

# How to Make Your Funeral Wishes Known

How can you make sure your funeral and burial wishes will be carried out after you die? If you are a person who has ideas about how they would like to be remembered, there is only one way to make sure that things will go the way you would like: express yourself while you are alive. While this is a topic that many are not comfortable discussing, it is important to let your family know your desires and to put them in writing.

To help your loved ones follow your wishes after you are gone, you can write out detailed funeral preferences as well as the requested disposition of your remains. In addition to explaining where you want your funeral to be held, the document can include information about what you want to wear, who should speak, what music should be played, and who should be pallbearers, among other information. Making these decisions ahead of time can not only let everyone know what your wishes are, it can also help your family members during their time of grief.

It may be tempting to include this information in your will, but a will may not be opened until long after the funeral is over. A will is best used for explaining how to distribute your property, not for funeral instructions. You can write your funeral and burial directions in a separate document or you may be able to put your wishes in your health care directive. Whatever you do, make sure your family knows where to find the information. Do not put it in your safety deposit box that your relatives may have difficulty accessing. See the link in this newsletter called “What should be in your ‘death’ file” for good tips about what you should put together to ease this transition for your family, and how to do it.

If you don't make your wishes known, the responsibility for determining your funeral and burial rests with your loved ones. If you are married, your spouse is usually in charge of making the decisions. If you are not married, the responsibility will likely go to your children, parents, or next of kin. Disputes could arise between family members over what you would have wanted.

Many people choose to make their funeral arrangements ahead of time with a funeral home for burials, cremation, services, and cemetery plots. Pre-paid funerals are an excellent tool, as it relieves your family from major decisions at a difficult time and unexpected costs. Pre-paid funerals are also exempt resources for Indiana Medicaid qualification, up to a specified amount, so this can help many to fulfill spend-down requirements, while also fulfilling their own desire for a funeral and burial in keeping with their own wishes.