

# Funeral Planning Checklist

The following list of information is provided to help you plan your funeral. Organization is the key to planning in the midst of grief and sadness. We hope the following list will lend a helping hand. Print it out and keep it in a convenient place.

## Notify Authorities

If the death occurs outside of a hospital or nursing home you may need to notify authorities of the death. Call 911 or your local emergency number to report the death. The authorities will call the medical examiner or the decedent's regular physician who will then give instructions pertaining to the release of the body.

## Notify close relatives and friends

The police are required to notify next of kin, but there will likely be other relatives that should be included, especially if they need to travel some distance to attend the funeral. Don't forget to include close friends.

- You or the authorities may call the funeral home that will be taking care of the funeral arrangements for the funeral and disposition.
- Notify any relatives who will be having a part in planning the calling hours and details of the funeral and set up a time to meet with the funeral director to finalize the plans.
- Discuss who will be responsible for funeral expenses for billing purposes. If there is an executor for the estate of the deceased, this person usually handles this responsibility, but it is entirely up to the family to determine who should handle this responsibility. Often families will divide this responsibility between several family members.
- Gather the information you will need for the completion of the death certificate at the funeral home. Parent's names including maiden and middle names, also the social security number and date of birth of the deceased, their place of work (Name and address) and occupation of the deceased. See [Vital Statistics Form](#).

## The funeral director

The funeral director will guide you through the much of the planning process. Use the following checklist when meeting with your funeral director.

1. Consider embalming the body  
This decision will determine the timing of many decisions you make.
  - The law does not require embalming, however if you desire a viewing with an open casket, funeral homes will require that embalming be performed.
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  - Clothing & Jewelry  
If this will be a traditional burial you need to consider clothing & jewelry.
  - Clothing - You may want to bring this with you when you meet with the funeral director to make the plans, but this is not essential.

- Jewelry - Remember any special pins or jewelry. Special pins would include but are not limited to Union and association membership pins. Also Watches, earrings, necklaces, tie tacks, cuff links, or anything that the deceased particularly liked or directed to be included. Be sure to make your funeral director aware if jewelry will be buried or removed.
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- 2. Consider the type of burial
  - Cemetery plot \_\_\_\_  
If one has been previously purchased, bring the deed to the plot with you, if you have it, to the funeral home when you make your plans. If you know you have a plot but don't have the deed in your possession, the funeral director can contact the cemetery overseer to arrange confirmation. Otherwise a plot will need to be purchased.
  - Vault \_\_\_\_  
Choose a vault. Your funeral director will describe the various types available.
  - Mausoleum \_\_\_\_
  - See [Vaults and Mausoleums](#)
- 3. Select the casket or container
  - Wood \_\_\_\_ Metal \_\_\_\_ Cardboard (cremation) \_\_\_\_ Urn \_\_\_\_
  - Open or closed casket  
Decide whether it will be opened or closed casket. This decision is often not made until the deceased has been prepared and the family arrives for the first viewing.
  - Open \_\_\_\_
  - Closed \_\_\_\_
- 4. Calling hours  
Decide on calling hours at the funeral home.
  - Some families choose not to have calling hours at the funeral home. There is great flexibility and the time(s) selected should try to accommodate the needs of the family and friends.
  - Traditionally hours have been from 7 to 9 p.m. or one hour prior to the service as these hours can usually accommodate friends who have to work day or evening shifts.
- 5. Funeral services  
If you plan to have a funeral service, you need to consider when and where the service will be conducted.
  - When  
Before burial or cremation \_\_\_\_  
After burial or cremation \_\_\_\_
  - Where  
The funeral home \_\_\_\_  
Church \_\_\_\_  
At the graveside \_\_\_\_  
Other \_\_\_\_\_

6. Special Ceremonies

Some Fraternal Orders and the Military may provide special ceremonies for the funeral service.

- Check with the local branch of the service the deceased was enlisted in or the Fraternal Order for more information.

7. Compose the Obituary

- Vital statistics
- Memberships and associations
- Hobbies
- See [Writing an obituary](#)

8. Publishing an obituary

Decide on which newspapers or other publications will be used to place the obituary notice and if it should run as a free or paid notice. Your funeral director can explain what can be printed with each.

- Local \_\_\_\_
- Regional \_\_\_\_
- Internet \_\_\_\_

9. Flower arrangements

Decide on the type of flower arrangements to be provided by the family.

Relatives and other well wishers may also need to be advised as to your desired floral selections.

- Casket Spray \_\_\_\_
- Lid arrangements \_\_\_\_
- Standing spray \_\_\_\_
- Matching baskets \_\_\_\_
- Specialty pieces (floral hearts, crosses, and bible) \_\_\_\_
- See [Floral Selection Guide](#)

10. Pictures or photo album - Consider setting up pictures or a photo album to remind well wishers and family of good times or special events in the life of the deceased.

11. Other props

The family or funeral director may wish to setup props that reflect the interests of the deceased.

12. Eulogies

Decide who will deliver the eulogy

- Clergy \_\_\_\_
- Friend \_\_\_\_
- Combination \_\_\_\_
- Video eulogy \_\_\_\_
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- See [Writing a Eulogy](#)

13. Special Recognition

Consider special recognition for accomplishments of the deceased.

- Athletic \_\_\_\_
- Political \_\_\_\_
- Religious \_\_\_\_

- Scientific \_\_\_\_
- 14. Service Programs
  - Choose from funeral home offerings \_\_\_\_
  - Have unique programs printed \_\_\_\_
  - Print your own \_\_\_\_
  - [Memorial Cards](#)
- 15. Pall bearers

Arrange for pall bearers. Usually 4 to 6 men are needed.

  - Ask friends or relatives (usually not immediate next of kin)
- 16. Music at calling hours or funeral
  - Generic funeral home selections \_\_\_\_
  - Favorite recordings of the deceased \_\_\_\_
  - Other soothing instrumentals \_\_\_\_\_
- 17. Grave site transportation

Consider who will provide transportation for the family to the grave site.  
Transportation of the deceased is usually provided by the funeral home.

  - Friends and Family \_\_\_\_
  - Funeral home limo \_\_\_\_
- 18. Grave marker

A temporary marker may be selected if a permanent marker has not been purchased or engraved.

  - Engrave present stone \_\_\_\_
  - Purchase new stone \_\_\_\_
  - Veterans plaque - Veterans may be eligible for a marker plaque.
  - Special insignias - A member of a service or charitable organization may be eligible for special insignia to be fixed to the marker.
- 19. Wake or special gathering

Decide if there will be a wake or other gathering to celebrate the life of the deceased. Consider where and when to hold this gathering.

  - Where \_\_\_\_\_
  - When \_\_\_\_\_
  - Food \_\_\_\_\_
  - Drink \_\_\_\_\_
- 20. Accommodating out of town relatives

Consider how to accommodate relatives.

  - Assist with travel plans \_\_\_\_
  - Airport pick up \_\_\_\_
  - Lodging \_\_\_\_
- 21. Legal Matters - See [Related Legal Issues](#)

[Pop-up a Printer Friendly Version](#)