has the printer's page size and page-count range been checked?

Notes
