

# How do I get started on my estate plan?

Estate planning is critical to your financial well-being. A properly designed estate plan can help you during that interim phase of life prior to your passing and provide the next generation the guidance they need to make certain your wishes are followed.

## It's about leaving your legacy. Your way.

Although every plan is unique, the process for completing a plan follows a similar pattern and a little homework in advance can help make things run smoother.

### Ask yourself these starter questions and write down your thoughts:

- What is my net worth?
- Where are my documents?
- How do I own my house, car and other assets? (Asset titling)
- Are there any special gifts I want to make?
- How will the remainder of my estate be distributed?
- Will I have estate taxes?
- Do I have enough liquidity for bills and taxes?
- Who will help? – your fiduciaries
  - Estate administration
  - Powers of attorney
  - Trustee

After you have considered these questions and have a good feel for what you want to happen after you're gone, the next critical step is to engage the services of an estate planning attorney.

## Finding an attorney

Estate planning is a very specific area of the law, and you want to ensure your attorney is considered an estate planning attorney. You can take several measures to find the right attorney for your needs.

If you are already working with a financial professional, they may have a relationship with an estate planning attorney or firm. This would likely be your best option, as the firms may already have a long-standing working relationship and know how best to work together.

If you don't yet have an attorney you're working with, you may want to search the [American College of Trust and Estate Counsel](#), or contact your local Bar Association. Make sure you're working with someone on the Committee for Trust & Estate. Key terms to look for are "Trusts & Estates" and "estate planning." You're looking for a specialist, not a generalist.

## The appointment

Once you have selected an estate planning attorney, schedule an appointment for a consultation. Usually, there isn't a charge for this initial consultation; attorneys typically work with a flat rate.

In this initial consultation, the attorney will help you explore your personal and financial goals and collect information about your family, your assets and liabilities, and other information.

## The execution

Based on information you provide, the attorney will draft the necessary documents to help fulfill your wishes. Copies will be provided for your review. Take the time to review them with your spouse or partner and note any discrepancies or changes you'd like to make.

Once the attorney receives your review, the documents will be edited and finalized. In a step called "the execution," you will sign your documents. This is typically done in the attorney's office with the assistance of a notary and witnesses.

At this point, you can share these documents with your financial professional, who will incorporate the details into your financial strategy and help you maintain the estate plan through proper asset titling and annual reviews.

## Start writing your EPIC today

Start your epic journey by contacting your financial professional. They will work with you and your estate planning attorney to help you identify what's important to you and create strategies to pursue your goals.



### Bring your homework

Don't forget your answers to the starter questions

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