

CREATING A MEMORY BOOK

You don't need a publishing contract and an agent to create a book that you, your family and your friends can be proud of. Find out how to create a book which celebrates your life – past and present – in a fun, interesting and inexpensive way!

What is a memory book?

A memory book is a collection of memories (of either one person or of a group of people) made accessible to a wider audience. The memories can be presented visually (i.e. old photographs), told as stories using text or a combination of both.

Why create memory book?

- It is a good way of permanently recording recollections of events, eras, people etc
- Others can explore the past and your experience of it through the memory book
- You can use and develop new skills in creating a memory book i.e. writing, art and design, editing, IT
- Creating a book as part of a group can be great fun. It offers the opportunity to find out more about people as you share stories and discuss issues
- Creating the book might provide you with an opportunity to research new areas of interest
- A memory book is a wonderful gift for family and friends and is something that you can feel proud of

How do you get started?

You might be creating the book by yourself or as part of a group, but you need to be clear about any theme or structure early on. If you are working in a group, you may decide that the book will be a collection of personal stories – perhaps one page per person. Alternatively, you might alight on a theme for the book, such as theatre or the local high street during war time, which runs through all contributions. Once you have an idea of how the book will come together, you can start producing the content.

What to include in the book?

Your memories are the starting point for the content of your book, but it isn't always easy to remember what happened a long time ago or indeed to talk freely about the past. If you are working as part of a group, you might collect together some objects or photographs from your past which have certain memories or stories associated with them. Look at and talk about these objects with others and see what sort of memories this triggers. If you are working on your own, try visiting the local museum, archive or library; explore things that interest you and that have relevance to your past. This might prompt some ideas for what to include in your book.

Photographs and images can make your book visually interesting. Look through your photo albums for images that you associate with the stories you wish to include in your book. You can create copies of these images (so that you can keep the original) by scanning them onto a computer (see below for more information on scanning).

You might want to include current photographs of yourself and others who have contributed to the book. Make sure you take good quality, digital photographs that you can transfer easily to a computer.

Presentation

You should present the content in the book as you like, but remember that other people will be reading it, so think about what will make their experience enjoyable and engaging:

- Label photographs and images
- Use the same font size and format for all headings, sub-headings and text
- Explain any references that might be unfamiliar to people of different backgrounds, ages etc.
- Keep the text simple and don't put too much text on a page
- Make the front cover attractive and think of a good title
- Acknowledge those who have contributed to the book and helped to compile it
- Proof read the text several times for errors.

Making the book

Before you create the final version of your book, collect all of the images and text and create a "mock up". You can buy sketch pads or use rough paper, cut to the same size as your book pages, and lay out the text and images for each page. This will give you a really good idea of how the book will look.

You could create the final version using a simple scrapbook - sticking in text and images. You can easily get hold of large books with blank pages (hard or soft-backed) from your local stationers, arts and craft shop or WH Smith.

But you can also now create bound and printed books for relatively little. www.blurb.com is a website that can support you through the whole design and print process:

- Download a template for the book design from the www.blurb.com website
- Place your content into the template and then upload the completed template back on to the website
- The team at www.blurb.com will prepare the template for printing and you can then order and pay for as many copies as you would like. www.blurb.com will post the books to you.

You can create your book using your own design programme (Adobe InDesign is recommended). You would then upload your finished design to the Blurb website and order as above. Whichever design programme you use, make sure the measurements are the same as the print sizes available through Blurb. If you are not using a publisher's template remember to make allowances for the spine and the gutter of the book.

Further information and support

Scanning images - All images need to be scanned on at least 600dpi (dots per inch) to make sure that they are of sufficient print quality. You can purchase scanners for as little as £50 or you can buy a printer with a scanning function (which will be a little more expensive). You will need to connect your scanner to your computer so that you can store your scanned images – make sure your printer and scanner are compatible. If you don't want to buy a scanner, you should be able to make use of one at your library, or, for a small fee, at your local newsagent or internet cafe.

Companies which provide online design and print services are:

<http://www.blurb.com>; <http://www.unibook.com>; <http://www.photobox.co.uk>;

http://www.solentro.co.uk/find_out/my_own