

# YOUR LEGACY LETTER



# Your Legacy Letter

Passing on the Important things... Your experiences, values and wisdom

What's your Legacy? Is it the money you pass along from your IRA? Is it the home or material goods your kids inherit? Those "things" are NOT you.

You are the accumulation of your experiences... both good and bad. It's those experiences that created the person you are. Your values. Your wisdom. Your humor and your passion. These are the things that can live on long after you are gone. It's these things that your children and grandchildren will remember... not the money they inherited.

Your money is only a small part of your legacy. After the money is spent (and too often, as soon as it is received) your legacy is forgotten.

So, how do you pass along the "real" you? Many people are now using what is called a Legacy Letter. It is not a legal document but instead a document of the heart. It could be as short as a one-page letter, to as big as a book. There are no hard and fast rules about what goes into the Legacy Letter... it is as varied as people and their experiences are varied.

The idea behind the Legacy Letter is simple... let the people in your life (and future generations that aren't even born yet) know what is important to you and the life you live. Legacy Letters have been around for hundreds of years, but only recently have become popular again.

More and more people believe that the will or trust is a cold, hard document. Those legal documents lack the love and warmth that people should feel at a loved one's passing. And those feelings should continue years into the future. How many people pull out a will or a trust a year or a decade after the passing of a loved one to feel closer to them? Legacy Letters can actually be passed on for generations.

So how can you pass along your heart and soul to your current and future generations?

## 7 Simple Steps to Writing a Legacy Letter

### 1 NO NEED TO HURRY

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This letter is the accumulation of your life so far... you aren't done yet! So, it's not something you need to finish right now. Jot down some notes and ideas, then set it aside to stew. Then, jot down some more ideas.

Collect some pictures and news articles. Think about music and what that has meant to you. Any hard earned secrets of your hobbies that you want to pass along? What about your spirituality? Did anything happen in life to strengthen it?

Here is a list of some of the things you could start thinking about and gathering:

### My Favorites

**Places I visited**

**Artist**

**Books**

- Do I still have any of them?
- Did I write in any of them?

**Movies**

**Foods**

**Sports and Teams**

**Hobbies**

**Phrases most people would identify me with?**

### My Family

**Most important thing I learned from my parents**

**Most Important thing I learned from my grandparents**

**Most important thing I learned from being a husband/wife**

**Traditions growing up (Holiday, birthday, 4<sup>th</sup> of July, Summer, dinner, games, whatever!)**

**Favorite story about my mother**

**Favorite story about my father**

**Funniest thing that happened to me growing up**

**Saddest thing that happened to me growing up**

**The moment I knew I had grown up**

**What I wish the youth of today could experience that I experienced**

### My Professional Life

**Best job I ever had... because**

**Worst job I ever had... because**

**Why I became a (occupation)**

**If I had to do it over again, I would have become**

### My Experiences

**Best Memories**

**Saddest Memories**

**Historical events that had the greatest impact on my life**

**I am most proud of**

**I am most grateful for**

**Happiest moment(s) of my life**

**The people who influenced my life the most and why**

**One thing I regret**

**Hardest decision I ever made**

**Most difficult time in my life and how I got through it**

**Thing in my life I would like to ask forgiveness from**

## My Spirituality

**One belief I live by**

**Thoughts on religion and faith**

**I believe that God...**

**Charities that have always been important to me**

**Success to me means...**

**My Hopes for the Future**

**Values I hope to pass onto my friends and family**

**Wishes for my wife/husband**

**Wishes for my children**

**Wishes for my grandchildren**

**A mistake I made in life that I hope you can avoid**

**One thing I did in my life that I hope you get to do**

**If and when you hit hard times, always remember...**

You get the idea. Start collecting all sorts of information as it comes to you. Put it in one place so that when you are ready, you can dive in and create your first edition. Just remember, Legacy Letters can be updated the rest of your life, if you like.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

Talk about why you are writing the Legacy Letter. What do you want the reader to pull from it? Who do you hope reads it? Then, give them an overview of what is contained in your letter.

## 3 YOUR HISTORY

Tell your story. Where were you born? What was growing up like? Do you have pictures to share?

Here's some starting points:

### Schooling

**Where did I go to school?**

**Do I have pictures?**

**What was school like?**

**Did I have homework?**

**Did I date?**

**What kind of dates did I go on?**

**What did my friends and I do for fun?**

**Did I play athletics?**

**What was my best sports or activity memory?**

**Are any of my school buddies still in my life?**

**Did anyone from my school become famous?**

**My favorite bands when I was young**

**Concerts I attended**

## Marriage

**What was it like before I got married?**

**When and where was I married?**

**Where did I go on my honeymoon?**

**What was my first home like?**

**My first car**

**What I did for fun**

## Parenting

**What was it like to become a parent?**

**Was I in the delivery room?**

**How I reacted to each birth**

**How was each child different?**

**What was your favorite thing to do with your wife... your children... your family... your buddies**

## Work Life

**My work history**

**What I learned**

**What I would change**

**My best experience**

**My worst experience**

**If I could do it all over again, what job would I have?**

**Accomplishments I am most proud of**

**Things I would like to take back**

Just tell your story... and remember, your story isn't close to being done, so feel free to add and edit it at will.

## 4 LIFE'S LESSONS

### Experiences

**What shaped my life?**

**Experiences I had that pushed me one direction or another**

**What experiences do I wish I had acted differently... what I learned from them**

**People in my life that taught me lessons**

**Lessons they taught me**

**One thing I taught someone else, that I am most proud of**

**How I was different in my youth, young childhood and as an adult... why**

**One lesson I hope others would take from my life**

Nobody is perfect. Everybody has made mistakes. It's how we deal with them that matters.

## Difficulties

Mistake I made that others could learn from

How I dealt with loss or failure

Difficulties I had to overcome

How I overcame them

How I show compassion, patience, or understanding to others

How I feel about the people around me

What I find that is good in people

What I feel society could do better

Regrets in my relationships

I am most grateful for...

## Achievements

Achievements I am most proud of

One thing I wished I had worked harder to achieve

What goals I achieved

What goals I missed

Family achievements I am most proud of

Things in life I am most grateful for

Being grateful has benefited me by...

Advice I would like to share with my legacy so they can learn from my achievements and failures

How I would like my legacy to approach life, love, family and work

I wish somebody had told me when I was 20 years old

My one... "if I only knew then, what I know now" moment to share

## 5 BELIEFS AND VALUES

Credo I live by

My religious beliefs

Importance of religion to me... why

How to deal with people

Importance of is truth to me

Importance of Charity to me

The world would be a much better place if only...

The world would be a much better place if people would only

## 6 MY WISHES AND HOPES

What I hope my children, grandchildren, friends and family will see and achieve in their lives

My hopes for our country and the world

## 7 CLOSURE

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This is your last chance to let the reader know the meaning of life... as you know it. 😊

What one thing would you like them to remember about you? What one thing did you do, that you hope left the world a little better place?

There you have it... your heart and soul that will live long after you have passed to a better place. Don't you wish your parents, grandparents or even great-grandparents had done this for you? How much more would this have meant than any monetary or material goods?

I know a Legacy Letter can seem like a lot of work... but it is a true labor of love. You can let everyone know how much you appreciated knowing them and the joy they brought to your life.