

Will Storage Guide

This guide lists the various options on where to store your Will.

You will notice in this guide that the word 'Will' is always capitalised; this is standard practice and helps to avoid misunderstandings.

Where To Store Your Will

Now that you've finally created your Last Will and Testament, there's just one more important task you need to do before you can sit back and relax: store your Will.

There isn't any particular place that the law says you must store your Will but it should be stored in a safe, easy-to-access location where it can easily be found when it is needed.

Also, it is very important that your executors know where your Will is stored, so that they can handle your affairs efficiently after you have gone. Your wishes can't be followed after you pass away if no-one knows where your Will is. It is thus essential that you store your Will safely and that you let people know where your Will is stored.

Here we list the most popular options of where to store your Will:-

Store Your Will With A Solicitor

A solicitor is obligated to keep a client's Will confidential, so storing your Will with a solicitor is usually a safe option, and solicitors are regulated so if the Will is lost or damaged, you have recourse to make things right; which is just as well as we do hear some horror stories with Wills being kept in unlocked filing cabinets in solicitors' offices.

It is worth noting that solicitors generally offer Will storage because they have an ulterior motive in that they hope to get the probate business after you die. Bereaved family members going to collect the Will from a solicitor are fairly easy to sign up for expensive probate services without the family carefully reviewing the solicitors' fees, never mind negotiating them.

Also, the number of Wills in storage has a big influence on the value of a solicitor's practice, with Wills in their custody counted as business assets, which they are willing to transfer if they are acquired or amalgamate with another firm.

Bear in mind that not many solicitors will store a Will they didn't write, and there will probably be a fee payable if they do. Plus of course, you have to meet them at their offices at their convenience, not yours.

Store Your Will With A Storage Company

There are a number of specialist Will storage companies who normally provide a very safe and secure document archive storage facility which is protected by 24 hour security, CCTV, intruder alarms, humidity and fire control systems and often your Will is kept in a waterproof wallet.

With these specialist storage companies, your Will typically goes into a dark vault and never sees the light of day again until you or your executors ask for it.

When your executors need to access your Will, they need to provide the specialist storage company with a death certificate and proof of their identity and the storage company will then send your Will to them.

Do watch out for annual charges to store your Will which can add up.

Store Your Will With The Probate Service

A very good place to store your will is with the Probate Service, which is a government service offering the safe keeping of important documents. Not only will your Will be kept safe and secure, but after you have passed away, it is the obvious place for anyone looking for a Will to do a search, meaning it can easily be found when the time comes.

There is a one off fee of just £20 to deposit and register your Will with the Probate Service, and this can either be done in person at a Probate Registry of your choice, or by post.

If you choose to update or write a new Will in the future you'll have to retrieve your Will and pay another £20 fee. Only you can take the Will back while you're still alive by submitting the right form; you can't ask anyone else to get it for you.

Store Your Will Yourself

You can keep your Will at home anywhere you like, but it does make sense to store the Will with your other important documents.

The benefit to storing your Will at home is that it is completely free, and in the majority of cases, it's perfectly safe to do so. However, just be aware that it might get lost, damaged or destroyed accidentally, in which case it becomes useless.

There's no point in storing your Will in a place where your executor needs to act out a scene from *Mission Impossible* to retrieve it, so do resist the temptation to "hide" your will. People have been known to place their estate planning documents under mattresses, in the attic and so on; but that is not recommended.

If you store your Will in a location that requires a combination, key or password for entry, be sure to share that information with someone you trust, such as your partner.

Many people do keep their Will at home, and as long as it stored safely, this is a very good option.

Store Your Will With A Bank

We would go as far as to say never keep your Will in a bank safety deposit box, because it is hard to access during business hours, and inaccessible outside of banking hours.

Additionally, when someone dies, the bank can't open the deposit box until the executor gets probate (permission from the court to administer your affairs) – and probate can't be granted without the Will. It's a classic Catch 22 situation.

Unless the safety deposit box is jointly managed (and your survivors are authorised to access the safety deposit box), the bank will likely require a court order to provide access to the box, which could potentially take months.

Another word of caution: - If the Will provides instructions on issues such as preferred funeral arrangements then by the time the Will is liberated from the bank safety deposit box, it may be too late to act according to the funeral wishes contained within the Will.

Tell Your Executors Where Your Will Is Stored

Executors are the people who will administer your estate in accordance with your wishes, so if you want them to do their job properly, they have to know where they can find your Will.

We can't stress enough how important it is to make sure your executor or family members know where you've stored your Will and do remember if it cannot be located then you could be treated as dying intestate; so the law would decide who gets what from your estate, rather than you deciding.

Once you've made your decision about where to store your will for safekeeping, it's essential to make sure that your executors know where it is and how to get it after you pass away.

In Conclusion

So, in conclusion, there are a number of options available to you on where to store your Will safely, but do remember that wherever you store your Will, make sure that people you trust know where it's located so they can easily access it when the time comes.

Also remember that the original version of a Will is the only legally binding version. Photocopies and scans are not legally valid because they don't have your original signature on them.

As we provide you with your Will in electronic format, printing it off and signing it is easy, and you have a number of options on where to store your Will.

Once you have chosen, and stored your Will successfully, for your own peace of mind, tell your loved ones exactly where they can find your Will.