

Adoption Lifebooks

People often ask me, "What is a Lifebook?" I will respond, "It's the best gift you can ever give an adopted child." A Lifebook is a record of an adoptee's life that uses words, photos, your child's artwork, computer graphics, and memorabilia."

But it's more than a life story. It is a unique opportunity for parents to honor every minute of their child's life. A Lifebook is an adoption security blanket. It makes talking about adoption feel like everyday conversation. Putting your child's life story on paper is such a simple concept. Who would have guessed that the benefits are countless?

Beth O'Malley

author of LifeBooks: Creating a Treasure for the Adopted Child

Don't be intimidated by the task of a Lifebook. It's a gift to your child that will help to convey their story. You don't have to be crafty or artistic. There are a lot of ways to accomplish this goal. Here are just a few:

1. Hire someone else to do the work! www.customadoptionbooks.com
2. Buy a photo album that allows you to insert your photos and has space for your handwritten captions. www.hobbylobby.com or www.creativememories.com
3. Download all the photos and written information to create a hardbound book that a company will make for you. www.onetruemedia.com or www.snapfish.com or www.shutterfly.com or Creative Memories even has a similar product
4. Buy a 3 ring binder and 8 ½" x 11" plastic page protectors for papers that size and the 8 ½" x 11" sheets that are protectors with space for 3 photos to be inserted. Create your own Lifebook, and even include older kids. It doesn't have to be fancy – just something that tells the story.
5. Cut 8 ½" x 11" scrapbook papers in half. Using these half-sheets, glue on photos and handwritten captions to tell the story. Take the pages to FedExKinkos and have the pages laminated and spiral bound. Voila! An instant "safe" Lifebook for drooling toddlers to enjoy on their own.
6. Create a scrapbook in the traditional scrapbook style to tell the story. It can be very simple, gluing on photos, writing captions, and adding in adoption certificates and paperwork. Or, you can dress it up with all kinds of scrapbook products from stickers to die cuts to beautiful papers.
7. If you are technically savvy, create a Lifebook by creating a CD slide show where you insert photos to play with selected music. Macintosh computers have great capacity for this. Also, Microsoft Movie Maker is user friendly, or try a website such as www.onetruemedia.com.

Created By: Heather Enright

Tapestry

A Ministry for Adoptive and Foster Families

Lifebook Resources

Websites:

www.scrapandtell.com

www.adoptionlifebooks.com

www.customadoptionbooks.com

www.lifebooksource.com

www.onetruemedia.com

www.adoptivefamilies.com/scrapbooks

www.creativememories.com

www.snapfish.com

www.shutterfly.com

www.tapestrybooks.com

www.mypublisher.com

www.kodakgallery.com

Books:

LifeBooks...Creating a Treasure for the Adopted Child by Beth O'Malley

LifeBook Writing Guide for Parents of Adopted Chinese Children by Kay Groap

My China Work Book: An Adoption Memory Book for Kids Adopted from China by Beth O'Malley

My Special Family: A Children's Book About Open Adoption by Kathleen Silber and Debra Marks Parelskin

Adoption Lifebook: A Bridge To Your Child's Beginnings by Cindy Probst

Before You Were Mine: Discovering Your Adopted Child's Lifestory by Susan TeBos and Carissa Woodwyk

Ideas of What to Include In a Lifebook*

Life before Baby/Child

- type of work you do
- places you've lived
- hobbies
- pets
- what a typical weekend would be like "before baby"

Adoption Process

- story of how you decided to adopt (and why)
- how you chose country (if International)
- how long the process took - steps involved
- photos of homestudy and agency personnel
- description of talks with birthmother (pictures if possible)
- home study
- referral picture and docs that arrived with picture
- referral call, what you were doing when you got it

Birth and Foster Families

- socio-economic background of the birth mother
- names (and photos if possible) of the birth mother, father, grandparents
- names (and photos if possible) of the foster mother and family
- a birth and adopted family tree

Legal Section

- place of birth
- places where the child has lived (foster families, orphanages, reasons for moves)
- birth certificate
- social security card
- citizenship copy
- court petition (readopt) and decree

The Name Game

- a description on how you arrived at baby's name
- what the name means
- a list of your top choices
- child's name written in their language

The Nursery

- photos of fixing up the nursery
- descriptions of why you purchased what you did
- what was the most popular theme at the time

Travel Section

- airplane ticket stubs
- money from the country
- maps
- a local newspaper from the birth town/country
- brochures from museums and theatres that were visited
- a little bit of the orphanage (a stone from outside, a small handful of dirt, etc.)
- their name written in their language
- pictures of orphanage, caretakers, homestay families, drivers, interpreters, judge, sightseeing, airport and everything else that happens on your Int'l journey.
- for domestic--pictures of the hospital, birthmom (if possible), hotel you stayed in, and everything else that was a part of the "travel" experience.
- what you were doing when you got the call saying it was time to travel

Baby Showers

- baby shower(s) invitation
- photos of baby shower(s)
- piece of gift paper and card for each baby gift (this could get big, so maybe a small collage)
- names of people who were in attendance

Arrival Section

- first family photo after joining the child
- photos of arrival (the plane)
- date, time, airlines and place of arrival
- description of travel with child
- photos of passport/visa
- if child was escorted, escort information & photos, write any comments escort made regarding the trip with your child
- photos of people meeting you at the airport
- pictures of your house if someone decorated it before you got home
- pictures of family/friends holding the baby with huge smiles
- short personal handwritten notes from family/friends welcoming the baby

Personal Section

- baby's favorite food, toy, book, etc.
- list sleep and nap patterns (incl. picture)
- describe how they like bathing (incl. picture)

Medical Section

- report of each physical including updated measurements at each doctor visit
- immunization record
- full physical, history and clearance for adoption
- hand and foot imprints

- birth statistics (height, weight, head circumference, etc.)
- pictures of the doctors at the orphanage, Embassy and home pediatrician

Political & Current Affairs Section

- who was in office
- anything that you find interesting about the current state of affairs
- International adoptions could include: political picture of country, people in office, economic picture and any state of affairs you find interesting about that country.
- International adoption can include flag of country
- list the current hot sports stars and teams
- list the current hot actors, actresses and movies
- what food was chic--what restaurants
- what fashion was hot

Cost of Things

- cost of movies
- price of diapers, formula, Big Mac, etc.
- average annual income for the nation
- average home price for your region

The Adoption Announcement

- include the adoption announcement
- describe why you picked that particular one

Customs/Holidays

- pictures of all the child's "first" holidays with your family
- describe the feelings of having your child present for these special occasions
- a list of holidays from the home country and a description of how they are celebrated

Christening/Dedication Ceremonies

- pictures of ceremonies
- copy of invitation to ceremony

Ceremonies

- naturalization/citizenship pictures and any documents received
- visa appointment
- readoption court appearance

Gotcha Day Celebration

- for International adoptees, pictures of the family celebrating gotcha day
- description for any particular reason you chose to celebrate the way you did

Poetry

--You can either have a section of adoption poems that you love or space your favorite poems throughout the book. Perhaps put one at the beginning of each chapter?

**From www.scrapandtell.com.*