

Legacy Letters

A Legacy Letter is a way to share your values, blessings, life's lessons, hopes and dreams for the future, love, and forgiveness with your family, friends, and community. It is a heartfelt expression of what truly matters most in your life. Here is a template:

1. Opening

Most ethical wills are in the form of a letter, so you should address it- to friends and family, to a specific person, to whomever you would like to read your reflections. It's helpful to keep them in mind as you're writing, in order to stay on-topic, and to share the most important things for each of them. You can also prepare several separate letters for different people, and customize them for each person.

2. Your History - past and present

Think about memories from specific areas and times in your life:

- childhood
- college years
- marriage
- having and raising children
- your work
- travel
- your later years

3. Personal Values and Beliefs

What were the values that carried you through life? What were things that guided you, morally, personally, creatively? This is a space to share with your family the values and attributes you stood by throughout your life, or discovered to be important later on. Your values can be anything from your faith to whatever fueled your professional success to what you tried to keep in mind during challenging times. Further questions to consider include:

- Who showed you the importance of these values?
- What values do you want to see in yourself and others around you?

4. Hopes for the future

This section can be highly individualized for specific family members, or kept more general. Write about your hopes and goals for your family, your friends, your community and so on.

5. Closing

Signing off your letter, and saying goodbye to family and friends.

Remember that these are just suggestions for what to include and how to structure your ethical will. In the end, your ethical will is just that - yours. It can be serious or silly, long or short, cover all of these topics, or go into depth on just one. This is a document meant to reflect who you are to those who knew you best.

Author: Rachael Freed <http://life-legacies.com/ethicalwills/> Life legacies: Preserving past and present for the future (2012). Our ancestors and our ancestral wisdom live in our blood and in our bones. -Julia Cameron

