

Preparing a Family or Life Story

For a larger narrative built from several interviews, documents and generations.

This is preparation, not homework. You do not need complete dates, perfect memory, or a box of scanned records. Circle what helps. Leave the rest. Uncertainty is part of an honest history.

Before we speak

- Identify the people whose voices matter most.
- Mark the turning points: moves, marriages, losses, businesses, illnesses, births, ruptures, reconciliations.
- List what the family agrees on and what is disputed.
- Choose whether the centre of gravity is one person, one branch, or the whole family.

Gather only if it is easy

- Family tree or relationship list
- Photographs grouped roughly by decade
- Letters, diaries, certificates and newspaper clippings
- Existing genealogical research or timelines

Prompts worth thinking about

- Which family story gets told at every gathering?
- Which story has never been told properly?
- Who changed the direction of the family?
- What was lost between generations?
- What survived?

Set your boundaries first

Before the interview, decide what may be explored, what should be handled carefully, and what is off limits. You can change those boundaries later. A useful history does not require surrendering privacy.

After the first conversation

No quotation is given before the first conversation. If the project is a fit, use the Story Mixer to show the balance you want - emotional depth, humour, intimacy, historical context, voice and boundaries. I then assess the actual scope and normally send a written quotation within 24 hours.

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