

# Estate Planning: Getting Started

Everyone needs a will. *We recommend that you discuss your will and other estate planning matters with an attorney.*

If you don't have an attorney, you can find an estate planning specialist by using the directory provided by the American College of Trust and Estate Counsel: [www.actec.org/fellows/directory](http://www.actec.org/fellows/directory). Your attorney may provide you with resources to help you begin planning, or you can use this checklist to get started with gathering key information and thinking about your estate.

## Step 1: Take Stock of Your Current Situation

While this isn't an exhaustive list, you can prepare an inventory of what you do and don't own, the approximate value of each, and any related documents:

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|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Real Estate                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Insurance policies                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cars, jewelry, and artwork                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Retirement accounts                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Safety deposit boxes (locations & contents) | <input type="checkbox"/> Intellectual property                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bank and brokerage accounts                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Mortgages, lines of credit, and other debt |

## Step 2: Begin Thinking About Your Estate Planning Goals and Wishes

Your estate planning attorney will ask you additional questions to help you achieve your planning goals, and your attorney will explain the benefits and consequences of each decision.

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|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Who do you want to be responsible for distributing your estate?                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> If you have pets, how do you want to provide for them?                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Who do you want to leave your estate to, and what or how much do you want each individual to get? | <input type="checkbox"/> After taking care of your loved ones, are there any causes that you would like to support? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> If you have children, who do you want their guardian to be?                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Do you have any preferences for your funeral?  |

## Step 3: Meet with Your Attorney to Prepare Your Will

When you're ready, meet with your estate planning attorney to draft your will and other important estate planning documents, like a durable power of attorney and an advance directive.

## Step 4: Update Your Estate Plan When Needed

Make sure to regularly evaluate and update your will and other estate planning documents to account for any major life events (such as changes to your finances or changes to your family or their needs) or changes in the law. Please consult with your estate planning attorney if you feel that you need to update your will.

*National Brain Tumor Society does not provide legal, tax, or financial advice. We strongly recommend that you consult professional advisors on all legal, tax, or financial matters, including estate planning considerations. This communication is not intended or written to be used, and cannot be used, for the purpose of avoiding tax-related penalties.*