A.D.E Wills

A PLAIN-ENGLISH STARTER GUIDE

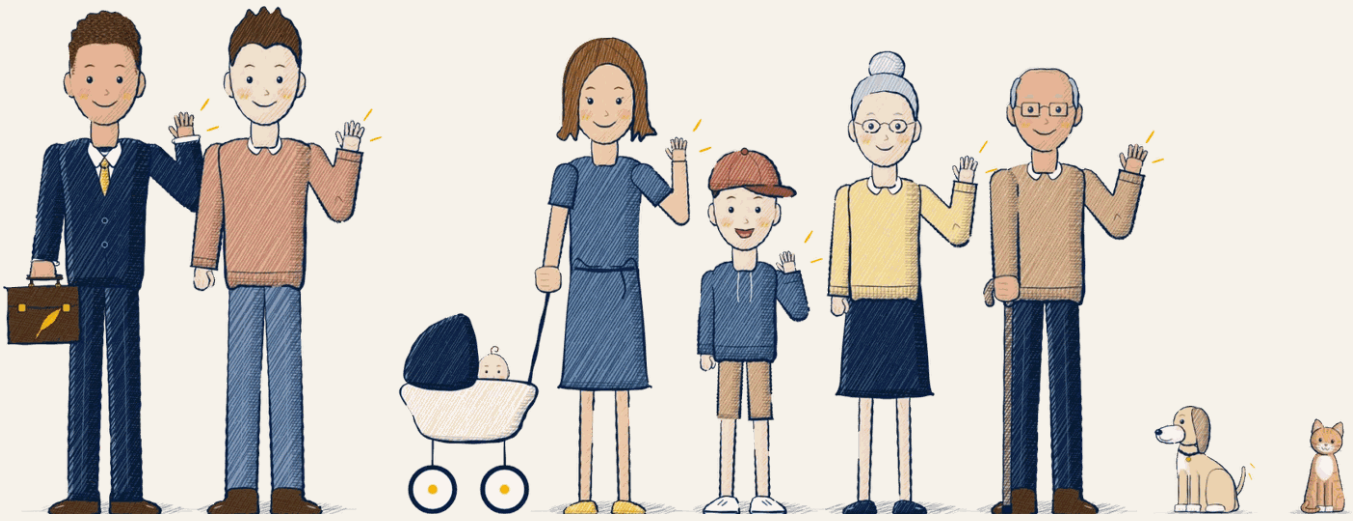
Keeping Your Will Safe and Up to Date

Making your Will is step one. Looking after it is step two.

A short, friendly guide to keeping your original Will safe, and knowing when it needs a fresh look. No jargon, and nothing to decide today.

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THE PART MOST PEOPLE MISS

Making it is only half the job

A Will is one of the kindest things you can do for the people you love. Once it's signed, though, it can let them down in two ways, both easy to prevent.

1. It can't be found

Your executors will need your **original** signed Will. If you kept it yourself and it can't be found after you die, the law presumes you destroyed it to cancel it.

Unless it can be shown otherwise, your estate could then pass under the intestacy rules, a fixed order of relatives that may not reflect your wishes.

2. It no longer fits your life

Your Will reflects your life on the day you signed it. New grandchildren, a house move or an executor who has since died can all leave it out of step.

An out-of-date Will can give clear instructions that no longer match your wishes, and some life events cancel a Will altogether.

The good news is that both have simple fixes, which the next two pages explain.

WORTH KNOWING

A photocopy or scan isn't the same as your original

A copy can sometimes be accepted, but only once your executors have explained to the Probate Registry, with evidence, what happened to the original. That means delay, cost and worry at an already difficult time.



Who this guide is for

Anyone who has made a Will and wants to be sure it will work when it's needed. It covers the law in England and Wales.



SAFETY

Keeping your Will safe

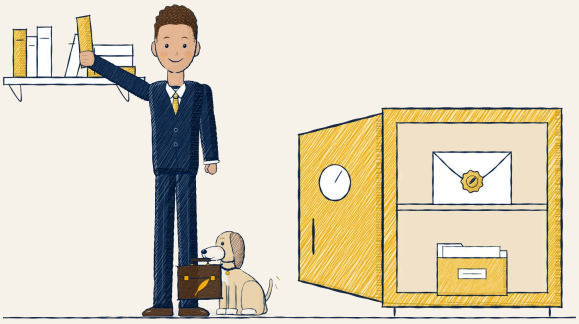
Where you keep your original Will matters as much as what it says. A drawer at home feels convenient, but it carries real risks.

The risks of keeping it at home

- **Loss.** Misplaced in a house move or a clear-out, or simply forgotten over the years.
- **Fire, flood and damp.** An ordinary drawer offers no protection.
- **Damage.** Tears, stains or marks where pages were unstapled can raise questions about whether the Will was tampered with.
- **Nobody knows where it is.** If your executors can't find it, it can't be used.

What good storage gives you

- ✓ Fire-resistant storage, away from everyday risks.
- ✓ A copy you can read whenever you like.
- ✓ Registration, so the Will can be traced when it's needed.
- ✓ A simple way for your executors to get the original when it's needed.



Registering your Will

Registration records that your Will exists and where it's held, on Certainty, the National Will Register. It doesn't record what your Will says.

When the time comes, your executors can search the register to find your Will and help check whether there's a later one. It isn't a legal requirement, but it closes the most common gap: a valid Will that nobody can find.

Please leave your Will exactly as it is

- Don't unbind it, re-staple it or remove any pages.
- Don't attach anything, not even a note or a paperclip.
- Don't write on it, initial it or cross anything out.
- Don't keep it anywhere only you can get into.

KEEPING IT AT HOME ANYWAY?

A few simple steps make a real difference

- Keep it flat, in a fire-resistant box, with your other important papers.
- Keep a copy somewhere separate, as a record of what it says.
- Tell your executors exactly where it is, and how to get to it.
- Register it, and update the register if you ever move it.

UP TO DATE

Keeping your Will up to date

Your Will is a snapshot of your wishes on the day you signed it. We recommend a review every five years, and after any major change in your life.



THIS ONE SURPRISES PEOPLE

Marriage or civil partnership cancels an existing Will

In England and Wales, getting married or forming a civil partnership automatically revokes (cancels) any earlier Will, unless the Will shows it was made expecting that particular marriage or partnership, and was meant to survive it. The Law Commission has recommended changing this rule, but as at November 2026 it still applies.



Every five years

Even if nothing has changed, read it through and check it still says what you want.



Separation or divorce

Separation alone changes nothing. Once a divorce or dissolution is final, your former partner is treated as having died for gifts and executor roles, and any appointment of them as guardian is cancelled, unless your Will says otherwise.



A new child or grandchild

Check your Will provides for them, and that guardians are named for any child under 18.



A death

If an executor, guardian or someone you've left a gift to dies before you, a role or gift may fail or pass differently.



Moving or selling a home

A property you no longer own can't pass under a gift that names it.



A change in what you own

An inheritance, a business or a big change in your savings may call for a rethink.



Someone's needs change

For example, if someone you're leaving money to becomes ill or vulnerable.



A change of heart

A falling-out, a reconciliation, or new wishes about who inherits or acts for you.



How a Will is changed properly

A signed Will can't be changed by writing on it: handwritten changes made afterwards generally don't count unless they are signed and witnessed too. We handle small changes, such as a new address or a replacement executor, as a Will update, and bigger changes with a new Will. Either way, it's signed and witnessed in the usual way.

PLAIN ENGLISH

The jargon, explained

A few terms come up often. Here's what they mean, in plain language.

Original Will	The Will you actually signed in front of your two witnesses. Copies, scans and photos are not the same thing.
Executor	The person (or people) you appoint to deal with your estate after you die and carry out the wishes in your Will.
Beneficiary	Anyone who receives something under your Will: money, property or possessions.
Estate	Everything you own when you die, such as your home, savings and belongings. Debts are paid from it first. Some things, such as a jointly owned home or a pension, may pass outside your Will.
Intestacy	The fixed legal rules that decide who inherits when someone dies without a valid Will.
Revocation	Cancelling a Will. It can happen deliberately, by making a new Will that cancels it or destroying it on purpose, or automatically, as on marriage.
Presumption of revocation	The rule that if your original Will was last in your keeping and can't be found, you're assumed to have destroyed it to cancel it, unless there's evidence to show otherwise.
National Will Register	A register run by Certainty that records that a Will exists and where it is kept, but not what it says.
Will search	A search executors can run on the register, and with local Will writers and solicitors, to trace a Will and help check for a later one.
Letter of Wishes	An informal note kept alongside your Will, never attached to it, to guide your executors. It isn't legally binding, so it can be updated without changing your Will.
Grant of probate	The court document that confirms your executors' authority to deal with your estate. They apply for it using the original Will.



Making things easier for your executors

If your Will is stored with us, your executors simply contact us with the death certificate and suitable ID, and we release your original Will straight to them, ready to apply for probate.



The Safe Will Plan

Your Will kept safe, findable and reviewed every year, from just £3/month.

Storing your Will is as easy as 1, 2, 3

1

Return your signed Will

Once the Will we've written for you is signed, post it back and we'll place it in our fire-resistant cabinet.

2

Keep your copy

A password-protected copy to keep and share with your executors, so it's easy to reach whenever it's needed.

3

Yearly review reminder

Each year we check whether anything has changed, and let you know if your Will needs updating.



Single

£3/month

billed annually, £36 a year



Couple

£5/month

billed annually, £60 a year

What's included

- ✓ Fire-resistant cabinet storage for your Will and any related documents
- ✓ An annual reminder to review your Will
- ✓ Executor release of your Will on death
- ✓ 10% off our other Wills services
- ✓ A password-protected copy for you and your executors
- ✓ A free yearly Will review by our team
- ✓ Free registration of your Will*
- ✓ Lose your copy? We'll simply send you another

Need a change? Just let us know and we'll tell you the fixed fee before any work starts.

Ideal if your wishes are settled. Renews each year; no VAT is charged.
*With Certainty, the National Will Register. Registering a Will is not a legal requirement.

HOW TO JOIN EITHER PLAN

Ring us on **01865 507174** or request a call back at **adewills.co.uk**, and we'll set up your plan over the phone once we're sure it's the right fit. Both plans are for Wills we've written; if yours was written elsewhere, we'll talk you through a new one first.

The Legacy Care Plan

Your Will stored and kept up to date for you: the small changes every Will needs, plus a brand-new Will every three years, from £10/month.

Updating your Will is as easy as 1, 2, 3



1 Tell us what's changed

A phone call or an email is enough. No forms to fill in, and no appointment unless you'd like one.

2 We draft it

We prepare the update, or a new Will if it needs one, and send it to you to check.

3 We post it out

Printed, with a Signing Guide where needed. Once it's signed, post it back and we'll store it in place of the old one.



Single

£10/month

one monthly price



Couple

£18/month

one monthly price

Everything in the Safe Will Plan, plus:

- ✓ One update a year, covering up to ten minor changes, drafted and posted to you
- ✓ A brand-new Will every three years, included in your plan
- ✓ Printing and posting included every time, with nothing further to pay for the updates themselves

A minor update

Replacing an executor or guardian, a new name or address for someone in your Will, a small change to a gift amount, or correcting a detail.

A new Will

Adding a clause, changing who inherits the rest of your estate, or reshaping your wishes. If something major happens sooner, we'll tell you plainly what's needed.

When your Will is updated, we securely destroy the old one, or return it to you if you prefer. Your Will is only ever released to you or your named executors.

12-month minimum term. Ideal if your circumstances are still changing. No VAT is charged.

A TWO-MINUTE CHECK

Is your Will safe and current?

Ask yourself these five questions. If you pause on any of them, it may be time for a chat.

- [ ] Do your executors know where your original Will is kept?
- [ ] Is it protected from fire, flood, damage and loss?
- [ ] Is it registered, so it can be traced when it's needed?
- [ ] Has anything changed since you signed it: marriage, children, property, or the people you named?
- [ ] Have you read it through in the last five years?

LET'S HAVE A CHAT

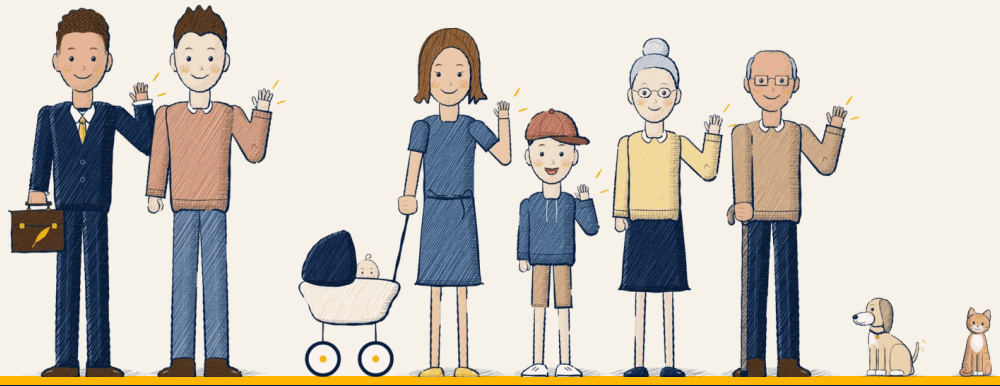
01865 507174

Your initial chat is free, online or over the phone, with no obligation. Email **info@adewills.co.uk** or book a free 15-minute call at **calendly.com/ade-wills/15min**.

WANT MORE DETAIL?

Our other free guides

The **Wills Starter Guide** and **The Will Guide** explain what a Will does, who inherits without one, and how a Will is signed properly. Download them at **adewills.co.uk**.



A.D.E Wills

Call
01865 507174

Email
info@adewills.co.uk

Visit
46 Woodstock Road, Oxford, OX2 6HT
(by appointment)

Opening hours
Monday to Saturday, 8am to 6pm

Your Will is written by a full member of the Society of Will Writers, working to their Code of Practice and holding full professional indemnity insurance. We are professional Will writers, not solicitors. This guide is general information about the law in England and Wales as at November 2026. It is not personal legal or financial advice and does not create a client relationship. The law can change, and our fees are always confirmed in writing before you instruct us.

A.D.E Wills is a trading name of A.D.E Estate Planning Limited.