

10 EXCUSES FOR NOT HAVING A WILL WHAT'S YOURS?

EVERY ADULT SHOULD HAVE AN UP-TO-DATE WILL.

Most of us know that. Yet three quarters of us don't have one. Older people are more likely to have Wills than younger ones but a majority of people die intestate (without a Will). That is not always a tragedy, but it sometimes is, and it's always a mistake. Here are some of the excuses people often have for not making a Will.

EXCUSE #1

I DON'T OWN VERY MUCH.

You probably own more than you realize. If you've recently done a net worth statement (a list of what you own and what you owe) you've probably found that out. If you haven't, it can be an eye-opener to see how much you have accumulated. A net worth statement is desirable information, not only in preparing a Will but in preparing for a legal checkup. But even if you own relatively little assets, somebody is going to get that property when you die. **Shouldn't you decide who?** And if you don't decide whom you want to oversee your affairs, a court will have to appoint someone. And that appointed person will have to pay a bond.

EXCUSE #2

MY SPOUSE WILL GET EVERYTHING ANYWAY, WHICH IS WHAT I WANT.

Not so, if you have children or grandchildren. Your spouse will get only part of your estate. This may be true even if you have no children. You can't be sure without checking the law in your home state and any other state where you own real estate. **Shouldn't you decide what happens to your property? What if you both die suddenly? Why should your spouse have to pay a bond?** The law requires it unless you specify otherwise in a Will.

EXCUSE #3

WE OWN EVERYTHING JOINTLY.

While it is very common for houses, bank accounts and vehicles to be jointly owned, that's seldom true for household furnishings, collections, etc. **And are you sure about the vehicles and bank accounts? The life insurance?**

EXCUSE #4

WE CAN'T DECIDE ON A GUARDIAN.

It can be a tough decision. Each of the possibilities has strengths and weaknesses. There are so many factors to consider: age and health, resources and energy, character and values, personalities, geography, etc. It could be one of the most important decisions you'll ever make. It could create some friction among your relatives. But shouldn't you decide instead of a judge? You know your children and your relatives better than anyone.

EXCUSE #5**WE'VE DECIDED ON GUARDIANS, BUT NEED TO CHECK WITH THEM FIRST (SAME FOR EXECUTOR).**

This sounds good, but how long have you been meaning to check with them? You say you meant to last year during the holidays but the "right time" didn't occur? You want to discuss it in person but don't know when you'll see them again because they live a thousand miles away. Stop procrastinating and call or write this week. Then get that Will drawn.

EXCUSE #6**THINGS ARE ABOUT TO CHANGE. I'M ABOUT TO: (GET MARRIED, GET DIVORCED, HAVE A CHILD, MOVE TO ANOTHER STATE, BUY A HOUSE...)**

Life is full of changes, like those mentioned might very well affect your Will. It's a good idea to review your Will after every major change in your life to see if your Will still expresses your current wishes. Except for a very short period of time, you shouldn't let an impending change stop you from making a Will. You can make changes to your Will any time, but you can't write one after you die.

EXCUSE #7**I CAN'T DECIDE WHETHER MY TEENAGER WILL NEED A TRUST.**

The safe course is to provide for a trust now. You can always change your Will if you decide later that your children are among the few 18 year olds who can be trusted with large amounts of money, especially after the tragedy of your (premature) demise. If you don't have a Will your child will be entitled to his share of your estate, in cash, when he turns 18. Some car dealer may be grateful for your neglect.

EXCUSE #8**I'M EMBARRASSED ABOUT WITNESSES.**

One advantage of having a law firm do your Will is that they can furnish your witnesses. You don't want beneficiaries as witnesses; it might be embarrassing to have non-beneficiary relatives (your witnesses don't need to know the content of your Will); and you don't want to impose on friends. Signing at your Countrywide attorney's office avoids this problem.

EXCUSE #9**I DON'T KNOW WHAT LAWYER TO GO SEE.**

Countrywide's attorneys will be happy to draft your Simple Will for you and it is included in your Legal Plan. We have considerable experience in this area and are eager to provide this important legal service.

EXCUSE #10**I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH A WILL WILL COST?**

Surveys show that people frequently do not know the cost of a Will. The cost varies depending on the complexity of your estate, but Simple Wills are included at no additional charge with your Countrywide Pre-Paid Legal Services Plan. Be assured that you will have peace of mind that comes from taking care of your legal needs.