

Checklist: Steps for planning for after death

Planning for burial, cremation, funerals and ways to commemorate life



Don't make your family and friends guess your wishes after death. Let them know your preferred way to go. [Way to go: People's views on burials, cremation, funerals and ways to commemorate life](#)

Many people assume planning for our own death means writing a will. This is only one part of being prepared for what happens after your death. Advance planning allows you to have a say in the music played at your funeral through to what happens to your body after you die.

Putting plans in place now can help reduce some of the stress on your family and friends in the future. You can update your plans at any time if your preferences change.

Visit [Cemeteries & Crematoria NSW for more information](#).

Start planning

It can be hard to know when to start planning. This checklist will help you make those important first steps.

1. Making plans for preferences prior to death

- Decide whether you would prefer to die at home if you have the choice.
- Make a list of the things or people you might want to comfort you as you are dying.
- Determine the key people likely to be involved in your after-death planning. They might want to contribute to these decisions. Consider your preferences and share them with the people in your life who you want involved with your

2. Making plans for your body after death

- Decide whether you want to be buried or cremated and [learn more about these options](#).
- Consider if it is important for family or friends to spend time with your body after you have died.
- Determine where you would like to be buried or have your ashes kept.
- Decide on the material for your coffin or shroud.
- Decide if you want to donate your organs, if possible.
- Decide whether you want to donate your body to science, if possible. This must be organised in advance.
- Make plans for what should happen to your body if you die overseas.
- Consider whether you want your body repatriated to your country of birth.

For more information, see our [factsheet on after-death options](#).



3. Making plans for your farewell and how you would like to be remembered

- ❑ Determine if you want a funeral or event to commemorate your life. Options include:
 - a. single service—one location (such as a chapel, place of worship or secular venue) without proceeding to the burial site or crematorium
 - b. dual service—ceremony starts at one location and proceeds to the burial site or crematorium
 - c. graveside service—takes place entirely at the graveside
 - d. direct cremation or burial—there is no funeral ceremony at the time and location of the burial or cremation, nor attendance at the burial or cremation (there can be opportunity to gather afterwards, or prior at another location, if you want)
 - e. memorial—takes place after the body has been buried or cremated.
- ❑ Decide on location(s) or venue(s) for the funeral or memorial. Options include:
 - a. funeral home chapel
 - b. place of worship
 - c. cemetery or crematorium chapel
 - d. your home or garden, or of a friend or family member
 - e. public space (such as a park or beach)
 - f. a private secular venue
 - g. graveside.
- ❑ Consider if you'd like a service, ceremony, reception, gathering or wake before and/or after the burial or cremation. Determine where you would like it to be held and whether it should be indoors or outdoors.
- ❑ Make a list of who you'd like to be notified of your death and invited to your funeral. Decide if you'd like a notice placed in a newspaper.
- ❑ Determine the type of flowers you'd like at your ceremony or on your coffin. An alternative is to have guests donate to a

charity in lieu of or as well as having flowers or anything else for your ceremony or event.

- ❑ Nominate someone to lead the event—a family member, friend, celebrant or clergy member.
- ❑ Nominate who you think you may like to deliver eulogies, tributes or stories about you.
- ❑ Consider writing your own obituary, eulogy or story.
- ❑ Choose poems or other readings you'd like as part of your ceremony and nominate who should read them.
- ❑ Choose music you would like played. Think of five pieces.
- ❑ Create personal messages, memory boxes or videos to leave for family and friends.
- ❑ Nominate any special food or drinks you would like at your funeral gathering.
- ❑ Choose whether you would like a headstone or memorial plaque and, if so, what you would like written on it.

For more information, see our [factsheet on after-death options](#).

4. Communicating your plans

- ❑ Discuss your plans for after death with family and friends, including your next-of-kin. Provide them with all the information they need to carry out your wishes.
- ❑ Record your personal preferences for after-death and make sure your next-of-kin know where this information is stored and can access it.

Cemeteries & Crematoria NSW information in [community languages](#) is available online.

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