

Writing an obituary

If you are having difficulties writing an obituary, we suggest viewing an obituary from our website or the local paper. Select an obituary and follow the format substituting your family's information. You may want to look at a couple different obituaries to make sure you are not missing a detail that you would like mentioned. When requested, we will assist you in writing an obituary that makes your loved one that special individual. Newspapers do charge for obituaries so we feel it is very important that your loved one be memorialized in *your* words.

The obituary will usually start with the name of the deceased. It is recommended to include a nickname or shorter version of his or her name to make sure people recognize the deceased. For example, Jonathan "John" A. Doe or Janet "Jane" M. Doe. You may also include nicknames or maiden names to assist the public. Following the name, the age should appear, if desired. Following the age, the place of residence should appear. You may choose just to mention "of Eau Claire" or "rural Eau Claire". You may also name the township or village. This is a personal choice. If an individual recently moved to this area or was not from this area originally, you may choose to mention "formerly of". Example: John A. "Shorty" Doe, age 85 of Eau Claire, formerly of Madison. **We recommend that addresses not be included in the obituary and that a neighbor be asked to watch the residence of the deceased during the times of the visitation and service.** The next item mentioned would be that a death has occurred. This is also a personal choice and can be expressed several different ways. Examples of this are, died, passed away, entered eternal life, entered heaven, etc. This is followed by a date and/or day. The first paragraph is concluded with the location of death. You may choose to eliminate this portion depending on the circumstances of the death.

For Example, Jane M. Doe, age 79 of Eau Claire, passed away Friday, September 21, 2011 at her home under the care of Hospice.

The next paragraph in the obituary states the service information. This includes the time, day and date of service and location which includes the address of the service. Also included are the name(s) of officiants, the day and date of the visitation and the location, including the address and time, of visitation. The name of the cemetery and/or the information pertaining to the committal service would also be included in this paragraph. There may also be mention of the military honors being conducted and which organization is rendering those services. We highly suggest that there is no mention of lunch because this may attract unwanted guests. However, there are circumstances with particular services or Life celebrations where mention of a meal or gathering are necessary.

Example,

John A. Doe, age 79 of the Town of Washington died Friday January 12, 2011 at Sacred Heart Hospital of an apparent Heart Attack.

Funeral services will take place at 11 am on Friday, January 19, 2011 at ABC Lutheran Church, 123 3rd Street, Eau Claire, WI 54701. Pastor Jane Doe will officiate. Burial will immediately follow the services in the ABC Lutheran Church Cemetery, in Eau Claire with

military honors being rendered by the American Legion or VFW. Visitation will be Thursday, January 18, 2011 from 4-7 pm at Fuller Speckien Hulke Funeral Home, 3209 Rudolph Road, Eau Claire, WI 54701 and Friday morning at the church one hour prior to the service.

The next paragraph includes the information pertaining to the deceased birth. Parents' names including the Mother's surname, date of birth and location of the birth. You may choose to include the city and state of birth.

Example

John was born to John and Jane (Smith) Doe on February 14, 1947 at Sacred Heart Hospital in Eau Claire, WI or John was born on February 14, 1947 to John and Jane (Smith) Doe in Eau Claire, WI.

The remaining obituary can be written in Chronological order depending on the individual's life. You may want to include information pertaining to high school graduation (year and school graduated from), service in the United States Military, including unit assignments and duty stations. You may also choose to mention military operations the deceased was involved in or awards achieved while serving. The time of service is sometimes mentioned or the date of entry and date of discharge. You may wish to include secondary education (school attended, degree received and year of graduation). Marriage information with name of spouse (maiden name of bride stated), date and location of ceremony may be included, along with jobs the deceased held. Other details that may be mentioned are church, organizations, and clubs the deceased was a member of or involved in.

The next item mentioned in the obituary is the survivors and preceded in death by paragraph. We are often asked, "Who should be mentioned?" This is a personal choice. **Please consider everyone you want included in this portion of the obit to avoid offending a family member or person of importance. Keep in mind that most papers charge per column inch, therefore, the longer the obituary, the more expensive it may be.** This may determine if you mention all the grandchildren and great grandchildren, their spouses and location of their residence. You may abbreviate by just mentioning a number of grandchildren, great grandchildren, and great-great grandchildren that survived your loved one. You may also mention that your loved one is survived by many nieces and nephews or family and friends. The preceded in death by section should include parents, spouse, children, grandchildren, brothers, sisters or any other person that you want mentioned. We have also seen pets mentioned in the survived by or preceded in death sections of the obit.

This section could be followed by a paragraph of personalization. What did he/she enjoy doing? What were their hobbies, sports, &/or activities. Some families will add a special poem or a special thank you to a person or organization for their assistance and care.

At the end of the obituary, our funeral home will invite others to sign an online guestbook. The online guestbook gives those friends or family members who are unable to attend an opportunity to write a message or share a memory of the deceased. One nice thing about the online guestbook is the ability to go into great length regarding your thought or memory from the comfort of your own home. Online condolences can be submitted to the funeral home 24/7. Once the message has been approved, it will be posted online along with the individual's obituary. This serves as a wonderful tool for the families to reconnect with friends and family.

Following the announcement of the online guestbook, there may be a notice of memorials.

A memorial is a gift of money given, in the deceased name, to a charity or an organization. The memorial may be given in place of a plant or flower. Some obituaries will ask or recommend that memorials be given in "Lieu of flowers". There are several different reasons for this recommendation.

1. Often times, the family has had personal experiences with a specific illness or disease, and requests memorials made to honor or memorialize their loved ones experience. Examples of these are: The American Cancer Society, The American Heart Institute, The American Lung Association, or American Diabetic Association. Sometimes families will request memorials to organizations they support, such as: the Area Humane Association, their church, Y.M.C.A, or a local food bank. When mentioning the memorial, it is helpful to include an address to the particular organization or charity. This reduces confusion and ensures the memorial is being directed to the exact organization or charity the family wants to receive the memorial. Including the address also eliminates your family from having to forward the gift of money. The organization will usually write a letter to the family explaining that a gift of money was given in memory of your loved one, so your family can send a thank you to the donor.
2. The family may suggest a memorial because they simply do not have room for all the plants and flowers. They may also be traveling and are unable to travel with the plants or flowers. Perhaps there is a family member with an allergy to flowers or plants.
3. The funeral home tells every family that if they cannot accept all the flowers we will be happy to deliver them to area nursing homes, hospitals, or churches with a card attached mentioning who the arrangements are from and who they are in memory of. Please keep in mind some facilities are limited as to the number of arrangements they are able to accept. If a family wants all the flowers, we will be happy to deliver them to their home or arrange a time following the service to have the family pick up flowers at the funeral home.
4. Another reason for suggesting memorials is the family's need for assistance with finances. There may be a financial hardship due to a loss of income.

Whatever the reason, please know not everyone will follow your suggestion and some will simply send flowers because that is what they do to show their support.

You may also choose not to mention memorials at all because you are uncertain at the time of arrangements what organization or charity to donate to. This decision can be made at a later date.

The obituary is usually concluded by mentioning "Fuller Speckien Hulke Funeral Home" is assisting your family along with our address and telephone number. We add this portion to create a buffer zone for the families we assist. We do this hoping the public will contact us by phone or email to obtain service, floral, or memorial information about your loved one's service. At this difficult time, your family is planning a final tribute and it can be very difficult when the phone is ringing off the hook.