

# REMEMBERS WHEN

## LESSON 7 WORKSHEET

Title

### CHECKING YOUR FACTS

It is time to check the details of your story. Often we remember the “important” things, but our minds play tricks with the details. When you can cross-check a detail and verify it, do so. Often too much detail detracts from what we remember, so decide if the detail is necessary to the story.

Are your dates, ages, times, and years correct? If in doubt, generalize. Say “after I graduated,” “when I was in my teens,” or “before I started school.” Only use specific dates if you are sure and they are important to the story.

Have you recalled the right people? If you are not positive of the name (or if using the name might compromise someone else’s privacy), generalize. Say “...a teacher once told me...,” “...a friend and I went...,” or “...one of my cousins....” If you use someone’s name, please make sure you have spelled the name correctly.

Are you sure where it happened? Instead of giving a specific address (which no one really cares about) use phrases like “...on the farm in Iowa...,” “...when I went to Europe...,” or “...at college....”

Have you put words in someone else’s mouth? If you are recording dialog, you need to use words that the other person actually said. Instead, use phrases like “She said that...,” “He alluded to the fact...,” or “I understood him to say...”

Have you stated as fact anything that is actually your opinion? If you did not witness the event or hear what the person said, don’t say what that person thought or did. You can only report what you experienced. Use words like “I had the impression that he...,” “She didn’t seem to...,” or “I think they....”

Is your story real or wishful thinking? Our minds will give us the version of the story that we believe. To some extent, that is okay because it is the way we remember things. But running off into fantasy crosses the line between memoir and fiction. If you didn’t actually meet the president, you couldn’t have told him something. A memoir is the way you remember real experiences, not fantasies.

If you make statements about other people, they have the right to contest what you say – maybe even to the point of legal action. Avoid the serious mistakes of naming people and casting aspersions on their character. The nature of a memoir is to reveal the “inside story,” so of course you want to tell about things that no one else knows. Just be fair and considerate of people who may be adversely affected by what you write. Don’t, in general, “dish the dirt.”

You’ll find more great resources and a place to publish and read memoirs at <http://rememberswhen.com>.