

My last wishes

It's always difficult to think of death and dying, and therefore families sometimes avoid talking about the inevitable last moments when many difficult decisions need to be made. However, just like everyone should write their Last Will, the time you spend thinking about saying goodbye will be very helpful to those close to you that will be called upon to organize this last event. Everyone's wish is that our loved ones embark on this difficult journey calmly and without confusion or controversy.

For that to happen, conversations that clarify last wishes are greatly beneficial. Close family members will always want to do the right thing, but this can often be an enormous pressure on those charged with planning this final goodbye.

Why then not give your loved ones the gift of certainty? By guiding them this one last time towards choices that make the details of this important event easier to select your answers will help put the focus on accurately reflecting you and the life you have lived.

Let's get started.

My last wishes:

There are several elements to consider when choosing whether one wants to be seen one last time. Also, in this section we will be asking you questions about how you would like your remains to be treated.

These questions are far from simple to answer, but by following our simple, structured questionnaire we hope to make it just a little bit less painful.

1. Viewing

Do you want a viewing with open coffin? **Yes** or **No**
(If No go to question 2)

If Yes, please specify (*circle the choice that reflects your wishes*):

A For a short period, in other words for friends and family only

or

B For as long as my family thinks it will take

If you decide on a viewing, it's important to think about how you would like people to remember you. Ideally you could include a photo showing how you would like to look or refer to elements that you think would best reflect your likeness like a certain hair style, a piece of clothing etc. (*Please write what you think is important to include here*).

2. Disposition of your final remains

After you are gone, think about how you would like your family to dispose of your final remains. These answers are very important to communicate to your family members as they will want to follow these directives carefully, especially if you can keep a copy of this written document.

My remains will be (*Circle the right choice*):

- A** Buried in a cemetery
- B** Cremated
- C** Other (Example: Aquamation)

Please give us any details you can think of if you chose "Other":

When you think of your last resting place what do you have in mind? Maybe you have already chosen this place. Some families plan by buying cemetery plots. Others haven't made a choice. Keep in mind that wherever you chose to remain it should ideally be a place where your loved ones can come visit you and pay their respect as the years go by.

- A** Cemetery (*Please indicate which if you can*): _____
- B** Urn in cemetery (*Please say where*): _____
- C** Urn with a loved one (*Please say who if you can*): _____
- D** Other (Example: disperse my ashes): _____

3. End of life ceremony

These days more and more families opt for an end of life celebration rather than a traditional funeral service. This often gives family members the possibility of creating a more personalized event that better reflects the loved one that has passed. It also makes us focus on the celebration of the life lived, rather than insisting on the sadness that inevitably accompanies any passing.

However, regardless of current trends you must follow your instinct. If a more formal ceremony is what you consider appropriate you should tell us here, so your close family members will know and can respect your wishes.

Finally, as with many things, it's the small details that make something more personal and real. Take the time to find those things and write them here.

3.1 How would you generally describe the character of the end of life ceremony or celebration you wish to have? (*Circle the one that seems best*)

- A** Formal ceremony, preferably at church
- B** More relaxed, does not need to be at a church

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3.2 If you answered B not necessarily at church, can you imagine the best place to celebrate this end of life ceremony? These days many families take advantage of the fact that the ashes can easily be transported to choose a place that has particular significance for the person that has passed (for example: a favourite golf course). Others have chosen to be together in a more intimate environment sometimes even the home of one of the closest family members.

Can you help your family by describing the ideal place where you would like to have your end of life celebration?

(Please note in Quebec it must be somewhere that is accredited for funeral services).

3.3 If we had to put in one word the tone of the ceremony you would like to have, how would you describe it? (Example: calm, full of joy, solemn, a celebration, etc.)

3.4 Are there particular elements that could help personalize the ceremony by referring to things that you have held dear (Example: a particular piece of music, a flower you love, something else that reflects a passion in your life etc.):

3.5 Talk to those that will read these lines and tell them who should speak on your behalf at this end of life ceremony? As far as the celebrant is concerned do you want a priest or a non-denominational celebrant?

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4. Obituary

If you want to make sure of what is written you can write your own obituary (some people choose to do so to be sure of what appears) or you can simply instruct your family to mention the loved ones you will be leaving behind. The choice is yours.

You can also leave instructions as to how you would like this information to be communicated. Do you want it to be published on line, in a newspaper, not published anywhere (e.g. kept for family and friends only)?

Also, if you would like a text to be published should it be accompanied by a photo, and if so which one? Are there accomplishments or moments from your life you would like to mention and draw attention to?

Please help your loved ones by communicating what you think is important.

Thank you!

By filling out this questionnaire you have taken a huge burden off your loved ones' shoulders as they will be able to follow the guidelines included here without the worry that sometimes accompanies these choices. We encourage you to share the contents of this document with your family so they can not only know your wishes but discuss them with you. At the very least, leave a copy somewhere so it can guide them.

The most difficult moments are in fact those where the family of the deceased is without answers regarding choices that are in effect rarely made twice. Everyone wants to honor those that have passed away, but without clear conversations or a written word it can be difficult to know how.

By taking the time to put your last wishes down on paper we are convinced that you will be helping your loved ones tremendously. Thank you for taking the time and may your end of life celebration be a testament to the rich and fulfilled life you have lived.