

A Checklist for Your Initial Estate Planning Meeting

A primer for estate planning

When you start your estate planning or decide to update your planning, be ready to ask the right questions, and prepare in advance so that you are well equipped for your appointment. It will save both time and money.

Here are some helpful tips to consider before your first appointment so that you make that meeting as productive as possible.



- Create a list of instructions about when or how much a beneficiary should inherit. Decide whether it should be through your Will, through a beneficiary designation on life insurance or a retirement account, and whether it should be outright or held in trust for a period.
- Make a list of any personal property that you would like a specific friend or loved one to inherit.
- If you own real estate, decide who will inherit if your spouse/significant other or one or more of your children predeceases you.
- If you plan to leave any property or assets to charity, get the information on the charity's legal name, business address and tax identification number. It can all be found at www.guidestar.com for free and it will avoid confusion or frustration for your personal representative.
- Decide who will be your Power of Attorney or Health Care Proxy and who will be the alternate on each if the named person declines, becomes unable to act in that role or dies before you.
- Decide whether you want an Advanced Directive/Living Will and what your medical wishes are.

Take your current estate planning documents with you if you can locate them. Gather as much information as you can on the following:

- Property titles
- Corporate or partnership business agreements
- Individual and business bank accounts (and how those accounts are titled)
- Life insurance policies and retirement accounts (and the beneficiary designations)
- Contact information for your beneficiaries
- Copies of your last three year's income tax returns

All of this preparation will make your attorney's role in counseling you much easier and will save you time and money in the end.



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