

# Navigating the Unfamiliar: Arranging Your First Funeral

A practical guide for those  
tasked with planning a final  
farewell.



# Finding your footing in the storm

Planning a funeral is an emotional and overwhelming experience, especially when doing it for the first time. You may feel a mix of grief, stress, or even numbness.

**Key Message:** This guide serves as a beacon to help you understand what to expect during your initial visit to the funeral home and how to prepare your mindset and materials.





# Stabilizing yourself before the journey

## **Acknowledge the Difficulty**

It is okay to feel overwhelmed. Give yourself permission to grieve at your own pace.

## **Prioritize Self-Care**

Ensure you are getting rest and eating nutritious food.

## **Seek Anchors**

Bring a friend or family member to the arrangement conference for support and a second set of ears.

## **Calm the Mind**

If anxious, practice deep breathing or meditation before the appointment.

# Crossing the threshold

The Funeral Director is your guide, not a salesperson.



## **A Compassionate Welcome**

You will be greeted and guided to a private room to discuss arrangements comfortably.

## **Guidance over Pressure**

The staff is there to support you. They will ask questions to understand your needs rather than dictate them.

## **Open Communication**

Do not hesitate to ask questions or express emotions; the environment is designed for this.

# Gathering the vital statistics

The director will handle legal paperwork but requires specific data from you to proceed.

- Full legal name (including middle names or suffixes)
- Social Insurance Number (SIN)
- Date of birth
- Place of birth (City, Province/State, Country)
- Date of death
- Place of death



# Documenting the family history

This information is required for the obituary and government records.

## Information Checklist:

- Father's full name
- Mother's full maiden name
- Marital status and spouse's information (if applicable)
- Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) card or Service Number (if applicable)
- Cemetery deed or plot information (if already owned)



# Physical items to bring with you

## Clothing

If you prefer the deceased to be dressed in their own clothes, bring a complete outfit, including undergarments and shoes.

## Photos

A recent photograph for the obituary, memorial video, or cosmetic preparation.

## Policies

Any pre-need arrangements or insurance policy documents.

## Medical Info

Only if relevant to the cause of death or handling of the body.



# Identifying who needs to know

Compiling these lists helps the funeral director assist you in notifying the community and structuring the obituary.

## **Immediate Family**

List names and current contact information.

## **Close Friends**

Gather contact details for those who should be notified personally.

## **Community**

Identify specific religious or cultural groups that need to be informed.

# Defining the type of service

## Service Types

- **Traditional Funeral:** Typically includes a viewing with the body present.
- **Memorial Service:** Often held without the body present.
- **Celebration of Life:** Focused on happy memories and the personality of the deceased.
- **Graveside Service:** Held solely at the place of interment.

## Location Options

Funeral home chapel, a church, another venue, or the cemetery.



# Decisions regarding disposition

You will need to choose the final method of handling the remains.

## Burial

Ground interment in a cemetery.

## Cremation

Reducing the body to ashes (cremains).

## Entombment

Placement in a mausoleum or crypt above ground.

## Donation

Donating the body to science/medical research.

# Personalizing the tribute

Discuss special requests to make the service reflective of the individual. Write down your thoughts beforehand to ensure no detail is forgotten.

## Personal Touches to Consider:

- **Audio/Visual:** Music selections, readings, and poems.
- **Environment:** Floral arrangements and displays of personal items.
- **Words:** Obituary preparation and eulogies.



# Merchandise and financial clarity

The Funeral Director will guide you through product selection and costs. They will provide a detailed price list outlining the cost of each item and service.

## Merchandise

- Selection of caskets, urns, burial vaults, or memorial products (keepsakes).

## Logistics

- Transportation costs and third-party fees.



# Reviewing your decisions

## **Alignment**

Take time to ensure the decisions match your wishes and the wishes of the deceased.

## **Budget**

Verify that the selected options align with your financial resources.

## **Review**

Once decisions are made, the director will help you complete the required paperwork.

*Note: Don't be afraid to ask for help or express your emotions.*



# Support beyond the service

The funeral home staff is there to support you even after the arrangement conference. You are not alone; compassionate professionals are available to support you every step of the way.

## Resources:

- \* Inquire about grief support resources.
- \* Ask about aftercare services (help with administrative tasks after the funeral).



# Trust your instincts and the process

While the waters are unfamiliar, you have the map, the necessary information, and the support to navigate this journey.

Take it one step, and one decision, at a time.



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