

# MEMOIR PLANNER WORKSHEET

*Create a plan for your Memoir before you start*

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## Step 1: Decide where you're starting and ending

A memoir is different from an autobiography: it is about a set of events in your life rather than your whole life. Your first task is to decide what events you're writing about, and identify where the story starts and ends.

*What was the beginning of your story?*

*Where will you end your story?*

## Step 2: Create a timeline of the major events

Create a timeline of the events in your story that are the 'game-changers.' These are often points where things change, move forward or get stuck, and where decisions are made and confrontations happen. Often the game-changer events will have an emotional impact on you.

*Create a timeline and note on it the 'game-changing' events. (You may need to use a separate sheet.)*

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## Step 4: Choose additional anecdotes or scenes

There are bound to be things you want to include in your memoir that weren't 'game-changing' in any way. Perhaps they are funny, gross, entertaining, horrifying or amazing. Or you just want to put them in for your own reasons.

*List the anecdotes or scenes you'd like to include. Then think about where in your timeline they would fit.*

## Step 5: Get all mathematical

Math doesn't sound like it should be part of story-telling, but it helps with giving the right amount of space to the important parts of the story.

If you wrote a 50,000 word book about your life-changing trip to India, for example, and spent 45,000 words describing the tiny details of your travel and accommodation, leaving only 5,000 words for the spiritual, life-changing parts of the story, you're short-changing your reader.

Thinking in math terms also helps us get the proportions right. Let's think about three major 'game-changer' points in any story: the point at which everything changes, the lowest point, and the final battle.

If your story gave 35,000 words to the point at which everything changed, then gave a piffling 2000 words to the lowest point and kept 13,000 for the final battle, the story would feel unbalanced and top heavy.

*Look at your timeline of important events, and think about your story as having four quarters. Allocate the events to the different quarters. Which major events will go into the first quarter, the second quarter, the third, and the fourth? (Hint, the lowest point should be in the third quarter, and the final battle, in the fourth.)*

[If you're a super-planner, you can go on from here, decide how many chapters you'll be writing, and allocate events, anecdotes and scenes into your chapters (of course, still paying attention to the four quarters of your story structure).]

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