

Memoir Writing Prompts

150 prompts, organized by life stage

Before you start

- Pick the prompt that pulls at you. Order does not matter.
- Write or speak for fifteen to twenty minutes and stay in one scene.
- Keep uncertainty visible: “I think it was spring” is better than an invented date.
- Don't polish yet. A rough page that exists beats a perfect one you never start.

Earliest memories

- ☐ 1. Write about the first moment you can remember clearly. Where were you standing?
- ☐ 2. Describe a sound from your early childhood that you could still recognize today.
- ☐ 3. Write about a time you were lost, even for a minute.
- ☐ 4. Describe the lap, hand or voice that meant safety to you when you were small.
- ☐ 5. Write about the first time you saw snow, the sea, or a big city.
- ☐ 6. Describe a toy you loved, and what happened to it.
- ☐ 7. Write about something you were sure was true as a child that turned out not to be.
- ☐ 8. Describe a meal you remember from before you started school.
- ☐ 9. Write about the first time you were truly frightened.
- ☐ 10. Describe a nickname you had, and who gave it to you.

The house you grew up in

- ☐ 11. Stand at the front door of your childhood home. What do you see first?
- ☐ 12. Describe the kitchen at the time of day it was busiest.
- ☐ 13. Write about the room where you were sent when you were in trouble.
- ☐ 14. Describe the view from the window you looked out of most.
- ☐ 15. Write about a place in the house where you hid, read or daydreamed.
- ☐ 16. Describe the smell of the house on a holiday.
- ☐ 17. Write about the bathroom routine on a busy morning.
- ☐ 18. Describe the yard, stairwell or street outside, and who you saw there.
- ☐ 19. Write about something in the house that was broken for years.
- ☐ 20. Describe the sounds of the house at night.

- ☐ 21. Write about a time the house was full of people.
- ☐ 22. Describe the last time you were inside that home.

Family at the table

- ☐ 23. Describe a typical dinner: who sat where, and who did the talking?
- ☐ 24. Write about a family argument you remember, and how it ended.
- ☐ 25. Describe a phrase one of your parents said so often that you can still hear it.
- ☐ 26. Write about a time a parent surprised you.
- ☐ 27. Describe a brother, sister or cousin as they were when you were both young.
- ☐ 28. Write about a family rule, and the time someone broke it.
- ☐ 29. Describe a grandparent through one ordinary thing they did.
- ☐ 30. Write about a family secret you discovered, if you are willing to.
- ☐ 31. Describe how your family celebrated good news.
- ☐ 32. Write about a moment you felt like the outsider in your family.

School days

- ☐ 33. Write about your first day at a new school.
- ☐ 34. Describe the walk, ride or bus journey to school.
- ☐ 35. Write about a teacher who changed how you saw yourself.
- ☐ 36. Describe the classroom you remember best, down to the smell of it.
- ☐ 37. Write about a friend you made at school and how the friendship began.
- ☐ 38. Describe lunchtime: where you sat and what you ate.
- ☐ 39. Write about a time you were embarrassed in front of the class.
- ☐ 40. Describe a test, performance or game you prepared for.
- ☐ 41. Write about something you were punished for, fairly or unfairly.
- ☐ 42. Describe what you did the minute you got home from school.
- ☐ 43. Write about a school trip or special day.
- ☐ 44. Describe the last day of school one year.

Being a teenager

- ☐ 45. Write about the first time you felt independent.
- ☐ 46. Describe your bedroom as a teenager: what was on the walls?
- ☐ 47. Write about a song that belonged to one particular summer.
- ☐ 48. Describe the friends you spent weekends with and where you went.

- ☐ 49. Write about the first job you had and your first paycheck.
- ☐ 50. Describe a fight with a parent that felt huge at the time.
- ☐ 51. Write about a crush and what you did about it, if anything.
- ☐ 52. Describe a time you broke a rule and got away with it, or didn't.
- ☐ 53. Write about what you wore to feel like yourself.
- ☐ 54. Describe a teacher, coach or neighbor who treated you like an adult.
- ☐ 55. Write about a moment you realized your parents were ordinary people.
- ☐ 56. Describe what you thought your future would look like.

Leaving home and first freedoms

- ☐ 57. Write about the day you left home. What did you take with you?
- ☐ 58. Describe your first room, apartment or barracks of your own.
- ☐ 59. Write about the first meal you cooked for yourself.
- ☐ 60. Describe a time you ran out of money.
- ☐ 61. Write about the first person who became family by choice.
- ☐ 62. Describe a city or town the way it looked to you when you first arrived.
- ☐ 63. Write about a mistake that taught you how to be an adult.
- ☐ 64. Describe the first time you voted, signed a lease or bought something big.
- ☐ 65. Write about a letter or phone call from home that you remember.
- ☐ 66. Describe a risk you took and how it turned out.

Work and calling

- ☐ 67. Write about how you got your first real job.
- ☐ 68. Describe an ordinary day at the job you did longest, hour by hour.
- ☐ 69. Write about the person who taught you the most at work.
- ☐ 70. Describe the tools, uniform or desk that meant work to you.
- ☐ 71. Write about a day at work when everything went wrong.
- ☐ 72. Describe a moment you felt proud of something you made or fixed.
- ☐ 73. Write about a time you stood up for yourself or someone else at work.
- ☐ 74. Describe a colleague you still think about.
- ☐ 75. Write about a job you quit, or a job you lost.
- ☐ 76. Describe how you felt on your last day at a job.
- ☐ 77. Write about work you did that nobody paid you for.

- ☐ 78. Describe what you would tell someone starting out in your field.
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Love, friendship and heartbreak

- ☐ 79. Write about the first time you met someone you went on to love.
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- ☐ 80. Describe a date, walk or conversation you remember word for word.
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- ☐ 81. Write about a gift someone gave you that you still keep.
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- ☐ 82. Describe your wedding day, or the day you knew you would build a life together.
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- ☐ 83. Write about the hardest conversation you ever had with a partner.
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- ☐ 84. Describe a friend through one day you spent together.
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- ☐ 85. Write about a friendship that ended, and what you understand about it now.
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- ☐ 86. Describe a small habit of someone you loved.
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- ☐ 87. Write about a heartbreak and the first day you felt better.
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- ☐ 88. Describe a love letter, message or note you received or wrote.
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- ☐ 89. Write about a time a friend showed up for you.
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- ☐ 90. Describe what love looked like in your parents' house.
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Raising a family

- ☐ 91. Write about the day you became a parent.
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- ☐ 92. Describe the first night at home with a new baby.
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- ☐ 93. Write about a moment one of your children made you laugh until you cried.
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- ☐ 94. Describe a family routine from when your children were small.
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- ☐ 95. Write about a time you worried about one of your children.
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- ☐ 96. Describe a family holiday that did not go to plan.
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- ☐ 97. Write about something you did differently from your own parents.
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- ☐ 98. Describe a child's first day of school from where you stood.
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- ☐ 99. Write about a time your child taught you something.
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- ☐ 100. Describe the house when the children had grown and gone.
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Places, moves and journeys

- ☐ 101. Write about a move that changed the direction of your life.
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- ☐ 102. Describe a journey by train, ship, plane or car that you remember vividly.
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- ☐ 103. Write about the first time you went abroad or far from home.
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- ☐ 104. Describe a place you went back to after many years.
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- ☐ 105. Write about a neighborhood that no longer exists as you knew it.
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- ☐ 106. Describe a place where you felt completely at peace.
- ☐ 107. Write about getting lost somewhere unfamiliar.
- ☐ 108. Describe a view you still carry with you.
- ☐ 109. Write about a place you were sad to leave.
- ☐ 110. Describe the place you would choose for one more afternoon.

Objects, keepsakes and photographs

- ☐ 111. Choose an object you have kept for decades. Write about where it came from.
- ☐ 112. Describe a photograph of yourself and what happened just outside the frame.
- ☐ 113. Write about a piece of clothing you loved and wore out.
- ☐ 114. Describe a recipe card, letter or note in someone else's handwriting.
- ☐ 115. Write about something you inherited and what it means to you.
- ☐ 116. Describe a gift you gave that mattered.
- ☐ 117. Write about an object you lost and still think about.
- ☐ 118. Describe your most-used tool, pan or instrument.
- ☐ 119. Write about a photo that tells a story differently from how you remember it.
- ☐ 120. Describe the object you would most want your family to keep, and why.

Hard times, loss and resilience

- ☐ 121. Write about a time you had very little and how you managed.
- ☐ 122. Describe a hospital room, waiting room or kitchen table where you waited for news.
- ☐ 123. Write about someone you lost through one ordinary memory of them.
- ☐ 124. Describe the day you realized a hard time was ending.
- ☐ 125. Write about a time a stranger was kind to you.
- ☐ 126. Describe a decision you made under pressure.
- ☐ 127. Write about something you survived that you rarely talk about.
- ☐ 128. Describe what helped you keep going.
- ☐ 129. Write about a time you had to start over.
- ☐ 130. Describe what you would say now to yourself in the hardest year.

Beliefs, turning points and change

- ☐ 131. Write about a moment that changed your mind about something important.
- ☐ 132. Describe a time your faith, or lack of it, was tested.
- ☐ 133. Write about a book, sermon, speech or conversation that changed you.

☐ 134. Describe a promise you made, and whether you kept it.

☐ 135. Write about a time you changed your life on purpose.

☐ 136. Describe an injustice you witnessed and what you did.

☐ 137. Write about something you used to believe about yourself.

☐ 138. Describe a public event that changed your private life.

☐ 139. Write about the bravest thing you have done.

☐ 140. Describe a moment of forgiveness, given or received.

Later life and looking back

☐ 141. Write about the first day of retirement, or the day you stopped a long routine.

☐ 142. Describe an ordinary day in your life now, as a record for the future.

☐ 143. Write about something you learned late in life.

☐ 144. Describe a friendship that grew stronger with age.

☐ 145. Write about becoming a grandparent, if you are one.

☐ 146. Describe the advice you would give to your twenty-year-old self.

☐ 147. Write about something you are still curious about.

☐ 148. Describe the moment in your life you would most like to relive for a day.

☐ 149. Write a letter to a grandchild who has not been born yet.

☐ 150. Describe how you would like to be remembered, in one scene rather than one sentence.

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