



*Snapshots™*

## FUNERAL CHECKLIST

THERE ARE MANY DECISIONS YOU WILL HAVE TO MAKE WHEN PLANNING A FUNERAL. HERE IS A CHECKLIST OF SOME OF THE ISSUES YOU SHOULD DISCUSS WITH YOUR LOVED ONES:

Decision	Things to Consider	Your Thoughts
Interment or Cremation	If the deceased has not provided instructions, you must choose between burial or cremation. Religious preferences may be a consideration.	
Embalming	In most cases, there are no legal requirements to have a body embalmed. However, where there is a long delay between the death and the burial, or if the deceased's body needs to be transported, embalming may be required.	
Clothing and Jewellery	Particularly where there is going to be an open casket viewing/ funeral, you will have to determine what the deceased will wear and if any jewellery will be worn.	
Viewing	It is common practice to have a viewing at the funeral home where mourners can come and pay their respects to the deceased. Traditional hours are 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. and 7:00 to 9:00 p.m., but this is not set in stone. It is assumed that family members will attend and it is a good idea to discuss scheduling.	
Open or Closed Casket	This decision may be a religious or cultural issue and, without specific instructions, your family will have to make a choice. The decision will also impact the nature of the services required from the funeral director who will need to prepare the body. As well, some clergy will require a closed casket during a memorial service.	
The Service	You will need to decide upon the location of the service, if any. It may be conducted at the funeral home or at a place of worship, such as a church or temple. The person conducting the service must be consulted to arrange the timing, and the funeral director advised to arrange for transportation of the body. If your family is dispersed across a large area, agreeing upon a mutually convenient location will also be a consideration.	
Interment	You should determine if the deceased had pre-arranged to have a cemetery plot prepared. If not, then the funeral director can help in arranging to prepare a plot at an agreed upon location, either religious or secular. If the deceased is going to be interred, you must decide whether it will be a private, family event or a more formal group procedure. Often the interment occurs immediately after the religious service, with all of the mourners in attendance, and a further religious ceremony is usually conducted. The religious leader must be consulted, as well as the funeral director, to arrange for transportation of the body.	

Transportation	Where there is a formal burial after a service, it is common practice to arrange transportation for the immediate family. The funeral director will provide this for a fee.	
The Casket	In the absence of specific instructions from the deceased, and where burial is chosen, you will have to select a casket. This is typically the most expensive item in the funeral and it is important that your family comes to an agreement on cost since, in an emotionally charged time, there is a temptation to not want to appear stingy. The average cost of a casket is around \$2,000 but can go up to \$10,000 or more.	
Music	It is traditional to provide music at a funeral and there will be many standard pieces that can be played following the customs of a given religious faith, either by recording or by live performers. In recent times there has been a trend to request more untraditional music that is considered in keeping with the nature of the deceased; however, when the setting is religious, this requires consultation with the religious authorities who have the right to make the decision.	
The Eulogy	You may want to have someone deliver a eulogy at the funeral service. This is an honour both to the deceased and the person making the delivery, but it is important that the person assigned is comfortable with speaking in public and that they make an address that your family will be comfortable with.	
Pall Bearers	With a traditional religious service, pall bearers may be required. Ordinarily four to six people carry out this responsibility. The funeral director can assist if additional pall bearers are needed.	
Flowers	Flowers are a traditional part of the funeral process and your family will probably want to provide some appropriate arrangements. Other mourners often provide flowers but in recent times it has become quite common to request mourners to make donations to a charity of the deceased's or family's choice in lieu of floral arrangements.	
The Obituary	It is customary to have an obituary printed in local newspapers to notify the public of a death. Your family should appoint someone to write the notice and have it reviewed. You should also agree on where the obituary should be printed and for how long, given the costs involved.	
Memorial Markers	Although not an immediate concern, you need to give some thought as to the type of marker that will be installed on the grave. There are many choices and cost will certainly need to be considered. Furthermore, some cemeteries may have guidelines on what can be erected.	
Distributing Ashes	Sometimes, a deceased will want to be cremated and then have their ashes scattered. Survivors need to be aware that there can be laws that restrict this procedure. Generally, scattering ashes on private land is acceptable providing the owner agrees. When contemplating scattering ashes on public land, the authorities should be consulted. The funeral director should be able to provide further information.	
Viewing Casket	Where a cremation is planned, caskets can be rented from the funeral home, which will be used only for the visiting/viewing hours.	

Post Funeral Gatherings

It is common practice to have a gathering of mourners after the funeral to commemorate the deceased. Some options:

- A gathering at the home of a family member. In this case, you will need to make plans for refreshments. Your family may arrange to provide this themselves or hire a caterer. Support groups at churches or other religious institutions may also lend assistance.
- A gathering at a church hall. Most religious institutions have social groups that will step in and provide catering services for post funeral gatherings at a modest cost.
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A hotel/restaurant or other private social meeting place can also be rented. Many provide catering services.

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