



Getting It Together

An Estate Planning Checklist

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Getting Started

Getting your documents organized can seem like a daunting task. Maybe you have considered organizing all the necessary documents and making all the right calls, but you just aren't quite sure where to begin. Good news! Below, you will find a checklist of important documents to gather as well as guidance regarding what avenues to pursue while getting your affairs in order.

The information and documents listed below will apply to most families. However, there may be additional documents that are important to you and your family. Think through any additional documentation that would be helpful and include it. The list below is an excellent starting place and covers the vast majority of what you will need to include when you start getting your affairs in order.

Keep It Current

It's very important to remember to keep your information current, most especially regarding your legal documents and beneficiary information. Wherever you keep this information, you will also need to update your tax return yearly. Make sure to appoint a new executor if the one you have currently chosen moves away or is unable to fulfill his or her duties. If you move, make sure to update your current address on all your documents, policies, accounts, and assets. At the beginning, it is quite an undertaking to gather all the information. But, once it is together, updating is simple.

An important note on how to keep your documents safe, especially in the face of natural disasters:

There are fire and water secure cases available for purchase that would be ideal for protecting your important documents. Often, the cases are small enough to carry and have a locking mechanism. Of course, there are other ways to keep your documents safe, but the main idea here is to consider how you can keep your documents safe, secure, and accessible in case of emergency.

Also, you might consider holding an annual or biannual family meeting to go over your wishes and your estate. For some families, this may not be pleasant or even possible. But if you can schedule family meetings, it is an excellent time to let everyone know how your assets are going to be distributed. This will give you the opportunity to answer their questions, set their expectations, and hopefully, prevent any family disagreements over your final wishes.

Protect Your Personal Information

When filling out checklists or gathering documents, protecting your personal details is just as important as keeping them organized.

Why Caution Matters:

Scammers and identity thieves often target personal details like full Social Security numbers, passwords, bank account numbers, and Medicare numbers. Once obtained, this information can be used to open accounts in your name, access your savings, or steal your identity. Standard email and unencrypted internet messages are not secure and can be intercepted by fraudsters.

Safe Steps to Keep in Mind:

- **Never email sensitive data:** Avoid sending full Social Security numbers, passwords, or bank account details through standard email.
- **Beware of unsolicited calls, texts, or emails:** Government agencies like the IRS, Social Security Administration, or Medicare will never call or text asking for immediate payment, gift cards, or personal information. If you get a suspicious contact, hang up and call the official agency number directly.
- **Never give remote access to your computer:** If a pop-up on your screen or a phone caller claims your computer has a virus and asks to remotely access it, close the screen or hang up. Legitimate companies like Microsoft will never contact you this way.
- **Watch out for urgent or fear-inducing demands:** Scammers try to create panic by claiming a loved one is in trouble, a payment is overdue, or a legal action is pending. Take a breath, pause, and verify the story with a family member or trusted professional before acting.
- **Keep physical documents secure:** Keep original birth certificates, deeds, wills, and financial statements locked in a fireproof safe, locked drawer, or secure box at home.
- **Guard your passwords and PINs:** Never share your online passwords, bank PINs, or device passcode with anyone who contacts you unexpectedly by phone, text, or email.
- **Hand-deliver or use secure methods:** When sharing sensitive documents with trusted professionals (such as your attorney or accountant), deliver them in person or ask for a protected, encrypted portal.
- **Shred unnecessary documents:** Before tossing old bank statements, medical bills, or receipts in the trash, shred them to prevent someone from searching through your garbage for personal details.

GET IT TOGETHER CHECKLIST

Put copies of these documents in a notebook and check them annually; if you have documents you want to add that are not on this list, write them in on the blank lines provided.

1. PERSONAL DOCUMENTS

☐	Driver License
☐	Social Security Card
☐	Passport
☐	Any Medicare, Medicaid, or Medigap cards
☐	Your Birth Certificate
☐	Your Marriage License
☐	Your Military Discharge Papers
☐	Your Separation or Divorce papers
☐	Writing that includes bequests of specific items to specific people
☐	Letters to Loved ones
☐	Safety Deposit Box information and location of keys
☐	Computer passwords
☐	Location of any Post Office boxes and their keys
☐	Name of Church and Pastor
☐	_____
☐	_____
☐	_____

2. LEGAL DOCUMENTS

☐	Last Will and Testament Location
☐	Durable Power of Attorney Location
☐	Health Care Power of Attorney Location
☐	HIPAA Authorization Release
☐	Deed to any houses or land you own
☐	Titles to your cars, boats, trailers, or RV's
☐	Title to any Mobile Homes owned
☐	Estate Attorney contact information
☐	Other attorneys and their relationship, as well as contact information

	Addresses of any property owned in part or whole
	Citizenship / Green Card Documentation
	Revocable / Irrevocable Trust Location and Information

3. FINANCIAL DOCUMENTS

	Life Insurance Certificates
	Copies of most recent Bank Account statements for each account
	Last two (2) years tax returns
	Copies of any IRAs, 401(k), pension plans, or other retirement documents
	Copies of all brokerage account POAs provided to financial institution
	Copies of any credit card statements for cards with a balance
	Copies of education loan documents
	Copies of auto loan documents
	Accountant / Tax preparer contact information
	Home and Auto Insurance documents
	Cell phone statement
	Homeowners / Renters Insurance
	Disability / Long-Term Care Insurance
	Automated Payments (Autopay)
	Rental Real Estate & Lease Agreements

4. BUSINESS DOCUMENTS

	Any Business Ownership paperwork
	FinCEN Beneficial Ownership Information (BOI) Reports
	Name and phone number of important business associates
	Partnership Agreements
	Corporate documents, books, and seals

	Accountant/Tax preparer contact information
	Business Insurance information

5. FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS

	Name of contact at the funeral home
	Funeral Insurance Information
	Information about pre-paid funeral/cremation services
	Information about pre-paid burial plots
	List of people you want notified about your death
	If you want donation in lieu of flowers, the details regarding the charity
	Any special requests you have regarding the service or post-service
	If cremated, directions for ashes to be scattered

6. MINOR CHILDREN

	Name of person who will be the guardian
	Copies of their birth certificates
	Any medical history
	Names of doctors, babysitters, dentists, etc.
	Details on savings accounts, education accounts, etc., in the child's name

7. PET INSTRUCTIONS

	Name of person who will be the guardian
	Veterinary clinic's contact information
	List of pet medications and details
	Special dietary needs and allergies

	Adoption Record Location
	Pet Licenses and Vaccination Information
	Microchip Information
	Pet Insurance Information

8. DIGITAL ASSETS & ACCESS

	Digital Legacy & Password Managers
	Online Accounts & Subscriptions
	Cryptocurrency & Digital Wallets
	Social Media & Email Memorialization