



# *Managing Digital Assets Upon Death*

An in-depth resource for setting up access and management protocols for your digital assets after you're gone.

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In this age where everyone's everything is handled, stored or backed up digitally, knowing what accounts and assets exist, as well as how to manage them after a loved one has passed can be overwhelming. In some cases, it may prove to be impossible to access the online accounts of a loved one if the proper access rights and permissions weren't set up ahead of time.

As a society, we have become accustomed to designating in advance what should be done with our physical assets (finances, possessions and real estate) upon death. We are willing to hire professionals to put together legal documentation to ensure that our physical assets are appropriately distributed.

But what about our digital assets? What processes do we have in place to ensure that our social media accounts, computer files, shopping or rewards accounts, cloud storage and other online or digital assets will be accessible and manageable upon death? Unfortunately, in many cases, there are none. However, as more digitally-connected people are passing, ensuring that our online legacies and data are taken care of after we're gone is becoming increasingly important.



## *Your Digital Life Is Immortal*

Have you ever wondered what happens to your social media accounts and other online assets after you're gone? Have you thought about what may happen to the data stored within these accounts? More importantly, do you know what you would like to happen to these accounts and their data after death?

In most cases, our digital lives go on forever unless we close or cancel them, or give someone else permission to manage/close them after we're gone. Managing our digital assets during our end-of-life planning should be just as important as managing our physical and financial assets.

## Planning Ahead

Just as with establishing a last will and testament to indicate how your life savings should be allocated upon your passing, it's crucial to indicate ahead of time who is authorized to manage your digital assets after you're gone. There are two main things to consider when planning for the management of your digital assets.

- 1. Keep a Record of Online and Digital Assets and Logins**

With so many online subscriptions and services available today, it's easy for the number of online accounts you own to grow quickly. Whether these accounts are free or paid, it's important to keep a list of URLs, logins and passwords somewhere safe. This will allow for a trusted loved one to manage your accounts once you've passed. Just be sure to let them know that this document exists, and how to access it ahead of time.
- 2. Give Authority to Someone You Trust**

If you'd rather not give full access to your digital assets, or at least not right away, there are ways to designate permissions to specific people after you're gone. A variety of websites do offer services for death planning, but the idea is still very new, and hasn't been widely adopted yet. How your accounts can be managed and what type of permissions can be granted varies.

## Sites Offering Death Planning Services

Whether you belong to one or many social media networks, it's important to consider how you'd like them to be managed after you're gone. Here are the death planning services offered by a few popular social media platforms:



### Facebook Legacy Contact

Facebook offers the ability for users to designate a [legacy contact](#) upon death. The chosen contact will have access to post a static message to your profile, in addition to updating your profile photo and responding to friend requests. If you prefer, you can also choose to give this person permission to download your public activity. However, all private messages will remain so – forever.

If instead, you would rather have your account completely deleted upon your death, you can set your Facebook account accordingly.



### Memorialized Instagram Account

Although Facebook does own Instagram, Facebook legacy contacts are not permitted to access the same person's Instagram account. In fact, "Instagram doesn't allow anyone to log into a [memorialized account](#)." Instead, your Instagram account can be either memorialized or deleted upon the request of a verified family member.

Memorialized accounts are meant to remain untouched, and therefore cannot be altered in any way after the account owner is deceased. To request the memorialization of an Instagram account, a loved one must submit a [special request](#).



## Google Account Executors

For your Google account, you are permitted to designate up to 10 people to manage your account after you've passed. If you don't choose anyone to manage your account, then it will automatically become inactive based on your [preferred settings](#) after activation. The default setting is 3 months, one month before which your designated contact will receive an alert by phone and/or email from Google.

Additional inactivity periods to choose from include 6, 9, 12, 15 or 18 months. Once your account has reached the end of its inactivity period, your designated contact(s) will receive an email that you have prewritten, indicating what you would like done with the account.

You can either give your contact(s) full access to your account, specified access to download certain data, or no access at all, in which case they will just receive the notification that your account has been inactivated, and they will have permission to simply delete the account.

## Sites With Limited Account Management for Deceased Individuals

The following sites don't currently offer specific death planning services, though there have been discussions about the possibility of offering such services in the future. In the meantime, there are other ways to delete your account and data:



### Twitter

While Twitter doesn't offer a specific policy for designating an account manager upon the death of the account owner, there is another way to have your account deleted after your death. A verified immediate family member of the deceased can provide a death certificate and any other required documentation in order to receive permission to delete your account.



### LinkedIn

Like Twitter's policy, LinkedIn allows a verified family member or close acquaintance to remove your account by filling out a [special form](#).



### Snapchat

Snapchat will delete the account of a deceased person upon request from a verified next-of-kin, along with certified proof of death.



## Tumblr

Tumblr will also allow a verified next-of-kin to request that the account of a deceased person be deleted.



## Other Sites

Sites such as Yahoo, Microsoft and AOL, and more, have all created basic protocols to allow immediate family members to request the deletion of a loved one's account.

## Online Data Storage

Storing data online has grown increasingly popular in recent years, and is likely to continue to grow. Unfortunately, this type of data can be challenging to recover after an individual's death. Due to privacy laws and encryption processes, it's possible that your data may not be recovered upon your death, unless you have given access (login) information to a trusted loved one. Therefore, the best way to ensure that your online data is recoverable and accessible by your loved ones is to provide the necessary access credentials to someone you trust ahead of time.

Another option is to save your most cherished files (photos, stories, etc.) offline, versus in a cloud setting, to increase the chances that these files can be accessed by your loved ones after you've passed. There are also digital services available (such as [LastPass](#)) for securely storing login and password information for all your digital accounts. Rather than including personal login information in your will (which is highly discouraged), you can provide a loved one with access to all of your linked accounts with one master password.

## *The choice is yours, but be sure to make one.*

When it comes to managing your digital life after your death, the biggest mistake you can make is not deciding how you want your digital assets to be handled. There are a few options out there to choose from, but if you don't make a choice ahead of time, your family and friends may be left scrambling to access your important data before it's gone forever. By being proactive, you can make the process of managing digital assets much easier for those you love.



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If you'd like to take the next step in planning, one of our experienced funeral planners can meet you for a free, no obligation consultation at one of our facilities or your residence.

**REQUEST CONSULTATION ▶**

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