



# Practical Tips for Writing & Delivering an Outstanding Eulogy

## 1.) Decide on the style.

Serious or light-hearted? Your decision on style will be influenced by the way the deceased died. If you're eulogising the untimely death of a young person you may likely be more serious than if you were eulogising someone who lived a full and long life.

## 2.) An Obituary isn't a Eulogy.

An obituary provides the basic information about a person's life, their family relationships, their parents and siblings, where they came from, what they did and their achievements. But you are not writing an obituary. You're delivering a eulogy. A good eulogy talks about the essence of the person. What they loved to do, their passions, the people they loved most, what was different and special about them. If you can convey that to your audience, your eulogy is a success.

## 3.) Write an outline

It helps to jot down the points you want to cover. You could brainstorm these with other friends and loved ones of the deceased, to make sure you cover all the points that are important.

## 4.) Timing

The average eulogy is between three and five minutes long. Any longer and you'll be testing the patience of your audience. When they start to squirm, or when you see their eyes glaze over, it's time to cut it short. If, after five minutes you still haven't gotten to the best bits, you may as well give up because you've missed your opportunity. Your audience will have already given up on you.

## 5.) Introduction

Briefly introduce yourself and state your relationship to the deceased, even if everyone at the funeral already knows you. You could say something like, "Hello, for those who don't know me, I'm Elizabeth Knight. Sheila and I first met in primary school and have been best friends ever since."

## **6.) Keep your audience in mind.**

Write the eulogy as though you are speaking directly to the deceased person's loved ones. Don't say anything that would offend or shock them. Try to keep things positive, but if the deceased person was hard to live with or particularly negative, either avoid speaking about it or simply mention something like, "He had his demons, which were a constant battle." Your task is to be honest without being hurtful.

## **7.) Remember Key People.**

Make sure you write down the names and relationships of people who were important to the deceased. You do this because you're sad and under stress and it is very possible you'll have a 'blank' moment and forget the name of the deceased person's wife or best friend.

## **8.) Mention the Family.**

Even if you barely knew the family of the deceased, make sure you say something about their family relationship. Saying something like, "Frank was driven by his passion for his work, but he never forgot who he was doing it for. There was no doubt how much he adored the love of his life, his wife Anna and he often spoke proudly of his three talented children, Aiden, Kate and Harry." This is comforting to the family and gives them insight into a side of their loved one they may not know.

## **9.) Use specific examples to illustrate their traits.**

Don't provide a long list of their qualities. They're meaningless unless you relate them to a real example. If they were generous, tell about an act of generosity they performed. If they were kind, tell a story about something they did that was kind. If they liked to play tricks on people, tell a story about one of the tricks they played. If they were thoughtful, mention a thoughtful act.

## **10.) If you don't know enough, find out.**

The point of a eulogy is to convey a sense of the person you're eulogising, so that even a stranger would get an idea of the person when listening to their eulogy. If you can achieve that, then you've written a good eulogy.

## **11.) Do a run through.**

Enlist the aid of a close friend of the deceased or a family member to ensure you've not missed anything important and that what you have written is accurate. They'll be able to tell you if anything you've written is inappropriate or was disjointed, off the topic, repetitive or difficult to understand.

## **12.) Practice.**

The most important thing you can do when delivering a eulogy is to practice it. Read it out loud until you're confident that you can deliver it fluidly. You need to run through it a number of times to ensure you place emphasis on the right words and place pauses in the right places.



**13.) Connect with the audience.**

It helps you connect with your audience if you can look at them when speaking, even if you're reading the eulogy from a script. Glance ahead of where you're reading so that you'll know what to say, put your finger on where you're up to, glance at the audience and hold their gaze for a few moments, then look back to where your finger is on your script. Keep doing this throughout your eulogy.

**14.) Memorise as much as you can.**

Your words sound more heartfelt if every sentence is not read directly from your script. If you can memorise some or all of your speech, perhaps simply referring to notes, it will be even better.

**15.) Have back-up.**

Have someone on standby who can read the eulogy you have written, just in case you become too emotional to read it yourself. Make sure they have read it through a few times and are familiar with the material.

**16.) Calm yourself.**

Before you speak, take a number of deep breaths to calm yourself. You may choose to have a glass of water on the podium so that you can take a sip if you need a moment to compose yourself.

**17.) Be yourself.**

Keep in mind that you're not doing this to impress anyone. You're doing this to honour the deceased. That's all.

**18.) Be real.**

Use your usual everyday voice. Don't try to speak 'properly' or use a newsreader's voice. Your audience will wonder who you're pretending to be. You need to connect with your audience and they want to connect with you, after all, you're all in this together. You're sharing your grief and putting words to theirs, so relax, make it real and speak from your heart.