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How to Write Up a Will

1. List What You Own

Start with a full inventory of what you own. This includes:

- Property (homes, land)
- Bank accounts
- Investments
- Vehicles
- Personal valuables (jewelry, art, heirlooms)
- Digital assets (cryptocurrency, online accounts)
- Insurance policies

Be thorough. The more specific, the better.

2. Decide Who Gets What

Now choose your beneficiaries. This can be:

- Family members
- Friends
- Charities
- Organizations you support

Be clear about who gets what. Avoid vague language-write names, amounts, and specific items.

3. Choose an Executor

Your executor is the person who'll carry out the instructions in your will. Pick someone trustworthy, organized, and capable of handling paperwork and deadlines. Let them know ahead of time-they need to be on board.

4. Appoint Guardians (If You Have Kids)

If you have children under 18, name a guardian. This is one of the most important parts of your will. Talk with

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the person beforehand and make sure they're willing to take on the role.

5. Write the Will

You can write your will:

- With a lawyer
- Using an online legal service
- By hand (in some jurisdictions, handwritten wills are legally valid-but double-check the laws in your area)

Use plain, direct language. Include:

- Your full legal name and address
- A statement that this is your last will and testament
- Details of your assets and who gets what
- Name of your executor
- Guardianship information (if needed)
- Your signature and the date
- Signatures of witnesses (usually two, not beneficiaries)

6. Store It Safely

Once your will is signed and witnessed, store it in a safe place. Make sure your executor and close family know where it is. A fireproof safe, secure cloud storage, or your lawyer's office are all good options.

7. Review and Update as Needed

Life changes. So should your will. Review it after major events like:

- Marriage or divorce
- Birth of a child
- Death of a beneficiary
- Buying or selling property

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A will isn't a one-and-done document. Keep it current.

What is Probate?

Probate is the legal process of sorting out a person's stuff after they die.

Here's what it usually involves:

- Proving the will is valid (if there is one)
- Identifying and gathering the person's assets (like money, property, valuables)
- Paying off any debts or taxes
- Distributing what's left to the people named in the will (or to family, if there's no will)

If there's no will, the court decides who gets what based on local laws.

Bottom line: Probate makes sure everything is handled properly and legally after someone passes away.