

# **Your Complete Financial Guide**



**The Essential Guide to Wills**



Investopedia [1] describes a will as a legal document that sets forth your wishes regarding the distribution of your property and the care of any minor children. In simpler terms, your will states how you want your property to be shared, and if you have children who are minors, your will states who you would want to care for them. In cases where a person dies without leaving a will, the majority of decisions concerning their estate and the care of their children are left to state officials.

### **Who needs a will?**

One survey [2] estimates that over 70% of Americans do not have a will in 2020. There is quite a lot of controversy as to who needs a will. And while some may argue that it is better to be on the safe side by getting one, some criteria help us to determine those who need a will and those who could do without one. Typically, you would need a will if you are married, have kids, or if you have a lot of money or valuable property.

1. If you are married, you need a will. While it is common for spouses to inherit property after the death of their partner, it is not something you should leave uncertain. Also, stating this clearly in your will protects your spouse from relatives who might want to lay claim to your estate without your permission.



If you have children, you also need a will. If you have kids who are minors, but you do not have a spouse, then you should state clearly who you want to take care of your kids. Otherwise, you leave the decision up to the state. Also, if you want your kids to inherit all your assets, then you should state that as well.

Typically, children inherit part of their parents' estates after the surviving spouse, but this is not always the case. Whatever feelings you have about your children and their inheritance should be put into writing so it would not be left up to debate. For instance, you may want a specific asset to go to only one of your kids, or you may want to exclude one. Whichever the case may be, it is always best to have a legally binding document to back up your wishes.

Let's say you are not married, and you do not have kids either. What could necessitate your getting a will? If you have assets that surpass \$100,000 in value, then you should get a will that dictates how they should be shared. If you do not have property, but you have a significant amount of money, perhaps in savings or in a secret stash, then you need a will too.



## Who doesn't need a will?

If you do not have a spouse, kids, money, or property, then you do not need a will yet. However, if any of these changes, then you should get a will. That is not to say you should not get one now. Regardless of whether you have a lot of assets, if you are someone who has strong opinions as to how you want your belongings to be shared, it will do you a lot of good to have this in writing.

As things change, it would be wise to periodically revisit and review your will to see if you need to make any changes like additions and subtractions. You might even see a need to change the allocations of properties. Remember, a will is of no use if those who need it are unable to find it, so ensure the executor or family members at least know where it is kept.

## Reference

[\[1\] Investopedia](#)

[\[2\] 2020 Estate Planning and Wills Study](#)