

11 tips for preparing your last will and testament.



Most people know a will is important, but many of us put off the responsibility of actually writing one.

And while it may seem like a will won't be needed for a while, taking care of it now is an act of kindness for your loved ones – saving them time, money and potential conflict, should the unexpected happen.

Need help getting started? We've gathered a few pointers below:

1. **Seek the help of an attorney.** Keep in mind a will that's not properly constructed can easily be contested. An attorney can help you avoid this.
2. **Know the laws of your state.** If you write the will yourself, you'll need to do your homework, as estate laws differ in every state.
3. **Clearly define your beneficiaries.** Include full legal names, addresses and social security numbers to make sure the right people inherit the right things.
4. **Remember the law typically favors the current spouse.** If you want others to inherit, including children from a prior relationship or extended family, make it clear in the will.
5. **Appoint the executor.** This is not the time to worry about hurt feelings. Choose an executor with a history of financial responsibility and someone you trust to be honest and fair.
6. **Determine if and how the executor will be paid.** The role of executor is tedious and time consuming. Often, a small percentage of the estate is appropriate compensation.
7. **Specify who gets family heirlooms or items of tangible value.** This is often written out in

a separate letter kept with the will. Making these decisions yourself can help avoid conflict between your beneficiaries.

8. **Appoint a guardian for minor children.** If you have young children, consider who you trust to raise them in a manner that reflects your values. And establish a children's trust to ensure their guardian has access to all necessary child-rearing funds and that your children inherit according to your wishes.
9. **Select witnesses and have them sign in front of a notary.** Keep in mind that beneficiaries should not be witnesses.
10. **Place the will in a safe place and alert the executor of its location.** If a will is not located and recorded, your wishes may not be followed.
11. **Update your will periodically.** Has your estate grown? Have you married or divorced? Had a child? Has your executor pre-deceased you? Many issues can change how you want your estate handled, and your will should reflect those changes.

Ultimately, a will is a critical step to safeguarding your family's future, but when you want even more peace of mind about it, talk to an agent about your life insurance options.