

## Where you shouldn't store your will



Creating a will and powers of attorney can add valuable peace of mind, not only to your own life, but to the lives of the people you love. But once you've have these important life documents prepared, where should you keep them?

Among the worst options is one that may surprise you: a safe deposit box at a bank. Although this option offers high physical security, heirs may need a court order to access the contents – a process that adds cost and inconvenience to an already stressful time.

Another poor option lies at the opposite end of the security spectrum: storing your life documents among your general possessions – in a nightstand drawer, for example. This kind of storage can leave your documents vulnerable to spills, fire, or even tampering. Also, digital only versions of life documents are not an option as presently paper copies of wills and powers of attorney are required.

Better options include a well-organized, lockable filing cabinet or a home safe. In both of these cases, it's important to be sure that a trusted individual (for example, your executor) has access to the combination or key.

Others opt to leave the original copies with the lawyer who prepared them. Many law firms have fireproof storage for important client documents, and storing the will with a law firm can ensure that only authorized individuals can access them. The main downside to this choice is that heirs may not know who your lawyer is, or, if your will is stored for many years, the firm could relocate or even close (though lawyers will generally make efforts to return documents to clients if this happens).

Whichever option you choose, discuss the documents' location – and their general contents – with your executor, to minimize confusion when they are needed. You should also be sure to review your documents every two years, and after significant life events like marriage, divorce, the birth of a child, death of a family member, or – if you should be so lucky – that big lottery win.

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