Eulogy template

Fill in one part at a time, in pencil, in your own words. Skip any line that does not fit. Write the three stories first: the opening and the one sentence about who they were come easier once the stories are on paper.

Before you write

Ten minutes of notes, no sentences yet. You will choose from this page later.

Their name, and the name everyone called them

Who you are to them

How long you have to speak (ask whoever is leading the service)

Who else is speaking, and what they plan to talk about

Something they said, word for word: a phrase, a sign-off, a piece of advice

Stories that come to mind, a few words each. Write down more than three, then choose.

People to ask for a story you were not there for

More room to write

1. Opening line

About 20 seconds. Say who you are to them, then start with a picture, not a summary: where they sat, what they always had in their hands, the sound of them at the door.

I am (your name), and I was their (who you are to them)

One picture of them that most people here will recognize

Your opening, written out in full

2. Who they were, in one sentence

About 15 seconds. Write this after the stories. If the sentence could be said about anyone, make it more specific.

The words people keep using about them this week

What those words looked like in something they actually did

Who they were, in one sentence

More room to write

3. First story: an ordinary day

About a minute. Something they did so often that everyone here has seen it. Ask yourself: what did they do every week without fail? What did they say when you walked in? What was always by their chair, on their desk or in their pockets?

Where and when

What happened, in the order it happened

What they said or did that nobody else would have

What this story shows about them (for you, not to read out)

More room to write

4. Second story: when it mattered

About a minute. A time they showed up, took a stand or surprised you. Ask yourself: who did you call when something went wrong? When did they do the hard thing? When did they surprise everyone?

Where and when

What happened, in the order it happened

What they said or did that nobody else would have

What this story shows about them (for you, not to read out)

More room to write

5. Third story: the side you did not see

About a minute. A story someone else gave you: a friend, a colleague, a neighbor, a brother or sister, someone who knew them before you did. Ask them for one story, not a tribute, and say in the speech who told it to you.

Who told you this story

Where and when

What happened, in the order it happened

What this story shows about them (for you, not to read out)

More room to write

6. What they taught us

About 30 seconds. Not a list of virtues. One thing you or the family still do because of them.

Something they taught you without meaning to

Something you still do because of them

Their words, exactly, if you have them

7. Closing line

About 20 seconds. Short sentences, because this is where your voice is most likely to go. Speak to them, to the family or to the room, and then stop.

Who you will speak to last: them, the family or the room

Your closing line, written out in full

More room to write

Read it aloud

At about 130 words a minute, 3 minutes is about 390 words, 4 minutes about 520 and 5 minutes about 650. Time yourself once, out loud, before the day.

Words in total

Time when read aloud, first try

What to cut if it runs long

Lines where you will need to pause (mark them on the page too)

Who will read it for you if you cannot

Printed in large type, double spaced, two copies (tick when done)

More room to write