

## Questions to Get You Started

A blank page can be scary. What should you write? What sounds best? How could you ever find enough words to fill it? Rooted in Story understands how daunting the writing process can be—especially when trying to figure out how to begin and what to say. As you consider what to include in your RiS book, use these questions to get you started.

Always remember, there's no right and wrong answer about the content of your book. Try brainstorming, then go back and consider what you wrote down. If a few things catch your eye, refocus and expand on those ideas. If you have trouble with making it sound “right” or coming up with ideas—no worries! Contact us for advice. RiS is happy to work with you at all stages of your book project.

- **Key Question: Who are you? What was life like then and now?**
- Write a basic biographical outline: what were you doing through out your life from the earliest days, the latest years, and all those in between? Note all experiences that were significant to you for each era of your life.
- Brainstorm about what defines you as an individual. How do you prefer to portray yourself to others? What do you prefer to hide or share with only select few? Why?
- Choose one aspect of your identity and think/write about why it is so important to you. How have certain experiences in your life demonstrated this? Select additional aspects of your identity and repeat the exercise.
- If you could choose only one thing to tell people about yourself, what would it be?
- What are the first and last things, people, events, and/or experiences that you wish to forget?
- Write about your spouse. How did you meet? What was your life like starting out? What is your favorite memory of him/her?
- What was your life like as a child? Where did you live and what was it like? What were your father and mother like? Did you get along with your siblings? What sort of things did you do or not do together? Who were your friends? What things did you do for fun? What things did you do that weren't so fun? What memorable successes and failures can you recall?
- What was school like—elementary, middle, and/or high school?
- Describe your pets. What are/were their names? What fond memories do you have of them?
- Are you a veteran? What was life like in the service?
- If you went to college, what was it like? How did attending college change you?
- What kinds of jobs have you had over the years? What did you do? Did you like these jobs? Why? Do you have favorite or not-so-favorite memories from work?

- What are your hobbies? How do they fit into your life? Have they changed over the years? How?
- Consider any of the above questions. How has this type of experience changed for subsequent generations? What are the major differences, and how might they still be similar?
- Where have you traveled around the country or world? Why did you go? What did you see?
- What other memorable stories about things that happened to you can you share? These may include vacations or other travels, a sudden revelation, living with friends and family, etc.
- Were you and your family touched by any significant local, national, or global events such as the Depression, the World Wars and other conflicts, the moon landing, or the like? How so? What do you remember?
- What do you consider to be your family's heirlooms? Write out a history of each. Be sure to include any dates, names of former & current owners, and why your family has kept them around. When you think about each heirloom, what comes to mind?
- What are some of your family's favorite dishes? Write out the recipe and explanation of why it's a family favorite and/or the recipe's history in your family.
- What life lessons would you like to pass on to your family? How did you learn these lessons?
- Go through your family photos and think about why this picture was taken. What was happening at the time? How was it significant then and now? Choose the photos that work well with your main subject, write about your memories of what's in the picture.
- Ask your family—they may be interested in hearing about something not on this list.
- Brainstorm about supplementary material you may want to include in your book. These may include: stories of people and events; essay on particular question or topic; family tree(s); biographies of family members; family photos; documentation (birth, marriage, or death certificates; service records; newspaper clippings, church bulletins (for marriages, etc.); records of sale; drawings; diplomas; programs; etc.); family heirlooms—from keepsakes to wedding rings to old family recipes.