

Legal terms explained



Administrator If you die without a Will or without appointing an executor, an administrator will be appointed to handle your estate.

Beneficiary A person or organisation who receives something in your Will.

Bequest A gift in your Will.

Chattels Personal property including furniture, furnishings, moveable goods and, under English law, your animals.

Codicil A separate legally binding document making a change or addition to your existing Will.

Conditional bequest A gift that will only take effect if a certain event occurs.

Estate The total value of all your assets at the time of your death.

Executor Someone you appoint to carry out the terms of your Will.

Grant of probate A court document confirming the authority of an executor to administer the estate.

Intestacy When someone dies without having made a Will or where their Will fails to dispose of all of their estate.

Legacy A gift in your Will.

Pecuniary legacy The gift of a specified sum of money.

Residuary legacy Where the residue of your estate (see below) is set aside for, or to be divided between, named beneficiaries.

Residue The remainder of your estate after payment of debts, funeral expenses and the costs of the administration of the estate, and all specific and other gifts in the Will have been paid.

Specific legacy The gift of a specific item (e.g. a painting, car, property, etc.).

Testator/Testatrix The person making the Will.

Trustee An individual appointed to look after any part of your estate for the benefit of others.

Will A legally binding document giving instructions about what to do with a person's estate when they die.