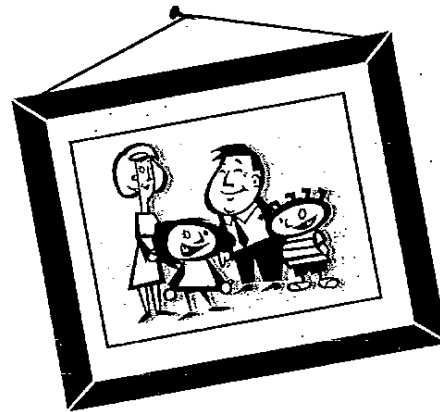
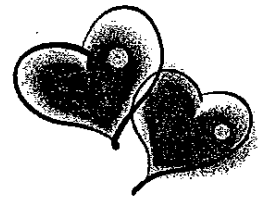
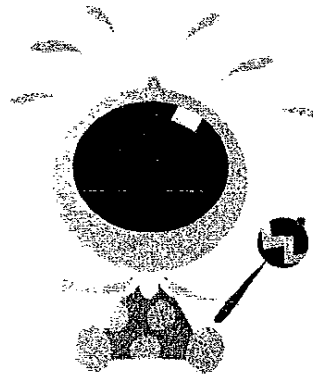
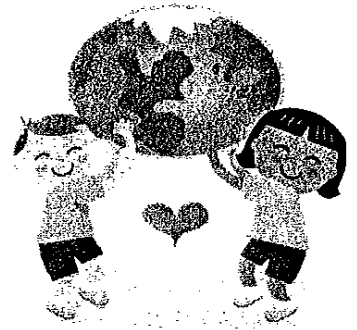


Writing Your Life

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FAMILY TREE

"To move freely you must be deeply rooted."

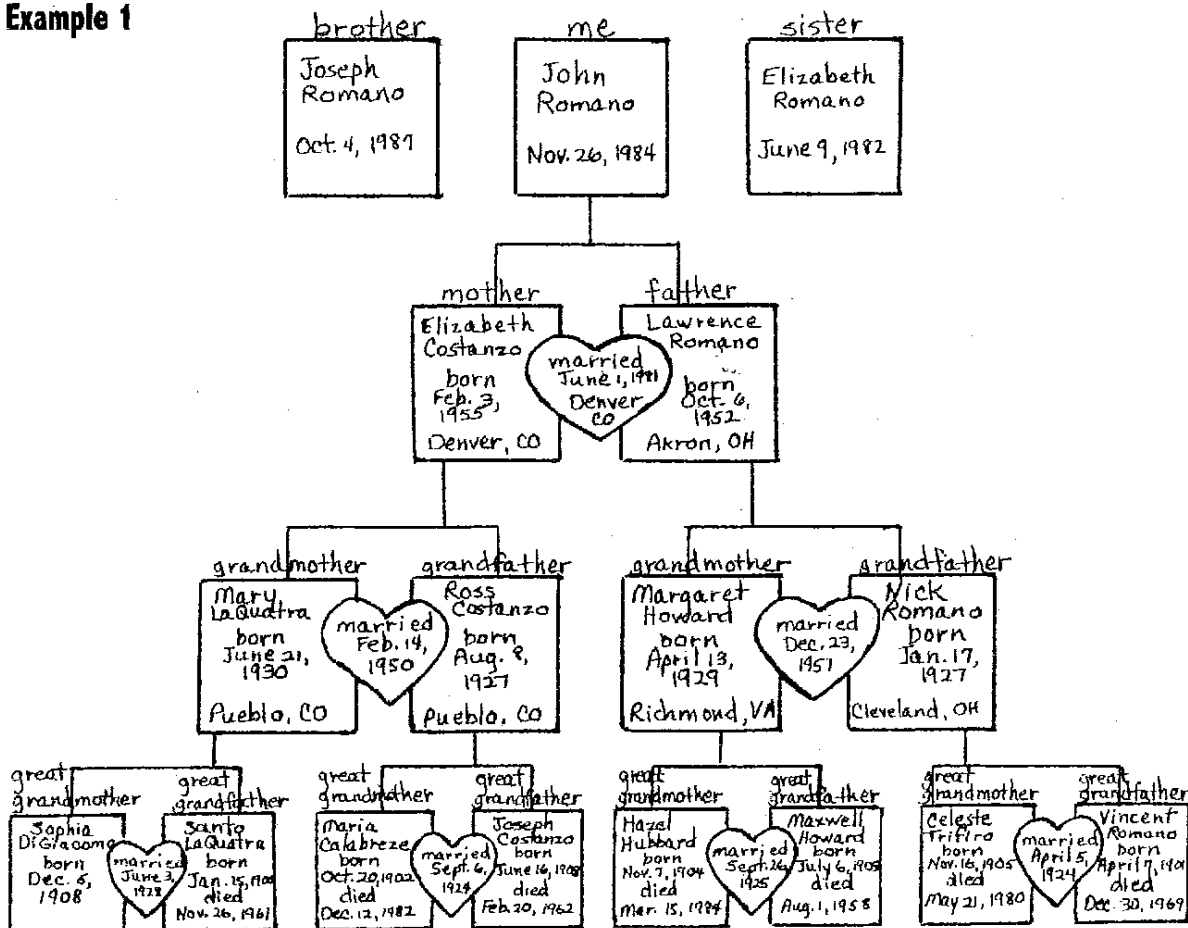
Bella Lewitzky

Draw a picture of your family history by making a family tree. Gather information by talking to your parents and other relatives, including stepparents. You will probably need to make a few phone calls or write a few letters in order to track down names and dates.

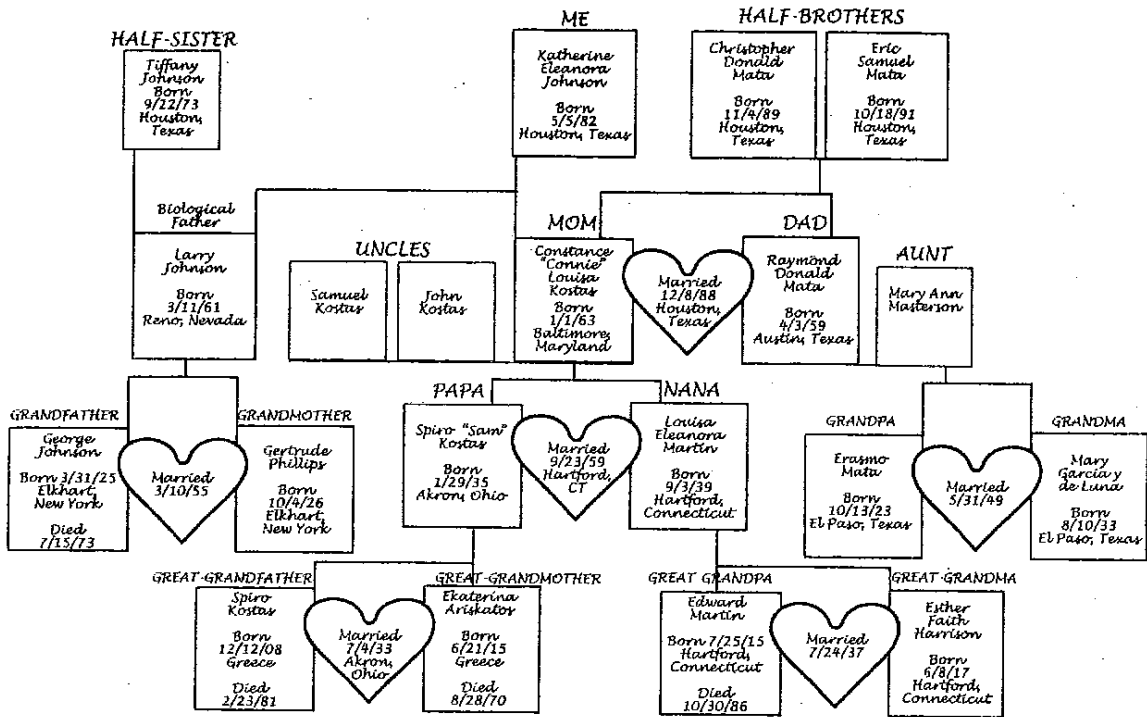
Make your family tree as full as possible by including complete names, places of birth, and dates of birth, marriage and death. Leave blanks for information you can't remember or don't know; perhaps you will be able to add it later.

Remember that families come in many shapes, sizes and forms. Design a family tree to fit *your* circumstances. Here are five sample family trees, to show you just a few possibilities:

Example 1



Example 4



REMEMBER THROUGH RIPPLING

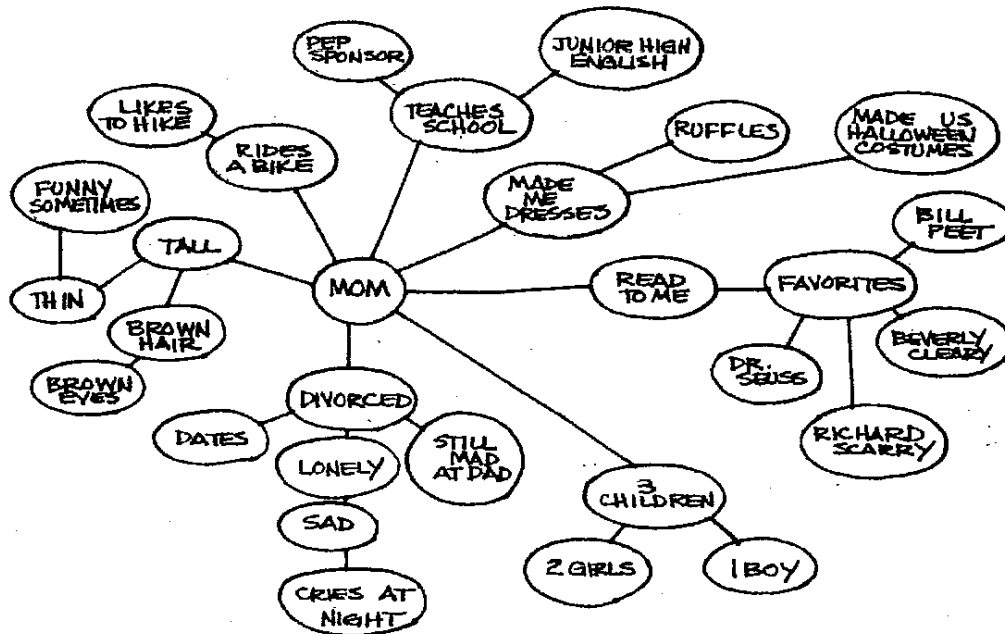
"We do not remember days, we remember moments."

Cesare Pavese

Have you ever skipped a smooth, flat stone in a clear pond? As it hits the water, the stone makes ripples around the point of impact. Then it skips, and more ripples appear.

You can help generate rippling in your mind whenever you want to remember details about a particular subject. Try this: Write the name of the subject in the center of a page. Focus on that subject and draw "ripples" out from it, jotting down any detail at all that you can remember. Each ripple can then generate ripples of its own. Soon you will have a whole page of memories, and it will be easy to begin writing.

Here is an example of one girl's ripples, as she focused on the subject of her mother:



Example

Now try some rippling of your own, using one of these subjects:

- my first days at school
- my mother
- my father
- sisters
- brothers
- holidays
- friends
- grandparents

* Pets

On Your Birthday

"People are trapped in history and history is trapped in them."

James Baldwin

What was the world like the day you were born? What was happening that year? Visit the library and/or your local newspaper office to find a newspaper from the day you were born. Find popular magazines from the year you were born, as well as an almanac and/or any other useful materials.

Getting started

Choose from the questions below to help you write:

1. On the day you were born, what happened in your community, in the United States and in the world?
2. What were the major news events the year you were born?
3. What were the hit songs the year you were born? What were the Oscar-winning movies? Which actors were popular? Which books were best sellers? Who were the sports heroes?
4. What other interesting information can you find about the year you were born? For instance, who was president of the United States?

Before You Started **SCHOOL**

"A person's a person, no matter how small."

Dr. Seuss

What was life like when you were a preschooler — from about ages 2 to 5? Write about the years before you started grade school.

Getting started

Choose from the questions below to help you write:

1. What is your earliest memory? Describe it. Why do you think you remember it?
2. Describe yourself as a preschooler. What did you look like? What did you enjoy doing? What was your favorite thing to eat? What was your general nature — sunny, shy, serious, quiet, ornery, etc.?
3. How did you feel about baby sitters when you were small? Did you have a favorite baby sitter? Who was it?
4. Before you started school, did you stay at home most days, go to a relative's house or attend day care? How did you feel about whatever arrangement you had?
5. Ask your parents (or others who remember you) to tell you about any one or all of the following:
 - something cute you did as a toddler
 - a time when you embarrassed someone
 - a time when someone was frightened for you
 - a time when someone was proud of you
 - a time when someone was irritated or annoyed with you
 - a time when you surprised someone
 - an incident that sums up your personality

YOU AND THE OUTSIDE WORLD

"All adventures, especially into new territory, are scary."
Sally Ride

How were you involved in the outside world when you were younger, the world away from your family? Write about school and activities you were involved in during your earlier school years.

Getting started

Choose from the questions below to help you write:

1. Describe the schools you attended. What was each like? How did you feel about school? What were your favorite subjects? What school programs do you remember? What teachers do you remember most, and why?
2. Did you ride the bus, walk to school or get a ride from your parents? What memories do you have about getting to school?
3. What do you remember about lunch at school? Did you pack your lunch or eat school lunch? If you packed your lunch, what kind of lunchbox did you have?
4. What were your favorite school activities? Did you ever enjoy being in a play, a spelling bee, a concert, a poster contest, student council, etc.? Explain.
5. How did you spend your free time after school and on weekends? What did you do for fun? What games did you play? Did you have any hobbies? What were they?
6. Where did you live when you were little – on a farm, in a town, in a city? Describe your neighborhood and some of your neighborhood activities. How did you get around? (You might even want to draw a map of your neighborhood and the important places in it.)
7. Were you active in any clubs – 4-H, Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts, Bluebirds, Boys and Girls Club? Why did you join? What did you do? What did you learn?
8. Were you involved in organized sports, either through school or other organizations? What did you like about sports? What did you dislike about them? Did you have a favorite coach? Why was he or she your favorite? What was your favorite sport?
9. Did you take lessons of any kind – music lessons, dance lessons, karate lessons, acting lessons, etc.? How did you feel about the lessons? What did you like? What did you dislike?

A

FEW MEMORABLE DATES

"When a dog bites a man, that is not news . . . But if a man bites a dog, that is news."

John B. Bogart

All of us are a part of history. National and world events affect our lives — sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly. Below are some dates in history that have had an impact on people your age. Choose at least two of the dates and write about their effects upon you and people you know. (Or feel free to add other significant dates not listed below. You may want to include dates that affected only your region of the country, your state or your city.) Where were you on those dates? What were you doing? What were your thoughts? How did you react to the news on those dates? How did you feel? How did the news affect your thinking or view of the world?

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| January 28, 1986 | The space shuttle <i>Challenger</i> explodes shortly after takeoff. |
| November 11, 1989 | The Berlin Wall, separating East and West Germany, falls after 28 years. |
| February 11, 1990 | South Africa frees Nelson Mandela after 27 years of imprisonment. |
| January 16, 1991 | Operation Desert Storm begins an attack, led by the United States, on Iraq. |
| April 29, 1992 | Riots break out in Los Angeles after four police officers are acquitted in the beating of Rodney King. |
| February 26, 1993 | A bomb explodes in New York City's World Trade Center, killing six and injuring over 1000. |
| April 19, 1993 | After a 51-day standoff, federal agents destroy the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas, killing 72. |
| April 19, 1995 | A bomb destroys the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 people. |
| October 3, 1995 | A verdict of "not guilty" is announced in the murder trial of O.J. Simpson. |
| July 17, 1996 | TWA Flight 800 explodes and crashes off Long Island, killing everyone aboard. |
| July 4, 1997 | NASA's <i>Pathfinder</i> spacecraft lands on the surface of Mars. |
| August 31, 1997 | Princess Diana of Wales dies in a car crash in Paris. |
| April 20, 1999 | Twelve students and one teacher are murdered at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. |

Family Life

"If I am in harmony with my family, that's success."

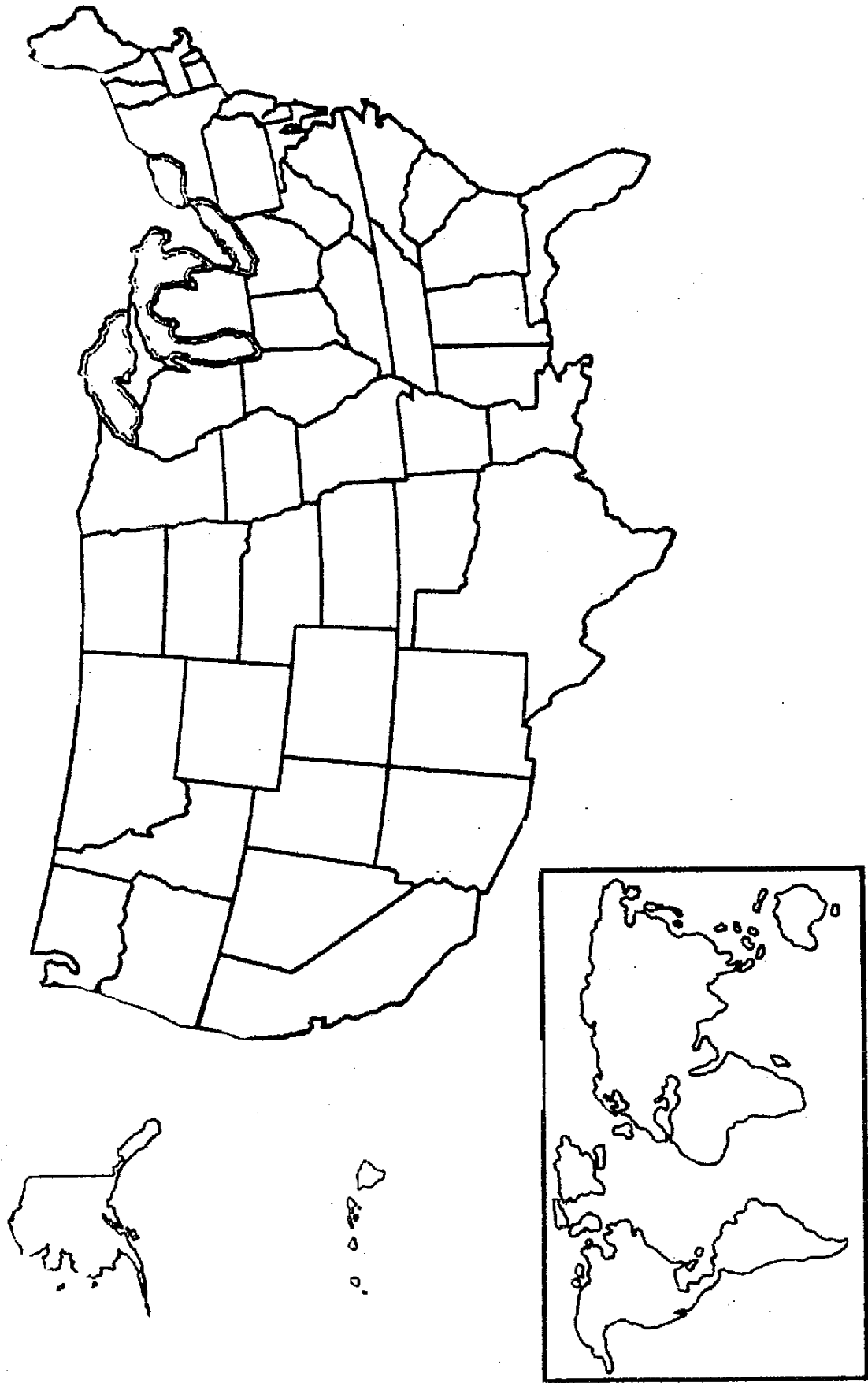
Ute proverb

All families are different, but they have one thing in common: They have a big effect on our lives. Write about life in your family. (If you live part of the time with one parent and part of the time with another, you may choose to write about either or both family situations.)

Getting started

Choose from the questions below to help you write:

1. What is life like in your family? What makes you a family? How do you all manage to get along?
2. How would you describe your family's "personality"? For example, is it noisy, active, quiet, calm, strict, friendly, loving, formal, informal, etc.?
3. What makes your family special? Do you have special words, sayings or jokes? What are the family rules? What are the family traditions? What do you like most about your family?
4. What values are important to your family? For example, honesty may be very important, or doing well in school. Perhaps sharing time with relatives is especially important, or spending time on church activities. What is especially important to your family? How do you show that it is important?
5. Tell some family stories. Did you ever share an adventure? What funny things have happened to you? What frightening things? Can you describe a family hobby, sport or other activity you enjoy together?
6. Are animals or pets a part of your family? If so, explain. Can you tell any interesting animal or pet stories involving your family?
7. Do you spend a lot of time with grandparents, aunts, uncles and/or cousins? Have you had any unusual, special, funny or exciting family get-togethers?
8. How does your family get all the chores done? Does everyone have special responsibilities? What do you have to do?



EVERYDAY LIFE

AT YOUR AGE

"Take time every day to do something silly."

Phillipa Walker

Young people today live lives very different from young people of yesterday or young people of tomorrow. Describe everyday life in your world today. As you write, you will be recording history, so write with honesty.

Imagine someone fifty years from now finding what you have written. How interesting it will be for them to read about your world. And imagine what fun it will be for you — a gray-haired man or woman — to read about your own life in "the good old days."

Getting started

Choose from the questions below to help you write:

1. Describe what is "in" with you and your friends. What music do you like? What dances, television shows, movies, videos, etc., do you enjoy?
2. What is definitely not "in" with you and your friends?
3. Describe the fashions that you and your friends wear. Describe the hairstyles.
4. Describe a typical school day for you. What happens? What do you enjoy? What do you dislike? Is school important to you? Why or why not?
5. What are the conflicts, hassles and stresses in your life? Describe them. What do you do about them — or what are you going to do?
6. What do you do when you are not in school? Describe a typical weekday evening, a typical Saturday and a typical Sunday.
7. What activities are you involved in, other than school? Do you belong to clubs or organizations? Do you have a part-time job? Do you enjoy any hobbies? Are you active in church groups? Do you participate in sports?
8. Describe young people of the opposite sex, in your view. What are they like? What do you like about them? What do you dislike?
9. Do you go on dates? If so, where do you usually go? Do you remember any date especially well? Why?

THOUGHTS ON FRIENDSHIP

"A true friend is someone who is there for you when he'd rather be anywhere else."

Len Wein

According to Robert Louis Stevenson, "A friend is a present you give yourself." No matter what our age, friends are very precious. Write about the friendships that have been important to you, either now or in the past.

Getting started

Choose from the questions below to help you write:

1. Of all the people you have known, who have been your closest friends? Tell a bit about each of these special people. When were you friends (preschool, first grade, middle school, now)? What did you do together? What kinds of support did you give each other? Can you tell a favorite story about each friend?
2. What is most important to you in a friendship? Explain.
3. Have you ever gone on an adventure with a friend? What happened?
4. Have you ever been deeply hurt by a friend or someone you thought was a friend? How did you handle that?
5. Within your family, who has been your best friend? Explain.
6. Did you ever have a friend move away? How did you handle that? Were you able to continue the friendship?
7. What kind of people do you like to spend time with? Are you a member of a group? How important is "belonging" to you?
8. What qualities do your friends bring out in you? Do different friends bring out different qualities? Explain.
9. What do you give to your friends?
10. What can people learn about you by looking at your friends?
11. How does peer pressure affect you? Has it ever helped you? Has it ever caused you problems?

BRAG PAGE

"Modesty is a vastly overrated virtue."

John Kenneth Galbraith

It's time to brag about yourself. Write about the achievements, talents, accomplishments and rewards of your lifetime – and don't be modest.

Getting started

Choose from the questions below to help you write:

1. What moments in your life have most pleased you? When have you been most proud of yourself? Perhaps you saved a dog's life, climbed a mountain, caught a fish, helped a friend in need, knitted a sweater, made a speech or learned to speak another language. What pleased you about what you did or about what happened?

2. What awards have you received in your lifetime? Perhaps you won a spelling bee, a blue ribbon at the county fair, a poetry contest, a dance contest, a most valuable player award for your softball team or a perfect attendance certificate.

Be sure to mention trophies, plaques, certificates, cash prizes or other awards. Include recognition from schools, clubs, churches, charities, community organizations, hobbies or other sources.

3. What are your talents, large and small? Perhaps you are known as a talented singer, a good cook, an interesting conversationalist, a versatile athlete, a gifted artist or a great baby sitter. Perhaps you have a way with animals, an ability to tell jokes, a knack for finding bargains or an aptitude for leadership. Whatever your talents, tell about them.

4. What special skills help make you unique? Perhaps you can touch your nose with your tongue, recite the alphabet backwards, walk on your hands, do the splits or do a great Donald Duck imitation. Have some fun with this one.

5. When other people have complimented you over the years, what have they most often said? Perhaps they have complimented your smile, your sense of humor, your beautiful eyes, your organizational skills, your athletic ability, your strength, your long hair, your thoughtfulness or your energy. Tell about your most frequent compliments – and now is not the time to be modest!