

# STORYTELLING 101

FOR MEMOIR WRITERS

*Tolulope Popoola*



# Storytelling 101 for Memoir Writers

## 6 Essential Steps to Masterful Memoir Storytelling

**Tolulope Popoola**

This guide contains valuable tips and advice to help you finally get started with that dream of writing your memoir.

Copyright

Tolulope Popoola

2025



## Introduction

Hello friend. For years, you have dreamed of writing your memoir. You know your life has stories worth telling - lessons learned, moments of heartbreak, resilience, and triumph. But every time you think about the project or sit down to write, you feel overwhelmed and stuck. Where do you even begin? How can you make your memories compelling, rather than just a collection of events? And most of all, who would even care about your story?

If you've ever felt this way, you're not alone. The truth is, many aspiring writers get stuck before they even start. They feel overwhelmed by the sheer weight of their experiences. They doubt their ability to shape their life story into something readable and meaningful.

Don't worry, the solution is here! After working with many clients who come to me because they have been stuck for so long, I have developed a simple, step-by-step method that makes memoir writing **easy, engaging, and deeply satisfying**.

In this guide, I'm going to share that method with you. You'll learn exactly how to structure your story, how to make readers feel something, and how to overcome the doubts that may be holding you back. Writing a memoir isn't just about recounting facts, it's about **turning your life into a powerful, unforgettable narrative**. By the end of this guide, you'll know how to do just that. And more importantly, you'll believe that your story is worth telling.

# Common Myths about Memoir Writing

## **Myth 1 - "My life isn't interesting enough to write a memoir."**

When people think about writing a memoir, they often fall into a few common traps. They believe they have to be famous. They think their life has to be extraordinary to be worth reading. They assume memoir writing is just about documenting facts rather than crafting a compelling story. They believe their stories need to be full of dramatic events to be worth telling. The truth is, memoirs are not about extraordinary lives, they're about universal emotions. Readers connect with honesty, reflection, and personal growth, no matter how "ordinary" the life described may seem.

## **Myth 2 - "I need to have a perfect memory to write a memoir."**

Memoir writing isn't about recalling every detail exactly as it happened. It's about capturing the essence and emotional truth of your experiences. Writers can use research, interviews, and reflection to piece together memories and shape a compelling narrative.

## **Myth 3 - "Memoirs should include every detail of my life."**

A memoir isn't an autobiography. It doesn't need to cover your entire life from birth to present. Instead, memoirs focus on specific themes or pivotal moments that shaped your journey.

#### **Myth 4 - "I can't write about certain people because I'll upset them."**

While writing about real people can be tricky, it's possible to tell your story while being respectful. Changing names, altering details, and focusing on your perspective rather than blaming others can help navigate sensitive topics.

#### **Myth 5 - "I need to be a great writer before I start."**

The best memoirs aren't written by literary experts—they're written by people with a story to tell. Writing is a skill that improves with practice. The key is to start, revise, and refine your voice over time.

## **Common Myths About Writing in General**

#### **Myth 6 – "Great writers are born, not made."**

Writing is a skill that anyone can develop. Even bestselling authors started somewhere. The more you write, the better you become. The truth is, storytelling is a skill that anyone can learn. You don't need fancy words or a literary background. You just need a clear structure, an authentic voice, and the courage to begin.

#### **Myth 7 – "You have to write every day to be a real writer."**

While consistency helps, writing isn't a one-size-fits-all process. Some writers create daily, while others work in bursts. The key is finding a routine that works for you.

**Myth 8 – “Writer’s block means I’m not meant to write.”**

Every writer experiences writer’s block. It doesn’t mean you’re not cut out for writing, it just means you need a break, a shift in perspective, or a new strategy to get unstuck.

**Myth 9 – “If my first draft is bad, I’m not a good writer.”**

First drafts are meant to be messy! Writing is rewriting. Even famous authors go through multiple drafts before their work is polished and ready for readers.

**Myth 10 – “Traditional publishing is the only path to success.”**

With the rise of self-publishing and hybrid publishing, writers today have more control over their work than ever before. You can choose the best path based on your goals, audience, and creative vision.

As you can see, none of these myths are true. Some of the most powerful memoirs come from everyday people sharing real, human experiences. They didn’t have to be perfect before they started. If you’ve lived, loved, lost, struggled, or grown in any way, you have a memoir worth writing.

## How to Get Started

Writing a compelling memoir doesn't have to be complicated. In fact, the best memoirs follow a simple process:

### **Step 1: Define your theme**

Before you start writing, ask yourself: *What is my memoir really about?* This isn't just a collection of memories; it's a story with a deeper message. Maybe your memoir is about resilience after loss, finding identity, or overcoming a traumatic event. Identifying your theme will give your memoir direction and focus.

### **Step 2: Research and planning:**

When you've decided on your theme, you then need to do some research. You can look up other books that have been published that are similar or have talked about similar topics. You can also research key elements of the story, such as an important setting, like the places events happened, the time period, or the political and cultural context, which might give your memoir more depth.

You also need to plan who your target audience would be, and how you are going to structure your memoir to appeal to them. If you haven't already, try to brainstorm ideas for a title.

### **Step 3: Outline your key moments**

Think of your life as a movie. What are the most pivotal moments? Which experiences shaped you the most? Which moments are embedded in your mind because they were impactful? Which moment gave you clarity? Make a list of these turning points, and start to arrange them in a way that makes sense for your story. You don't have to write in chronological order—start with the moments that feel the most powerful.

### **Step 4: Show, don't tell**

Great memoirs make readers *feel* something. Practice using descriptive words to paint a picture or evoke an emotion for your reader. Instead of saying, "I was heartbroken," describe what it was like to sit alone in your empty apartment, staring at the wedding photos you couldn't bring yourself to take down. The more vividly you paint a picture, the more your readers will connect with your story.

### **Step 5: Write as if you're talking to a friend**

Your memoir isn't a history book, it's more like a conversation between you and the reader. Write the way you'd speak to a close friend. Be honest, be vulnerable, and don't worry about sounding "perfect." The more real your writing is, the more engaging it will be. If you're struggling to write, try speaking your ideas aloud and recording them. You might find it easier to express your stories this way. Use speech-to-text software to transcribe the recordings, then edit until satisfied with the text.

## **Step 6: Write the entire first draft, then edit ruthlessly**

The first draft is just the beginning. Once you've finished writing your story, you should take a break from it for a while, so you can get some distance, then come back to it with fresh eyes. It is easy to get emotionally attached to the work, because after all, it is your story, but you should cut out anything that doesn't serve your theme. Learn the art of editing carefully so you can strengthen your dialogue, sharpen your descriptions, and make sure every sentence keeps your reader engaged. When you feel you've done enough editing, get feedback from trusted beta readers who will spot things that you may have missed.

By following these steps, you'll create a memoir that is both deeply personal and universally relatable. And most importantly, you'll write something that feels true to *you*.

## Overcoming Challenges and Roadblocks

Writing a memoir is deeply personal and rewarding, but it also comes with its fair share of issues. Once you start writing, new challenges will arise. Doubt will creep in. You might wonder if your story is “good enough.” You might struggle with motivation. You might worry about what your family will think.

The key to overcoming these roadblocks is to **keep showing up**. Set a writing schedule, even if it’s just 15 minutes a day. Remind yourself that perfection isn’t the goal, progress is. And when self-doubt whispers that your story isn’t worth telling, remember: **your truth matters**.

**Keep your end goal in mind.** Think about the reason why you want to write your memoir, and picture yourself achieving that goal. Do you want to share your inspiring life story to bless other people? Do you want to write a story that teaches a lesson? Do you want to highlight an important topic or issue that affected you and potentially help people? Do you want to tell an important historical event that you feel the world needs to know? Whatever the goal for your desire to write, really think about the end result. When you’re tempted to reach for the TV remote or watch a YouTube video, remember your end goal. Think about what completing the book will do for your sense of achievement, and the fulfilment of your long-held dream. When you can visualise yourself typing “THE END” on your finished manuscript, you will be motivated to stick with it until you make it a reality.

**Here are some common obstacles you may face, and how to overcome them:**

**1. What if I don't know where to start?**

Start by brainstorming key moments, themes, or life lessons you want to share. Create a timeline or mind map of significant events and focus on a central theme to guide your writing. Remember, you don't have to start at the beginning—write the most vivid memories first and shape the structure later.

**2. What if I struggle with self-doubt?**

Almost every writer faces imposter syndrome. Instead of worrying if your story is “good enough,” focus on why you're writing it—to inspire, to heal, to leave a legacy. Trust that your unique voice and perspective will resonate with readers.

**3. What if I can't remember all the details?**

It's normal to have gaps in memory. Use journals, photos, letters, and conversations with family or friends to fill in missing details. However, memoirs are about emotional truth, not perfect recall—write what you remember and what it meant to you.

4. What if I get **stuck in the middle of my memoir?** If this happens, take a step back and revisit your theme. Are you straying too far from your main message? Are you getting bogged down in unnecessary details? Refocusing on your core story can help you push through writer's block and keep going.

## **5. How do I handle writing about painful memories?**

Writing about trauma or difficult experiences can be emotionally taxing. Take breaks when needed, seek support from a therapist or trusted friend, and focus on the growth or resolution in your story. Writing can be a powerful tool for healing.

## **6. What if I'm worried about what others will think?**

It's your story. While it's understandable to worry about how others might react, remember that you have the right to share your truth. If needed, change names, locations, or focus on your perspective rather than making accusations.

## **6. How do I make my memoir engaging?**

Good storytelling is key. Show, don't just tell—use vivid descriptions, dialogue, and sensory details. Create emotional highs and lows, and structure your memoir like a novel, with a strong opening, conflict, and resolution.

## **7. What if I run out of motivation?**

Set small, achievable goals. Whether it's writing 500 words a day or one chapter a week, consistency is key. Find an accountability partner, join a writing group, or work with a coach to stay on track.

## **8. How do I balance honesty with respect for others?**

Consider your intentions - are you writing to hurt or to heal? If including someone's story feels necessary, weigh the impact carefully. If needed, anonymize details or focus more on your journey rather than placing blame.

## **9. What if my first draft is terrible?**

All first drafts are rough. The goal is to get the words down, not to make them perfect. Editing and refining come later. Keep writing, and don't judge your work too soon.

## **10. How do I know when my memoir is finished?**

A memoir is done when it fully conveys the message or transformation you intended. If you find yourself endlessly tweaking, get feedback from beta readers, a writing coach, or an editor to help you gain perspective and decide when it's ready to publish.

**Every writer faces challenges, but the key is persistence. Your story matters. Keep going!**

## **Conclusion**

Writing a memoir is one of the most powerful things you can do. It's a way to honour your experiences, reflect on your growth, and connect with others through the universal truths of life. More importantly, it's a gift - to yourself and to those who will read your story.

You don't need to be famous. You don't need a perfect memory. You don't need to be a professional writer. All you need is the courage to begin. Your story matters. And now, you have the tools to tell it.

**So don't wait. Start writing today. The world needs your story.**

## Thank you for reading! Let me introduce myself:



Hi! I'm Tolulope Popoola, an award-winning Author, Writing Coach, and Publishing Consultant who took a bold leap from the world of accounting to follow my true passion - writing. Along the way, I've learned the ins and outs of storytelling, publishing, and marketing, successfully launching my own bestselling novel and collections of flash fiction stories. ([Check out my Amazon page here!](#))

in the right place.

Now, I'm on a mission to help **you** - whether you're an aspiring author, a passionate storyteller, or a parent nurturing a young writer - turn your ideas into compelling books. If you've ever felt stuck, overwhelmed, or unsure about your writing journey, you're

## How I can help you

**Courses** – For parents looking for a writing coach for their child, I run a weekly [Creative Writing Club for Kids and Teens](#), for ages 9 to 15. I also teach one-to-one lessons for children of other ages.

For adults, I have online courses: [Creative Writing for Beginners](#), [The Self-Publishing Course](#), and [The Book Marketing Course](#). Looking for an immersive experience? Join my [Intensive Two-Day Writing Workshop for Adults](#). I also have some mini courses, such as [The Plot Structure Blueprint](#).

**One-on-One Coaching** – If you're writing a novel or nonfiction book and need expert guidance, I offer personalized coaching sessions to walk you through your book, step by step.

**Publishing Support** – Ready to publish? I'll teach you how to transform your manuscript into a **professionally published book**, whether in print, ebook, or audiobook format.

Writing a book is more than just putting words on a page—it's about crafting a legacy. I'd love to help you bring your story to life!

### Let's get started!

Click on the links below to book a free 15-minute call with me, visit my website or connect with me on social media to explore courses, coaching, and publishing services that will take your writing to the next level.

|                             |                           |                          |                         |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| <a href="#">Book a call</a> | <a href="#">Instagram</a> | <a href="#">Facebook</a> | <a href="#">Website</a> |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|