

Instructions For Executing Your Will

Before signing your Will, ensure you have read it and understand your document, and that the document printed with all required information.

Your Signature: To properly execute your Will, you will have to be present with your chosen witnesses. You will have to identify to them that this document is your Last Will and Testament. You will then initial each page of the document at the bottom of the page, below all the text, except the signing page of your Will, which requires your full signature. To be valid, you must sign the final page with your usual check-signing signature. No text should appear on the last page after your signature – other than the witness signing area. Signing and initialing of the pages must occur in the presence of your witnesses.

Witness Signatures: While most states only require two witnesses, three witnesses are required in Vermont. After you have signed and initialed your document in front of witnesses, your witnesses must acknowledge that they are witnessing your Will and then must initial each of the preceding pages beside where you initialed and then sign and fill out the required information on the signing page of the Will. This must occur in your presence. You should then instruct your witnesses that they may have to appear before a court to verify that this process was completed and that you were of age and sound mind at the time.

When you and your witnesses initial the bottom of each page make sure to initial below all of the text of the document – no text should appear on the page after the initials.

Why is it a good idea to initial each page? Initialing each page will help to ensure that a page will not be improperly inserted or replaced some time later.

Remember: Your witnesses should be competent adults who are not receiving anything under your Will, and are not the spouses of individuals receiving anything under your Will.

Louisiana: Louisiana has special requirements for executing a Last Will. In Louisiana you must sign in the presence of a notary and two witnesses. The testator must sign at the end and on each other separate page. Then, in the presence of the testator and each other, the notary and the witnesses must sign a declaration stating that the Last Will was executed properly.

Storing your Last Will: Store your Will and Codicils in a safe place where your executor or personal representative will be able to locate it. You can make photocopies, but the original, signed and witnessed, will have to be produced before probate occurs. If you have older Wills they should be destroyed.

Marriage: If you marry you should make a new Will. In most jurisdictions, Wills made prior to marriage become invalid on marriage. When other relevant changes occur in your life, you should review your Will to see if it still reflects your wishes and is valid. If not, you should make a new one.