



Taking Control with Confidence

A Step-by-Step Cremation Pre-Planning Guide

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Literary Sources

All literary quotations can be found on the Goodreads website at www.goodreads.com.

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Welcome

If you are willing to plan ahead for your death, you are not only brave but fully committed to taking responsibility for your end-of-life care.

Cremation has become the preferred option for many families today because it is affordable and more environmentally-friendly than traditional burial. Whatever your reasons, this cremation pre-planning guide will help you prepare for that inevitable day when you will no longer be able to voice your intentions.

While we know it's difficult to even think about that day, taking the preparatory steps now to prepare for your cremation will give you a lighter heart and greater peace-of-mind. Not only that, making these decisions now will give you and your family the chance to sit down and really talk. You can reach an agreement about the care for your physical remains, a celebration of life, and how to pay tribute to your memory. This conversation can be a powerful experience for everyone involved; it brings the whole family together in a way unlike any other.

Our hope is that this guide and the recommended conversation give you the time to reflect upon what is both appropriate and meaningful for you. The precious time spent in this effort will ensure you receive the dignified and compassionate end-of-life care that you desire and deserve.

We are confident pre-planning will help to relieve much of the stress and heartache your family will feel on the day they are forced to say goodbye to you. So, as the poet William Wordsworth wrote, "Fill your paper with the breathings of your heart..."



The Cremation Process

Cremation changes the human body by use of heat and flame to fragments of bone and what appears to be ash. Essentially, it's a process of acceleration in that it accomplishes decomposition in a matter of hours instead of the months or years required by traditional burial. The National Funeral Directors Association offers this description of the cremation process:

"The casket or container is placed in the cremation chamber, where the temperature is raised to approximately 1400 degrees to 1800 degrees Fahrenheit. After approximately 2 to 2 1/2 hours, all organic matter is consumed by heat or evaporation."

Once the process is done, the cooled cremated remains are removed from the cremation chamber or retort. Any metal (such as tooth fillings or surgical implants) is removed using a magnet and disposed of properly. These cremated remains, which are often called ash, are then processed and carefully placed in a temporary container or an urn chosen by the family prior to the cremation.

Cremation isn't new. In fact, it has been around for thousands of years beginning in Europe or the Near East about 5,000 years ago. Today, cremation is a common practice in over 31 countries around the world including the U.S. where close to half of all families choose cremation over burial and in Canada where an average of 65% of the population chooses cremation.

"Cremation has long been established as the prime funeral rite in many cultures of the world, where it frames life and helps to explain its nature and destiny."

—Douglas J. Davies, Encyclopedia of Cremation

Step 1: Make Your Cremation Plans Known

It's not enough to know that you wish to be cremated; you need to let others know your intentions. This can take place verbally during the family's pre-planning conversation but you can't rely solely on verbal statements-of-intention. Family members may be unwilling to follow through with the wishes of a loved one at the time of their passing. That's why it's essential to write down your intentions and provide copies to trusted friends and relatives, your attorney, and the funeral firm or cremation provider selected to care for you.

Concerned family members and friends may ask for details about the cremation process during your pre-planning conversation. The following information plus additional resources at the end of this guide may be helpful.

Identify the Reasons for Your Decisions

You may learn that some of your family members and friends resist your decision to pre-plan your cremation. Rather than being forced to quickly come up with the reasons for your decision, we suggest that you take the time to write everything down. Here are some common reasons, which may help frame your response to a family member's concerns:

Cremation is Less Expensive

Traditional burial—including the casket, purchase of cemetery property and headstone, and all the miscellaneous cemetery costs involved in the interment—can cost your family thousands of dollars. The Cremation Association of North America (CANA) declares that the national average cost of cremation is \$1,650, which includes limited memorialization services and a basic urn. By choosing to make direct cremation prearrangements with a Simpler Times provider, you will save your family a great deal of money and help them avoid further debt should there be insufficient funds available at the time of your death.

Cremation Offers Flexibility

Your family may need to provide out-of-town loved ones and friends sufficient time to travel to the memorial service. By choosing cremation, there is a higher level of flexibility in both the timing of the service as well as in the design of the ceremony itself. The memorial service can occur weeks or even months after your passing, giving everyone the time they may need to personalize the service.

Setting Down the Specifics

Many families are divided in their thoughts about cremation. Nonetheless, you have the right to make the decision for yourself and by writing down your cremation intentions and providing copies of this signed and dated document to all those concerned, you will ensure that your wishes are carried out no matter how a family member feels.

This document, listing your instructions for your cremation as well as any service or memorial details, should also include the names and contact details for anyone designated to oversee your end-of-life plans. You need to establish who will be in charge and also make your wishes about the cremation arrangements clear in writing so as to prevent arguments between your survivors. There are other reasons to write down the specifics of your cremation arrangements:

- If you do not record your wishes in a legal document, the law defaults to what your state defines as your next-of-kin to make these decisions for you.
- If you do not leave binding written instructions, someone you haven't chosen could make decisions that would be counter to your intentions and desires.

If you have questions about the legalities of pre-planning your cremation, you are encouraged to speak with a Simpler Times provider for clarification.

I, _____, wish my body to be cremated.

I have made this decision in full light of the facts involved. I also want to designate
_____ as the person I entrust to follow
through with my intention.

Signed: _____

Dated: _____

Witnessed: _____

Questions to Ask Cremation Providers

Simpler Times values honesty above all else. We believe that all cremation providers should value honesty as much as we do however this is not always the case. We urge you to be pro-active and ask many questions. Keep asking until you receive clear answers.

When you contact a Simpler Times provider to arrange for an in-home or in-office cremation arrangement consultation, they will be delighted to answer any of the following questions.

- May I inspect the facility where my cremation will be performed?
- What is your cremation verification procedure?
- How long will it take my family to get my cremated remains back?
- Will you come to our home, night or day, to pick up my body? Is there an additional charge for this?
- Can you pick up my body from a hospital or nursing facility?
- How and where is my body kept until it is cremated?
- How will my family know that they are getting my cremated remains?
- What kind of container will my cremated remains be placed in if I've decided not to purchase an urn?
- How long does it take from the time my body is picked up until they can pick up the cremated remains?
- Besides the cremation, what else is provided with cremation services?
- Can I pre-pay for my cremation?

Albert Einstein said, "Whoever is careless with the truth in small matters cannot be trusted with important matters." We've provided the next section so that you can take notes about the cremation providers contacted. If you need additional space, we applaud your diligence and encourage you to use a separate sheet of paper to record relevant information.

"Honesty is the first chapter of the book of wisdom."

—Thomas Jefferson

Name of Cremation Provider	Name of Contact Person	Phone Number
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Notes from Initial and Follow-Up Conversations:

Name of Cremation Provider	Name of Contact Person	Phone Number
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Step 2: Plan a Remembrance Ceremony

While Step 1 involved making practical decisions regarding the care of your physical remains, this next step in the pre-planning process takes you into the realm of ceremony, emotional release, and commemoration.

It's time to reflect on ways your loved ones can come together with friends and family to pay tribute to your unique personality, your achievements, and the life you shared. You may also wish for them to have an opportunity to sit with you prior to or to witness your cremation. This type of opportunity can be a very special experience but it's not something most people realize exists.

Do you think having the time to see you would be valuable to you, your children, your friends, and your extended family? It really can be a profound way for them to say their goodbyes and begin the grief journey in earnest.

Do you want your family to have time with your body prior to the cremation or participate in a witness cremation?

Yes No

Do you wish them to have a remembrance service, where family and friends can come together in mutual support?

Yes No

What activities would you like them to incorporate during their time together?

Consider the following options:

- Special readings of poetry or prose
- Your favorite music
- The planting of a tree/flower/bush
- Scripture readings
- Candle-lighting
- A charitable donation drive
- A memory table with photographs or those things that were a big part of your life such as collectibles or other memorabilia
- Reading aloud a eulogy dedicated to you

Details of Your Plan

Write down where it should be held, who you would like your family to invite, and what you'd like to include in your remembrance ceremony.

Where Should it be Held?

Who Should be There?

Here are Some Special Things I'd Like Done to Pay Tribute to My Memory:

Step 3: Your Memorial

We've heard so many wonderful ideas for cremation memorials. Just like your earlier choices, making a decision about memorializing your life is a very personal process; it will be reflective of your life history, your lifestyle, your personality, and those little things that defined you.

The first decision defines where your memorial will be. Should it be inside your family's home or in your garden? Does it make more sense to pay tribute to your life with a donation to charity or through the purchase of a commemorative brick or flagstone for a local museum or park? The possibilities are almost endless!

Do you wish your family to create a memorial in remembrance of you?

Yes No

If yes, where would you like this memorial to be?

<input type="checkbox"/> Inside my home	<input type="checkbox"/> In my garden	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
--	--	---------------------------------------

If other, please specify your desired location:

In addition to creating a memorial, some of your friends and extended family members may wish to make a donation in your memory. Chances are you have charities you'd prefer them to support. If this is the case, write them down here:

Step 4: Capture Your Memories Now

After your passing, you will obviously no longer be available to share the details of your life and the hundreds of memories you would love to pass along to future generations will be lost. That's why it's so important for families making cremation pre-arrangement plans to set aside time now to record those priceless memories. In fact, we've discovered that this is a remarkable way to bring generations of a family closer together. While it's possible to record these recollections on your own, it can be helpful to get assistance to at least get you started.

There's a wonderful organization called StoryCorps. Now in its second decade, it has been responsible for archiving more than 45,000 interviews! You can learn more about how to record your story by visiting the website at www.storycorps.com.

If you plan on doing it yourself, with or without having family members participate, here are some questions to get you started:

- Describe the home where you grew up.
- How many people lived in your home?
- Were you all part of the same family?
- Did you have a garden/outside space?
- What was your favorite/least favorite thing about your home?
- Where did you eat your meals?
- Where did you go on holidays as a child?
- What did you do when you were there?
- What elementary schools did you go to?
- What was your favorite subject?
- Did you ever get in trouble at school?
- And were you punished?
- What games did you play in the playground?
- What was your first job?

These questions may elicit memories long forgotten. Be sure to have someone write down your answers or use a digital recorder to capture your words.



Memories Forever

The Simpler Times website has a unique feature: online memorial tributes called *Memories Forever*. Your family can archive meaningful photographs that capture the highlights of your life. We always encourage those who pre-plan their cremation to spend time gathering those photos they would like to be a part of this permanent online archive. Locate scrapbooks, boxes of photographs and other memorabilia of your life and invite your family over for an evening of memory sharing and photo selection. Set aside those photographs for them to use after your passing. They will certainly appreciate your thoughtfulness.

Step 5: Convey Your Wishes

Now that you've reviewed this guide, you have everything you need to complete the online pre-planning tool that transmits your plan to us for safekeeping. When the day comes that our services are needed, much of what we need will already be on file.

If this is not the right decision for you because perhaps you're not sure where you'll be living at the time, provide copies of this completed guide to those people you've designated to take care of everything once you are gone.



Closing Thoughts

Congratulations! As we said at the beginning of this guide, it takes courage to consider and plan for your death. There is great comfort in knowing that by planning ahead for your cremation, you have:

- Protected your family from having to make difficult decisions during an emotional time
- Made your decisions ahead of time weighing out your options
- Determined your family's needs and budget ahead of time
- Finalized your cremation pre-arrangements eliminating hastily made decisions and later regrets

If you have questions about your cremation pre-arrangements at any time in the future, please contact your Simpler Times provider who will be pleased and proud to assist you.



But still, no matter how much time passes, no matter what takes place in the interim, there are some things we can never assign to oblivion, memories we can never rub away. They remain with us forever, like a touchstone."

—Haruki Murakami, *Kafka on the Shore*



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