

YOUR FUNERAL, YOUR WAY

A Simple Guide to Pre-Planning Your Funeral and Protecting Your Loved Ones



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Planning your funeral ahead of time might seem difficult or uncomfortable, but it's actually a caring and thoughtful gift for your family. By clearly deciding what you want now, you save your loved ones from stress and uncertainty during an already emotional time.

Another important benefit is that planning your funeral puts you in control of the event, ensuring everything is done exactly as you wish, instead of leaving those decisions to others.

This guide will help you understand your choices and document your wishes clearly, making sure your funeral reflects who you are and what you value.



Understanding
Your CHOICES

CHOOSING HOW YOUR REMAINS WILL BE HANDLED

The first step in funeral planning is deciding what happens to your body after death. Here are your main choices:

BURIAL

- Traditional Burial means your body is placed in a casket and buried in a cemetery, usually with a protective vault.
- Green (Natural) Burial involves using environmentally friendly materials and no chemicals, allowing your body to return naturally to the earth.

CREMATION

- Simple Cremation is when your body is cremated, and your family receives your ashes to keep, scatter, or bury.
- Expedited Cremation happens shortly after death without any viewing or ceremony beforehand, making the process quicker.

OTHER METHODS

- Donation to Science allows your body to help with medical research and education.
- Alkaline Hydrolysis (also called water cremation) gently breaks down your body using water and chemicals, which is good for the environment.

CHOOSING THE TYPE OF CEREMONY

Next, you'll choose how you want family and friends to gather and remember you:

TRADITIONAL FUNERAL SERVICE

- A formal event, usually at a funeral home or place of worship, often following cultural or religious traditions.

CELEBRATION OF LIFE

- A more personal and relaxed event focusing on happy memories and personal stories.

PRIVATE GOODBYE

- A small gathering, usually just close family members, offering a quiet, personal farewell.



Making Specific DECISIONS

FINAL ARRANGEMENTS

Once you choose your method of disposition, there are other important decisions to make:

SELECTING A LOCATION

Decide on a cemetery, memorial garden, or another special place important to you or your family.

CHOOSING PRODUCTS

- **Burial Products:** Caskets, vaults, and grave markers come in different styles, materials, and prices.
- **Cremation Products:** Urns and keepsakes offer ways for your loved ones to remember and honor you.

PLANNING YOUR CEREMONY

- **Finding a Funeral Provider:** Choose a funeral home that meets your needs. Ask questions about their services, pricing, and reputation.
- **Details of the Ceremony:** Decide where it will be held, who will lead it, and what special elements (like music or readings) you want to include.

PERSONALIZING YOUR CEREMONY

Make your funeral truly reflect who you are with these personal touches:

- **Share Personal Stories:** Ask people to share meaningful memories or funny stories during the ceremony.
- **Digital Tributes:** Create a slide show or video to remember important moments from your life.
- **Include Family and Friends:** Let your loved ones participate by reading, speaking, or performing music.

PLANNING THE FUNERAL MEAL

Food plays an important role at every family gathering, including funerals. Here are some considerations:

- **Choosing a Location:** Decide if you want the meal at a home, funeral home, restaurant, or community center.
- **Selecting the Menu:** Consider the type of food you would like served, dietary restrictions, and whether you prefer catered or potluck style.
- **Planning for Guests:** Estimate the number of guests and decide who will be responsible for coordinating food preparation, serving, and clean up.



Documenting and
Sharing Your WISHES

DOCUMENT

Clearly documenting your wishes is very important. Follow these simple steps:

- **Write Everything Down:** Record your preferences clearly in a formal document provided by your funeral home or on your own.
- **Store Your Plans Safely:** Keep your documents somewhere safe but easily accessible, like with a trusted family member or at your funeral home.
- **Review Regularly:** Update your plans whenever things change in your life.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL PREPARATIONS

Planning ahead also means making financial and legal preparations:

- **Understand Costs:** Learn about typical funeral expenses and decide on a budget.
- **Paying for Your Funeral:** Options include pre-paid funeral plans, funeral insurance, or setting up a trust.
- **Important Legal Documents:** Prepare documents like a will, power of attorney, and advance healthcare directives.
- **Managing Digital Assets:** Document passwords and instructions for your online accounts and social media.

EMOTIONAL AND FAMILY CONSIDERATIONS

Talking about your funeral wishes with family can be difficult. Here are some helpful tips:

- **Discuss Your Plans Kindly:** Let your family know you're planning ahead to help ease their future worries.
- **Manage Family Concerns:** Respect different opinions, but clearly communicate your choices to prevent future disagreements.
- **Provide Emotional Support:** Share resources for grief counseling or support groups to help family members cope.



Frequently Asked QUESTIONS

Here are answers to common questions about funeral pre-planning:

- Is Pre-Planning Expensive?
Not necessarily. You control costs by clearly deciding what you want.
- Can I Change My Plans Later?
Yes, you can always update or change your plans whenever you need to.
- Will My Family Understand My Wishes?
Yes, as long as your plans are clear and you communicate them well.
- Why Should I Plan Ahead?
By planning your funeral ahead of time, you're showing love and care for your family. Your thoughtful preparation provides clarity and comfort to those you leave behind. The decisions you make today can greatly ease the emotional burden on your loved ones in the future.

Use this guide to get started, and don't hesitate to reach out to a trusted funeral professional if you have questions. Planning ahead is truly one of the kindest things you can do for yourself and those you love.