

10 Legal Tips to Remember When Writing a Memoir

This is an extra resource to go along with the original article:

[*Memoir: How to Write About Family*](#)

1. Consult a lawyer before publishing. Prepare a list of questions to ask.
2. Fact check your work before publishing. Don't rely on memories alone. You can use Google to check the details.
3. Don't lie. Truth is the best defense against defamation claims.
4. Write under an assumed name.
5. Change the names of your characters. This is perhaps the simplest way to minimize your legal risk, but it doesn't always protect you 100%.
6. Don't include physical descriptions. Reduce the amount of identifiable information in your story.
7. Change any identifying characteristics, such as age, job, hair color, etc.
8. Ask for your family member's permission— in writing. If they consent, they can't sue.
9. You are free to your own opinions. Opinions are not defamation. However, opinions must be weighted by facts or evidence. You can't make wild claims in memoirs.
10. Don't be vengeful in your memoir. Don't say things just to hurt another person. Even if something isn't illegal, it may be immoral, and that doesn't make for a good read.