

My Funeral Wishes

The following information reflects my personal wishes, wherever possible, regarding the handling of my body and the final arrangements following my death.

Funeral wishes for:

** An asterisk in a box means there are supporting notes to help you*

Arranger for the funeral Are there any friends or relatives that you would particularly like to arrange the funeral? If yes, give their details here.

*

Funeral director Is there a particular funeral director you would like to help arrange the funeral? If yes, put their details here.

How will the funeral be paid for?
There are a number of ways this can happen

*

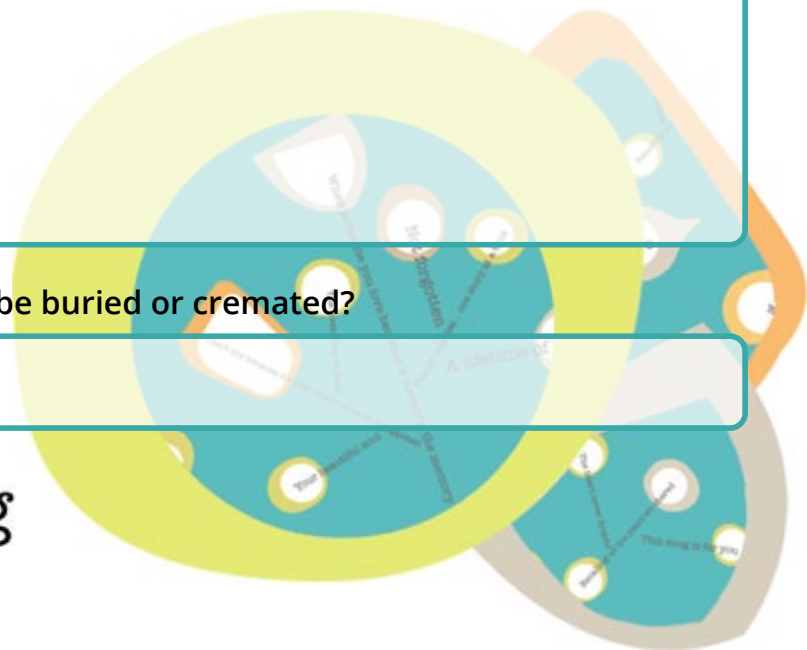
Pre-purchased grave or ashes plot
If you have a pre-purchased grave or ashes plot, please give details of where, plot numbers etc

What's most important? You might feel that a funeral is for those left behind, and so there are only a few things that are important to you. What are the important things that will help family and friends to grieve and support each other?

*

Burial or Cremation Would you like to be buried or cremated?

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Would you like an unattended cremation or burial? Even if you don't want a funeral ceremony there will still be things you need to consider, as well as making sure you have a conversation in advance with the people that matter, so that they know your wishes.

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Burial Location If you would like to be buried, where would you like to have your grave? Is this a natural burial ground or traditional cemetery? Or perhaps it doesn't matter to you?

Funeral Ceremony Location A ceremony can take place anywhere, and people don't have to go to the crematorium. Would you like your funeral ceremony to take place at a church, other venue or at the crematorium or burial ground?

Coffin What type of coffin, casket or shroud would you prefer?

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Bearers Who would you like to carry your coffin?

Transport Do you have a preference about your funeral vehicle (there are a lot of options: black hearse, white hearse, eco-hearse, horses, VW campervan etc)

The Ceremony Here are some questions relating to the ceremony itself. You may not care about the answers to any of these questions - sometimes it's good for the people left behind to decide. Is there anyone in particular you would like to lead it? Could family or friends lead the ceremony?

What type of ceremony would you like? Religious or civil / humanist?

*

Music What music would you like? Would you like anyone in particular to sing or play an instrument?

Ceremony Content Are there any activities, readings or poems you would like including?

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Flowers / Donations Would you like flowers at your funeral or would you prefer donations? If so, what charity or organisation?

Other Considerations There are a few other things you may wish to make note of so people are aware of your wishes when you die:

Organ donation You don't have to register in the UK anymore but you can if you want to. You can also opt out if you wish.

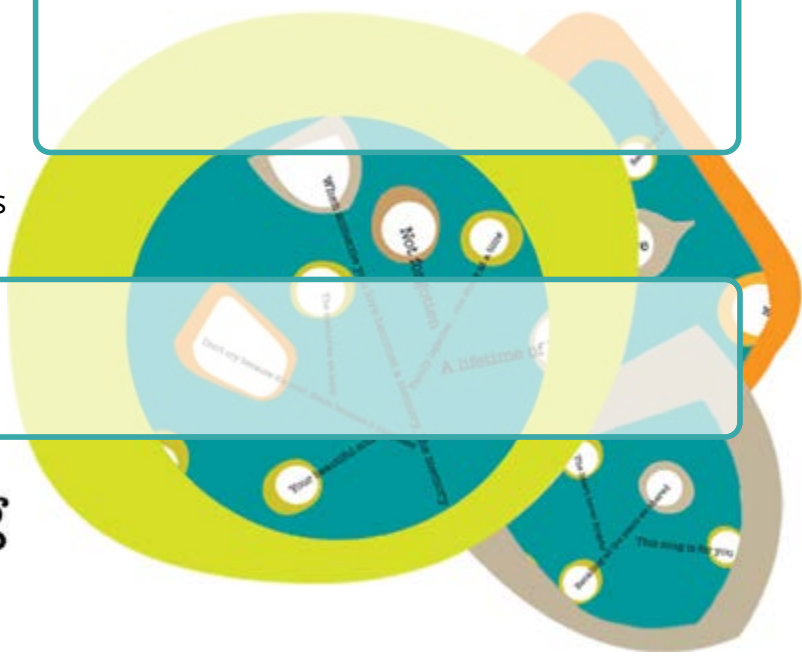
Body Donation Would you like to donate your body to medical science? Have you applied? Make sure you have a 'Plan B'

*

Enbalming: What are your feelings towards being embalmed?

*

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Ashes What would you like to be done with your ashes and where? Scattered / buried / other?

*

Memorials Would you like a marker to show where you, or your ashes have been buried or scattered? If so, what type? (e.g. headstone, tree, flowers, bench)

If you choose a headstone or bench, would you like any particular wording for the epitaph?

Other Considerations / 'Wake' Ideas Do you have any other requests for your funeral that people should be aware of? Is there a particular wake venue you like etc?

Please remember that funeral wishes are not enforceable after you die. This is why it's always important to discuss your wishes with the people who matter beforehand. Make sure they know what you would like to happen and that they know where this document is stored.

If you would like to nominate us as your funeral director, feel free to send us a copy of your wishes and we will store them also.

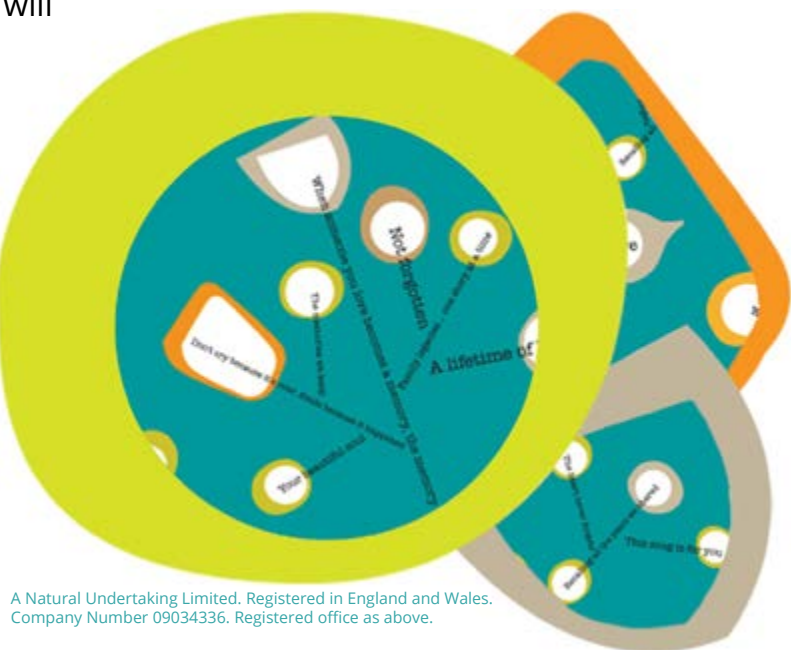
Signature:

Date:

Address:

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290 Vicarage Rd, Kings Heath, Birmingham, B14 7NH Tel: 0121 444 0437
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Notes to help you complete our 'Funeral Wishes' template

Arranger for the funeral

Your funeral director will need someone to sign the paperwork and be the applicant for the cremation. So even if you have written very detailed funeral wishes, someone will need to be the main point of contact with them in order to arrange the funeral.

Strictly speaking the executor of the will has the highest authority to do this. For most people it will be their next of kin, but it can be a friend or other relative as long as the executor is comfortable.

How will the funeral be paid for?

If you have taken out a prepaid plan it is important that people know this, and know the company and plan number so that it can be redeemed. This is the same for if you have taken out a life insurance policy.

Prepaid funeral plans are not a necessity, and most people don't realise that even though a bank account may be frozen when someone dies, the bank should pay the funeral expenses if there is money in the account: the funeral bill has the highest priority of all debts except for secured loans (such as a mortgage). You shouldn't therefore have to wait for probate for this bill to be paid, and family members wouldn't have to be out of pocket. The funeral expenses can be paid on production of a death certificate and a funeral director's invoice. Check with your specific bank to confirm and find out more.

What's most important?

Arranging a funeral is an important human rite of passage for us; some people will have strong views about all the details whereas for others only a few points may be important, such as whether they are buried or cremated. For many people a funeral is an important part of helping family and friends move forward in their grief, so they leave many of the details to family members to decide.

This area provides the space for you to help guide your family and friends in their decision-making process. Most people want to know they are doing something the person would have wanted, but equally it's good to know about the things that you're not bothered about – this might be 'don't spend the money on limousines' or 'don't feel you have to wear black' or 'I don't mind what you do as long as my ashes are spread in X place'.

And it could also be the space to tell your friends and family to do what **they** feel is right, and to feel free to do what would help them to come to terms with your death.

Do add more notes at the end, if this box isn't big enough.

Unattended Cremation or Burial

An unattended cremation is not a funeral. No ceremony is held and the person's body is simply taken to be cremated or buried, with ashes being returned as appropriate. There are many reasons

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why people choose this, but it's always important to discuss this first with the people who will be left behind.

It may be that everyone agrees that a memorial service at a later date would be appropriate – perhaps family are scattered over the world, or a family ritual would mean that delaying a get-together is important.

But you may also find that people are unhappy with this choice. We have met people who have felt cheated out of saying a proper goodbye to the person who has died and they then find grief is much harder on them. Talking this through with people in advance, therefore, to see how they feel about it, is important.

If you choose an unattended cremation or burial, do consider **local** independent funeral directors – they can provide a much more personal service for the families left behind and often are a better environmental choice with the cremations taking place locally, and can be competitively priced.

You are also likely to find them more accommodating, for example if you wish to be dressed in particular clothing or if family wish to say goodbye to you before you are cremated / buried.

Burial Location

Natural burial grounds and cemeteries differ in several ways, including the setting, the type of memorials, and the environmental impact.

Cemeteries are typically owned by a local authority and are dominated by rows of graves and headstones. Natural burial grounds are usually privately owned and are in scenic locations that encourage native plants, flowers, and wildlife; often being left as nature reserves once they are full. Cemeteries have large stone headstones and other memorials. Natural burial grounds typically don't have permanent grave memorials, although most do provide for some kind of grave marker.

Natural burial grounds have a more positive environmental impact because they request the use of biodegradable materials and don't use chemicals. Graves are usually shallower and allow for one person in them, as being buried closer to the surface is likely to produce less methane gas and is the quickest way for the body to naturally degrade.

For more information on natural burial grounds and their locations visit the Natural Death Centre website on: <http://www.naturaldeath.org.uk/>

If you are at the start of your funeral planning process you may wish to visit the cemeteries or burial grounds - it is often a great way to help you decide, and in many instances you will be able to choose and pay for your plot as soon as you have made your decision, thereby removing a large cost from the funeral when the time comes.

Funeral Ceremony Location

People often believe that a funeral has to take place in a church or a crematorium – however this is not true. A venue does not have to be licensed for a funeral to take place, although it is important that the venue are happy and logistically able to accommodate a coffin.

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The 'Victoriana' style funeral is not a pre-requisite these days. We live our lives in much more informal ways and so it is very easy to arrange a funeral which is more in-keeping with the way the person lived. Nor do they have to cost the earth – funerals can be kept very simple if that is what's required. We have arranged funerals at the graveside, in pub car parks, sports fields, village halls or stately homes – even people's back gardens. If the person was to be cremated we have then taken them the next morning without anyone being present to the crematorium. This allows the wake to continue straight from the funeral ceremony, keeping everyone together and without the need for moving to another venue.

If there's somewhere that you have spent a lot of time in your life – perhaps they would let you hold your funeral there...

Coffin

There are many types of coffins and caskets available these days. From cardboard (plain or printed) to willow, bamboo, banana leaf, veneer or solid wood; even a shroud could be possible. Again - if you have no preference, feel free to say so and leave the choice up to your family or friends.

Bearers

Someone will need to carry the coffin into the ceremony – sometimes a trolley can be used, other times the funeral directors can supply the bearers, but we have found that there are usually many family members or friends who would be honoured to help with this task and would really appreciate being asked.

Transport

As with most things these days, even the hearse now comes in different shapes and colours. If you have a particular opinion about this, you can add your thoughts here. The options range from the traditional black hearse to eco-electric hearses, traditional Morris Minors, horses, London taxi cabs or even your own van.

The Ceremony

If there is anyone in particular that you would like to lead the ceremony then this is where you can say so. Funerals can be led by family or friends and are often the most beautiful ceremonies which take place. But it's best to check with them first as sometimes emotions can make this too hard for people. Having a celebrant or priest to help lead the ceremony can be particularly helpful, especially if you are in a timebound venue such as a crematorium. Their experience can ensure that a structure is put together which will include all the important elements but which won't run over time. It can also mean that family can concentrate on saying goodbye rather than feeling anxious about fitting everything in on time.

This is where you can say whether you would like a religious, civil or humanist funeral. The key difference between a civil and humanist funeral lies in the approach to religious content: civil funerals can be tailored to include or exclude religious elements as required, while humanist funerals are strictly non-religious. Sometimes people only want the Lord's Prayer to be said as part of the ceremony in which case a civil funeral may be more appropriate.

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Ceremony Content

What would you like to happen during the ceremony? We have had people ball-room dancing round the crematorium, playing football, sharing funny stories and even performing scenes from Shakespeare around the grave. A funeral doesn't need to be so elaborate or include any of these things but there may be some poems or readings that are important to you or just something personal that people will remember you by.

Body Donation

If you would like to donate your body to medical science you will need to contact your nearest medical school and ask them about the process for donating your body. You will need to complete a form and keep a copy with your will (England & Wales).

Donating your body means that there is no need for a formal funeral. However there are many reasons why your body may not be accepted at the time of death, and so it is always good to have a 'Plan B' so that your family know what it should do if this occurs.

Embalming

People often talk about embalming, but our experience shows that many people don't really understand what it involves. Often described as 'Hygienic cleansing' many people consider that it is a kind of cleaning of the body. In reality embalming is an invasive procedure that uses chemicals and preservatives such as formaldehyde to slow down, not stop, the process of decomposition.

In reality embalming is a process that can be quite physical for the person doing it, and ultimately involves the displacement and removal of blood and other bodily fluids by the embalming fluids.

Embalming is used to help slow down the natural process of decomposition. As a process it goes back to the ancient Egyptians and it certainly has a place in modern times, particularly if a person dies abroad and needs to be flown back to their own country. But on the whole, with the prevalence of refrigeration and speed with which funerals take place, embalming is not a necessary procedure.

Nor is it needed if anyone wishes to spend some time with the person who has died. If you wish to be buried in a natural burial ground you should not be embalmed.

Ashes

If you are being cremated, our experience shows that this is one decision that would be really helpful to your family for you to make in advance; it may also prevent your ashes from languishing for all eternity in someone's spare wardrobe.....

There are many places such as crematoria grounds, cemeteries and natural burial grounds that will provide plots for ashes to be interred. Most crematoria offer scatterings in their gardens of remembrance. But your family and friends are free to scatter your ashes in other spaces where they have the landowner's permission and they should follow the Environment Agency guidelines when scattering in water.

This website is a good resource to provide you with some information and inspiration:

<https://scattering-ashes.co.uk/help-advice/law/>