

2. Relieve your estate from the expense of bonding. Waiving bond may be wise and can result in savings for your estate. Weigh this decision carefully.

3. Recommend a guardian for minor children. This will give the court helpful guidance in making its decision. Again, choose someone you trust. Consider the age of the guardian relative to the ages of your children. It is a good idea to discuss this with the person you intend to name before taking this step.

4. Dispose of your property with nearly total freedom. You can leave certain properties to specific people. You may have the property divided or direct that it be sold and the proceeds distributed. Many people also enjoy making gifts to charitable interests they have supported during their lifetime.

An important detail

Charities may sometimes share the same or very similar names, and they may possibly be in the same city or state. When drafting a will that leaves property to charity, it is important to correctly identify the intended recipient. We are happy to provide our correct legal name, our street address, tax ID and any other information you or your advisors may require as well as discuss ideas for leaving a legacy. Simply contact us.

Tax benefits

Given changes in our nation's tax laws in recent years, most Americans no longer need to worry about federal estate taxes. As a result, it may now be possible to leave more to family, friends and favorite charities.

Keep in mind that some states impose taxes on much smaller estates than those subject to federal taxes. Those with estates that are still subject to estate tax will be glad to know that unlimited amounts can still be left to your spouse or to charity tax-free under federal law and the laws of most states.

Special types of trusts may also be created to provide additional income for a relative or friend for a period of time while eventually transferring the property to one or more charitable interests. In this event, the assets in the trust will grow tax-free, and the income from the trust can be taxed more favorably when your heirs receive it.

Keeping up to date

Just as a photograph captures a moment in time, a will records your wishes and desires when it is written. As circumstances change, so should the document.

This code provides additional information to assist you in your planning or to share with your advisors.



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Examples of events that may call for revising your will are a change in marital status, births or deaths of loved ones, a move to a different state, tax law revisions, a change in financial status and, most importantly, changes in the way you want to leave your property.

It is wise to regularly revisit the terms of your will and have it reviewed periodically by your attorney to make certain your wishes are correctly expressed. It is also important to make certain that the terms of joint ownership arrangements and the beneficiary designations of life insurance policies, retirement plans, bank accounts and investment accounts are considered in light of the provisions of your will and other plans.

Steps to take

It's important to review your beneficiaries from time to time. If you would like to make a change, most financial institutions have an online form that allows you to designate or make changes to the beneficiaries on your accounts. Typically, the information you will need is:

- Beneficiary's name/Charity's legal name.
- Beneficiary's date of birth and social security number/Charity's EIN number.
- Beneficiary's/Charity's address and contact information.

More information

Tax laws change frequently. Check with your advisors for current amounts that are exempt from federal and state gift and estate taxation or for more information about other changes that may affect your plans.

Please contact us if we can assist you with the charitable dimension of your long-range estate and financial plans.



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HOW TO PROTECT YOUR RIGHTS With a Will



Some people view the act of preparing or updating their will as important but not essential. Unfortunately, often the lack of a will and other estate plans can result in a legacy of heartache and confusion for loved ones.

The reality is this: Almost everyone needs a will to claim important rights to which they are entitled.

A right and responsibility

In our society, private ownership of property is everyone's right. Along with that right comes the important duty to plan for your property's distribution after your lifetime. A will can be very important in this regard since it contains instructions on how you would like your property distributed.

While a certain amount of state and/or federal taxes may be due during our lifetime and possibly at death, we are generally free to choose how to use the rest of our property and earnings. Most individuals devote the majority of their resources to taking care of themselves and their families.

After setting aside funds to provide for their loved ones' future economic well-being, many people include the charitable causes they have supported in their will or other estate plans.

When you exercise your right to prepare a will according to law, your wishes will be respected, and your property will pass as you desire to those named.

However, if you choose not to have a valid will (like more than half of all Americans), you may leave your heirs a legacy of neglect, delays and unnecessary costs at a time when they are least equipped emotionally and perhaps financially.

Without a will

If you don't have a will, your state of residence must step in to distribute your property. A probate court will transfer your property to new owners according to all-purpose plans set out by your state legislature, directing how your property will be distributed regardless of what your wishes are and without taking into account the needs of your loved ones.

Treatment of heirs

Under the state's plan, your assets will be distributed to your heirs strictly according to their relationship to you. If you have children, your spouse may receive only part of your property. Your children will share in your assets in a predetermined percentage set by the state. There are few, if any, exceptions.

If your children are of legal age (18 in most states), they will receive their share immediately whether or not they are mature enough to manage it wisely.

What about others?

Under your state's will, special friends or others outside your family will not receive anything. For example, even if it was common knowledge that you wanted your closest friend to receive a certain property, there is no legal guarantee that person will receive it unless your wishes are stated in a will.

Unnecessary expenses

Where there is no valid will, a court will appoint a person to settle your affairs. Known as your "personal representative" or the "administrator" of your estate, the person chosen by the court may not be the individual you would select.

The administrator will be required to purchase a bond to protect against theft or misuse of your property. The bond fee will be paid from your estate. The court-appointed administrator will also be entitled to collect fees for efforts in administering your estate. There may also be unnecessary costs for accountings or bonds that could possibly be waived if there is a will.

Guardian decisions

If you are survived by minor children in need of a guardian and don't name the person you would prefer, a court will appoint one. This person is usually a relative but may not be the one you would have chosen.

The court-appointed guardian will then care for your children under the supervision of the court. Annual accountings of property must be filed in most states, and permission of a judge may be necessary in order to make expenditures.

Rigid division of property

Your property will be distributed in as nearly equal shares as possible. If you own a business, real estate, a collection of value or even family heirlooms, it may be necessary to divide the property in ways that may diminish their value.

If no division is possible or the judge finds it advisable, such treasured items may be sold to the highest bidder. Failure to plan can lead to estate sales that may result in reduced inheritances for your heirs.

Property management

Trusts are very flexible and useful devices that can help serve your financial planning needs. Trusts may be created in your will.

Under a trust's terms, you transfer your property to a trustee. As the name implies, this should be a person or other entity you are confident will carry out your wishes. The trustee will then manage and distribute your property as directed in the instructions you include in the trust.

The people and institutions who benefit from a trust may be the same individuals who might receive the property if the owner dies without a will. But if such heirs are not

capable of managing the property they receive because of age, physical or mental handicaps or lack of financial responsibility, a trust can be of great value.

Control over timing

Timing can be extremely important in the distribution of property. Young adults may not be prepared to wisely manage even modest sums of money. Under the terms of a trust created in your will, you can delay the distribution of property until a time you choose.

You can even delay distribution for the lifetime of another person. Many people choose to leave their property in trust for the benefit of a spouse, with the property distributed to children, other loved ones or charitable beneficiaries at the end of the spouse's lifetime.

How a will works for you

In even the simplest will, prepared by an expert, you can exercise your right to:

1. Name a person or institution you trust to handle your estate. Since your executor will have most of the rights of ownership of your property for a period of time, they should be a financially responsible and trustworthy individual. If you think family disputes may occur, it may be advisable to name a third party, such as a bank or trust institution.