



## How to Write a Eulogy

By colewiebe  
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In a time of grief after a loved one or friend has passed can be a daunting time to write a eulogy. If you're fortunate enough to have the honor and responsibility of this task, preparation is the key to success. Below are some tips to help you ensure your eulogy is appreciated and remembered.

### What is a Eulogy?

A eulogy is a speech before mourning attendees, given either at or after the wake. Wakes generally occur at a funeral home (although they used to be performed at the deceased's home) with a funeral proceeding either immediately after or within days of the wake. In some cases, a eulogy might be given at a memorial service, where a body is not present (for example, when a soldier is killed overseas and a body can't be recovered). A eulogy is customarily a five to ten minute speech, covering details about the deceased. In some funerals more than one eulogy is given by different individuals. Writing a proper eulogy takes time and multiple drafts but can oftentimes give the speaker a sense of closure and peace afterward.

### Be Genuine

The saying, "If you have nothing nice to say, say nothing at all" definitely applies in this situation. Regardless of a person's faults or flaws in life, a eulogy is intended to focus on the positives of a person's life, not negatives. Areas to focus on might be their contributions to society, their achievements, and positive personality traits, skills at which the person excelled, or even your favorite memories of the deceased. Regardless of the topic you choose, be sure it's something you truly believe. If you don't speak from the heart and with feeling, even if it's a little uncomfortable, your lack of feeling will be obvious to all who witness your speech.

It is appropriate to include tasteful and positive anecdotes about the deceased in your speech in order to convey a true sense of who the person was in life. Inserting humor can help break up the mournful atmosphere and bring a feeling of joy and happiness to the participants as well.

### Spend Time Preparing

If you did not know the deceased very well, spend time with friends and family members learning more about him or her. Find out more about the deceased's background, achievements and interests. If you were close to the deceased, it's important to make a list of your memories and ideas about the person. This list of ideas can be as long or short as you like. You will edit it down later. Once you have your list, look for common themes or ideas that might go together well. Cross off any ideas that don't look like a good fit or seem they wouldn't work well.

### Write, Edit, and Then Practice

Once you have your ideas together, write your thoughts down. Don't be picky; don't try to make it perfect. You can fix it later. For now, just allow the emotions you want to evoke in others flow through you. If your speech moves you to tears or laughter, chances are good it will do the same for others. Also, don't be too formal, this isn't a college paper. Just be yourself and speak from the heart, with kindness, and humor, if possible. Once you have an initial draft, review it carefully for word choice, sentences and pacing. Read it out loud to yourself and begin practicing your delivery. This will help you to pick out any awkward sentences or improper word choices. You can do this in front of a mirror once you have parts of the speech memorized if you like. Once you feel comfortable with the speech, choose a close friend or family member to listen to you practice. Allow this person to give you advice about any areas he or she feels needs more attention and make changes as you feel appropriate. A eulogy can be a very personal speech, so use your best judgment.

### Final Steps for Your Eulogy

Don't be afraid to type up your speech and print it for use at the funeral. It is easy to forget what you want to say. As long as you don't read in a monotone, and use an even pace, using a written speech is fine. If you become overwhelmed with emotion during your speech, know that it's okay. Simply take a few moments to compose yourself, then continue. Be sure you have tissues and water available to you during your speech.

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