



Steps to simplify funeral planning



Step 1: Give yourself a moment.

You may feel pressure from a hospital or even family members to make quick decisions. However, it's okay to take time to process your loss, consult with loved ones and carefully consider your options. Choosing a funeral home is a significant decision, and switching later can be costly, so it's important to feel confident in your choice.

Step 2: Decide what you'd like to do with your loved one's body.

In the United States, the most common two options are cremation and traditional burial.

Reasons to consider cremation:

- Generally more affordable than burial
- Considered to be more environmentally friendly than traditional burial (especially due to the lack of embalming)
- Allows you to keep your loved one's ashes, bury them, or scatter them somewhere meaningful
- In line with Hindu and Buddhist religious practices

Reasons to consider burial:

- Generally considered more traditional than cremation
- Allows the body to remain intact, which some people find more comforting
- In line with Christian, Jewish and Muslim religious practices

Step 3: Determine whether you'll want additional services from a funeral home.

While you'll need the assistance of a licensed funeral director regardless of your choice above, you don't necessarily need to work with a traditional funeral home. Ask yourself:

- Do you want a viewing (a gathering held before the funeral where attendees can see the body and offer their condolences to the family)?
- Would you like to have the body embalmed (a process that uses chemicals to preserve the body and slow decomposition)?
- Do you want to have the service in a funeral home?
- Are you interested in other traditional funeral services, such as the use of a hearse?

If you answered yes to any of the above, working with a traditional funeral home may be the best option.

If you answered no, you might consider a direct cremation or direct burial provider. This will allow you to focus solely on the cremation or burial process and can save you thousands of dollars.

Step 4: Choose the funeral home or service provider that best fits your needs.

Only after going through the first few steps should you start looking at and reaching out to funeral homes or other providers (e.g. direct cremation providers or body donation organizations).

When evaluating funeral homes, look for price lists online or ask for them over the phone. You'll find that prices can vary widely from location to location. You'll also find that many funeral homes request that you make an in-person visit to the funeral home for discussions around planning and prices. This is a common sales tactic, so you'll want to be informed about the average national prices and what to expect when dealing with a funeral home. You may also want to look at reviews online to ensure you're choosing the place that will make you feel most comfortable through the process.

Step 5: Find a burial spot, if applicable.

If you've chosen to bury your loved one's body or ashes in a cemetery, research the options around you. Like a funeral home, look at both prices and reviews to make sure you feel like you're making the best choice for you. You'll likely want to visit the top contenders, to see how you feel about each potential grave placement. It's also important to remember that your loved one may have pre-purchased a burial plot, which saves you both time and effort in finding one. If you think a plot was pre-purchased, contact the cemetery and ask for more information on how to proceed.

Step 6: Order a casket or urn, if applicable.

If you're working with a funeral home or cemetery, they will likely have caskets and urns for purchase. Many people find that purchasing through the funeral home or cemetery simplifies things. However, you can often save money by purchasing a casket or urn online.

Step 7: Determine and schedule gatherings.

Do you want a formal funeral service in a church? Or would a celebration of life in your loved one's favorite restaurant be more fitting? There is no right or wrong way to honor the life of a loved one, so explore your options and decide what is best for you. For your reference, here are some of the most common gatherings:

- **Viewing or wake:** A time to give condolences to the family, in which the body of the deceased is often present.
- **Funeral service:** A formal service honoring the deceased (often in a funeral home or place of worship) in which the body of the deceased is present.
- **Memorial service*:** A formal service honoring the deceased (often in a funeral home or place of worship) in which the body of the deceased is not present.

Determine and schedule gatherings (continued)

- **Celebration of life***: An informal celebration of the deceased, generally held in a home, restaurant, event space or other favorite location. Celebrations of life are often less somber gatherings and more focused on celebrating the life, achievements and impact the deceased had on those around them.
- **Burial**: A service (generally shorter than the funeral service) held graveside that focuses on the physical interment of the body.
- **Reception**: An informal gathering after a funeral or memorial service, often at a family member's home or a restaurant. Food and drinks are customary at receptions.

** It's worth noting that if you opt for a memorial service or celebration of life, there are no time pressures on when gatherings should be held. If it's easier for you to pause at this point and take some time to mourn and collect your thoughts, that's fine. It's not uncommon for a celebration of life to occur several months after a death.*

Step 8: Invite friends and family.

After finalizing the location(s) and time(s), inform the friends and family of the deceased. You can do this through email, phone calls, an obituary, or a custom memorial website. Consider asking loved ones to help share the news as well.

Step 9: Create the program.

Decide if specific individuals will give eulogies, if someone will read from a religious text, or if there are particular songs you'd like to include. Create a program that honors your loved one and coordinate with everyone who will participate. Be sure to estimate the timing for each section to ensure everything fits within the allotted time.

Step 10: Organize any remaining logistics.

Who, if anyone, will be providing food? Do you want to print out programs or prayer cards? Do you want to have a guestbook or other place for people to share memories and condolences?

Step 11: Appreciate what you've done.

The stress of organizing a large event combined with the grief of losing someone can be devastating. Throughout the process, make time for yourself, and when everything comes together, appreciate the work that you've done to honor someone who is important to you.

About us

Eversight is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Our mission is to restore sight and prevent blindness through the healing power of donation, transplantation and research.

Operating in Arizona, Connecticut, Illinois, Michigan, New Jersey, Ohio and South Korea, Eversight works in collaboration with surgeons, researchers, academic medical centers and eye banks across the United States and abroad. In addition to recovering, evaluating and providing donated eye tissue for sight-restoring transplants and promoting public donation awareness, we advance research into the causes and cures of blinding eye conditions and provide humanitarian aid to people around the world in need of corneal transplantation.

Join the Eversight community. Change the lives of those who are losing their sight or are blind, and the future for millions more all over the world through research into treatment and cures.



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