

What's the Difference Between a Will and an Estate Plan?

Understanding the difference between a will and an estate plan is essential, as they serve different purposes. A will is a legal document that outlines how your assets should be distributed after your death and who should care for any minor children. An estate plan goes further—it includes your will along with additional documents and strategies, such as trusts, powers of attorney, and tax planning, to help manage your affairs during life and transfer your wealth efficiently after death.

A Will

- ✓ Appoints an executor, who will manage your estate and carry out your wishes
- ✓ Specifies who will inherit your assets
- ✓ Allows you to name guardians for your minor children
- ✗ Is an essential part of a full estate plan — but not a complete plan on its own
- ✗ May not contain all the info and documents your executor will need to settle your estate
- ✗ Does not typically include strategies to reduce taxes, avoid probate, or maximize the value of your estate

An Estate Plan

Includes your will, plus:

- ✓ A complete inventory of all assets & liabilities
- ✓ Key documents and beneficiary information
- ✓ Powers of Attorney for property and personal care
- ✓ Healthcare directives and end-of-life instructions
- ✓ Trusts, tax planning, and beneficiary designations
- ✓ Reflects your personal goals and unique family circumstances
- ✓ Reduces delays, legal fees, and potential disputes during estate settlement

Passing away without a will is like leaving your family to complete a puzzle with missing pieces and no picture on the box.

Two Stories, Two Outcomes

With Only a Will

- The Executor may struggle to find important information
- Probate is usually required, which can be time-consuming & costly
- Minimal protection for minor or disabled beneficiaries
- Families may face stress, disputes and delays

When Jane Passes With Only a Will

Jane had a will, but no healthcare directive. After suffering a stroke, her family had to make difficult medical decisions without knowing her wishes, causing emotional strain and tension during an already hard time.

Following her passing, her executor struggled to find key documents. With no clear guidance, the probate process became costly and drawn out, adding to the family's stress.

Unfamiliar with legal steps and overwhelmed by personal demands, Jane's executor made mistakes. Disagreements arose, and instead of focusing on healing, the family was left dealing with confusion and conflict.

When Mike Passes, Having Made a Full Estate Plan

Mike had ongoing health issues, but he planned ahead. With a healthcare directive and POA, his family had clarity and peace of mind when he could no longer make decisions for himself. After his passing, his executor had a clear plan to follow. Documents were organized, instructions detailed, and nothing was left to guesswork.

Because Mike used tools like trusts and named beneficiaries, probate was avoided—saving time, money, and stress. Most importantly, family conflict never arose. His wishes were known and honored.

Instead of scrambling, his family was able to grieve and heal—just as he intended.

With a Full Estate Plan

- The executor/trustee has all the documents and clear instructions
- May simplify or avoid probate entirely
- Includes POA and health directives for incapacity
- Complete asset inventory is at the ready
- Faster, guided distribution
- Trusts provide managed inheritance for minor or disabled beneficiaries

Plan Today, Protect Tomorrow

Whether you're preparing a simple will or a full estate plan, your choices today shape your family's future.

**You deserve peace of mind.
Your family deserves a clear path forward.**