Digital Legacy Settings: How to Manage Your Online Accounts After Death

In today's world, we rely on our smart phones to do almost everything. This, in part, has led to us having significant digital footprints. Our digital footprint includes email accounts, social media profiles, cloud storage, online bill payment, memberships, and subscriptions, just to name a few. What many of us never consider is what happens to our digital footprint when we die. Fortunately, some technology companies offer legacy settings that allow you to establish a plan for your online accounts after death.

Legacy settings allow you to:

- Choose someone to manage your account after death (referred to as a legacy contact or a trusted contact)
- Control access to your data
- Decide whether your account should be deleted or turned into a memorial site
- Protect your privacy and minimize digital clutter after death

If you are interested in establishing a digital legacy, below are instructions for your smart phone and several common sites that allow for legacy settings.

Google

Feature: *Inactive Account Manager*

How to Set It Up:

1. Visit http://myaccount.google.com/inactive
2. Click "Start"
3. Choose an inactivity period (3–18 months)
4. Add up to 10 trusted contacts
5. Select what data they can access
6. Decide if you want to set your account to auto-delete after the inactivity period.

Importantly, the Inactive Account Manager feature applies at death and if your Google account is not accessed for the selected inactivity period. At that time, your trusted contacts will be notified. For more information: https://support.google.com/accounts/answer/3036546?hl=en

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iPhone (Apple ID / iCloud)

Feature: *Legacy Contact (iOS 15.2 or later)*

How to Set It Up:

1. Go to Settings > [Your Name] > Sign-In & Security
2. Tap Legacy Contact > Add Legacy Contact
3. Choose someone from your contacts and share the access key either by sharing it directly to their device or print a copy of the key.

To access the account, your legacy contact must provide:

- The access key
- A death certificate

Access includes iCloud photos, emails, notes, and more. It does not include passwords stored in Keychain. For more information: https://support.apple.com/en-us/102631

Android

Feature: Android devices primarily use Google Accounts, so legacy management is handled through Google's Inactive Account Manager (see Google section).

How to Set It Up:

For manufacturer-specific services (like Samsung Cloud), check:

- Settings > Accounts and Backup > Manage Accounts

To manage on a Google Pixel phone, check:

Settings>In the search settings box enter "Data & Privacy">Data & Privacy>More options>Make a plan for your digital legacy

You may need to contact support to close or manage those accounts posthumously.

Facebook

Feature: *Legacy Contact* or *Account Deletion*

How to Set It Up:

1. Visit www.facebook.com and log into your Facebook account
2. Go to Settings & Privacy > Settings >Accounts Center>Personal details>Account ownership and control> Memorialization Settings
3. Select either "Memorialize Profile" or "Delete after death"

4. Should you choose to memorialize, choose a Legacy Contact from among your Facebook friends
5. Facebook offers you the chance to send your chosen Legacy Contact a Facebook message notifying them of the status

Legacy contacts can:

- Write a pinned post
- Change profile/cover photo
- Manage tribute posts
  Note: They **cannot** log in as you or view private messages.

More information: https://www.facebook.com/help/1070665206293088

Instagram

Feature: *Legacy Contact* or *Account Deletion*

How to Set It Up:

1. Visit www.instagram.com and log into your Instagram account
2. At the bottom left, click ☰ **More**
3. Go to Settings >Accounts Center>Personal details>Account ownership and control> Memorialization Settings
4. Select either "Memorialize Profile" or "Delete after death"
5. Should you choose to memorialize, choose a Legacy Contact from among your Instagram connections
6. Instagram offers you the chance to send your chosen Legacy Contact an Instagram message notifying them of the status

Legacy contacts can:

- Write a pinned post
- Change profile/cover photo
- Manage tribute posts

More information: https://help.instagram.com/1401340471077706/

Unfortunately, not all sites offer these options. As of the date of this writing, sites like Amazon, X, and TikTok do not allow you to set up a legacy contact, although Amazon and TikTok have bereavement support. For more information on this, please see below.

Amazon Bereavement Support:
https://www.amazon.com/gp/help/customer/display.html?nodeId=TzcJJiVFnIi3pG2yDA

TikTok Bereavement Support: Contact privacy@tiktok.com

Because establishing a digital legacy is not universally available, we recommend that:

- Your estate documents address fiduciary access to your digital assets;
- You communicate your wishes to family and fiduciaries;
- You use a password manager with emergency access;
- Important access keys are stored in a secure and accessible location; and
- Legacy settings are reviewed annually.

Planning your digital legacy helps your loved ones address your digital footprint easily after your death in a way that is consistent with your goals. Spending just 15–30 minutes setting up these features today can greatly reduce stress for your family in the future. For more information, please speak with your Advisor.

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