



CHECKLIST

FAMILY HISTORY

Storytelling

Master the art of storytelling and
preserve your family's legacy with
our easy-to-follow checklist

WWW.FAMILYHISTORYWRITINGSTUDIO.COM

FAMILY HISTORY STORYTELLING CHECKLIST

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STORY NAME _____

DEFINE THE PURPOSE OF YOUR STORY

- Why are you writing this family history? To preserve memories?
- To share with future generations?
- To celebrate a specific ancestor or event?
- Keep your audience in mind. Who will read this story, and what do you want them to take away from it?

IDENTIFY THE FOCUS ANCESTOR

- Consider starting with someone you know
- Or choose a pivotal ancestor
- You must have considerable research on the ancestor.
- Or choose an ancestor that interests you.

ORGANIZE YOUR RESEARCH

- Review your family history research and genealogy records.
- Ensure you have the key dates, names, and locations correct.
- Identify any gaps in your knowledge or information that you need to fill.
- Organize your research materials in a way that allows easy access as you write (chronologically, by family line, etc.).
- Create a workflow incorporating citations, research and writing.

DEVELOP YOUR CHARACTERS

- Your ancestors are the main characters of your story. Bring them to life by answering:
- What were their personalities like?
- What were their relationships with others?
- What challenges did they face, and how did they overcome them?
- Use details from letters, diaries, or oral histories to add depth to your characters.

SET THE SCENE

- Describe the places where your ancestors lived, worked, and traveled.
- Use historical context to paint a vivid picture:
- What was the political, social, or economic situation at the time?
- How did these factors influence your ancestors' choices and lives?
- Include sensory details (sights, sounds, smells) to make scenes more immersive.

HIGHLIGHT KEY EVENTS ON A TIMELINE

- Identify the pivotal moments in your ancestor's history: births, marriages, deaths.
- Significant migrations, career changes, or military service.
- Challenges (e.g., wars, economic hardship) and how your ancestor responded.
- Use these events to drive the narrative forward.

CREATE A STORY STRUCTURE

- Identify the beginning of your story, introduce us to your ancestor. What are their dreams or goals?
- Identify the obstacles or challenges your ancestor faced in obtaining their goal.
- How did they change because of these challenges? Did they grow stronger, become more resilient, or maybe more compassionate?
- Identify the resolution, How did their life turn out? What's the lasting impact they left on their family or community?
- Make sure your narrative has a beginning, middle, and end.

SEE [STORY FOUNDATIONS LEARNING CENTER](https://lynnpalermo.katra.com/page/storyfoundations) FOR GUIDANCE WITH EACH OF THESE AREAS
[HTTPS://LYNNPALERMO.KATRA.COM/PAGE/STORYFOUNDATIONS](https://lynnpalermo.katra.com/page/storyfoundations)

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SHOW DON'T JUST TELL

- Instead of stating facts, show your ancestors' lives through sequence of scenes.
- Show their emotions (joy, sorrow, fear, hope) in response to events.
- Use dialogue or imagined conversations to bring scenes to life.

INCORPORATE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- Provide context for your reader.
- What historical events were happening during your ancestors' time?
- How did these events affect their lives (e.g., wars, economic depressions, social movements)?
- Use historical details to ground your family's story in the larger world.
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KEEP YOUR VOICE CONSISTENT

- Decide on your narrative voice
- Family History Narratives are written third person. (as an observer)?
- Ensure your voice stays consistent throughout the story to create a smooth reading experience.

EMPHASIZE THE EMOTIONAL JOURNEY

- Highlight the emotional arc of your ancestors:
- What were their hopes, fears, and dreams?
- How did they handle adversity?
- What were the family dynamics like, and how did relationships evolve over time?
- Make sure the reader can connect emotionally to the people and events you're describing.

COMPLETE THE MESSY FIRST DRAFT

- Get the entire story down in as little time as possible.
- Don't concern yourself with perfect prose.
- Don't stop to edit, or research just get the story down.

REVISION

- Take the messy draft and rewrite and refine.
- Ensure the story has a strong plot and character arc.
- Review all scenes that they serve the story and are engaging and entertaining and move the story forward.
- Develop the theme as work your way through the revisions.

PROOFREAD AND POLISH

- Edit your story for clarity, flow, and accuracy:
- Remove any repetitive or irrelevant information.
- Ensure the story progresses smoothly from one event to the next.
- Check for grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors.
- Ask a trusted reader to review your story for feedback.

PREPARE FOR PUBLICATION

- Include photos, documents, or maps to enhance the story.
- Decide how you will share your family history
- Make sure your story is well-formatted and visually appealing if you plan to publish or distribute it.

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