



Take Action: 5 Great Reasons Why Everyone Must Have a Will

A Last Will and Testament is the heart of every estate plan. It's the most basic document you will include in your plan, and oftentimes it is also the first. Most people have an idea of what a Will is and how it works, but there are a few misconceptions about the process of creating a Will.

For one, many people think that in order to have a Will, you need to have a large estate. It's easy to put off planning until some distant day in the future when you are older and richer, but even the young and broke can — and should — create an estate plan that works well. In many cases, estate planning can start right at age 18, putting up some effective safeguards for you, your money, and your family.

The main reason to have a Will is that you never know what surprises life has in store for you. Whether it's disability, death, or changes in your relationships, life constantly throws curveballs that you can't prevent — but you can plan ahead to minimize the impact on you and your family.

With that in mind, here are five of the top reasons why everyone should have a Will.

1. You can distribute personal property.

While other estate planning documents are most effective at handling assets like real estate or life insurance, your Will is great for distributing personal property. This could mean furniture, cars, jewelry, clothes, family heirlooms, or other personal items that have sentimental value to you. Your Will can ensure these items end up in the right hands.

Writing down these specifics in your Will can also help mitigate conflict within your family after you pass. Instead of letting people guess or potentially argue about who gets what, you can let them know exactly what you wished — and save them a great deal of stress in the long run.

Even if you have taken the right steps to eliminate or minimize probate, you will undoubtedly have some personal items that need to be addressed. This is a great opportunity to start family traditions and leave personal messages to your inheritors.

2. You can outline funeral plans.

No matter how close you are with your family, it's always a good idea to leave instructions about how you would like the details of your funeral to be handled.

Do you want to have an open-casket service, or would you prefer your ashes to be transformed into blown-glass art? Want someone to read your favorite poem during the eulogy or have a line inscribed on your headstone? It may seem a little macabre to think about, but you might be surprised at what comes to mind when you sit down and write out your wishes.

To sum up, don't let your loved ones guess about your wishes. You can use your Will to make it easy for them and outline a plan.

3. You can choose guardianships for minor children.

If you have children under 18, this is a critical part of your Will. You have the ability to appoint a guardian or guardians for your minor children in the event that you pass away unexpectedly.

No young parent expects to pass away and leave their kids behind. The sad fact is that accidents happen, and it's always preferable to make a plan rather than leaving it to chance.

Without a Will that specifies your choice of guardian, the courts will choose on your behalf. Of course, the courts don't know what you know about your relatives and loved ones, so their choice will not always align with the best possible person or the person you have in mind. A Will puts that choice entirely in your hands and gives you some peace of mind for the possibility an unexpected scenario.

4. You can appoint a personal representative.

The personal representative of your estate is the one who takes charge of the estate after you pass away. Their duties will include gathering documents, paying debts, sorting out your belongings, working with attorneys, and generally sorting out your affairs after you pass away.

When you select one main person to handle your estate, you can rest easy knowing your affairs will be left in the hands of someone you know and trust. It's very important to choose carefully, because the personal representative will need to have the time and the ability to carry out all of these responsibilities.

5. You can select an attorney in advance.

Estate planning is an ongoing process — you will likely come back and update it to reflect changes in your finances, family, and life in general — so it's a good idea to find one reliable attorney to work with throughout. This person will ideally get to know you and your family, as well as your financial situation and future goals, to make recommendations that fit your life.

In the event that some probate proceedings are necessary for parts of your estate, it is always advisable to pre-select your attorney. That way when the time for probate arises, you will have a qualified representative you know, like, and trust to work with your family and make the process more efficient for everyone.

Ready to get started?

If you're over the age of 18, the best day to start estate planning is today. In many ways, your Will is a reflection of the life you led and the legacy you leave behind — you worked hard to build up your estate and grow your family, and the right legal documents will ensure these interests stay safe and secure long after you're gone.

To start working with an established attorney who knows the ins and outs of Wills, probate, and general estate planning, call the law office of EIDeiry & EIDeiry, P.A. at 954-670-2800. Estates and families alike come in many different shapes and sizes, so we will work closely with you to ensure your Last Will and Testament reflects your needs and wishes. We look forward to getting to know you.