

A Simple Guide to Michigan Wills

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(Easy-to-Read Handout for all – Share with Family or Friends)

Dear Neighbor or Friend,

Making a will is one of the kindest things you can do for your family. It lets you decide exactly who gets your house, savings, jewelry, car, or anything else after you pass. Without a will, Michigan law decides for you—and it may not be what you want.

Here's everything you need to know, explained in plain English.

What Makes a Will Valid in Michigan?

Your will must meet these **minimum legal requirements (from Michigan law, called EPIC):**

- 1. **It must be in writing** (typed or handwritten).**
- 2. **You (the “testator”) must sign it** yourself—or tell someone to sign it for you while you're right there watching and fully aware.**
- 3. **At least two witnesses must sign it too.** They must see you sign (or hear you say it's your signature) and then sign within a reasonable time.**

That's it for the basics! If those three things are done, the will is legally valid.

****Holographic (handwritten) will:**** Allowed only if the whole important part and your signature are in your own handwriting ****and**** it's dated. These are harder to prove later, so most people avoid them.

What Should a Will Actually Contain?

A good will usually includes these common parts (the law doesn't force every single one, but they make it clear and useful):

- Your full name and that this is your “Last Will and Testament.”**
- A sentence saying you cancel any old wills.**
- Who you want as **Personal Representative** (the person who handles your estate—pays bills, files papers, distributes items). Pick someone you trust who is 18+ and organized. Name a backup too.**
- Who gets your belongings (specific items like “my wedding ring to my granddaughter Sarah” or “my house to my son”).**
- Who gets the rest of your money and property (the “residue”).**
- If you have kids under 18, who you want as their guardian.**
- Any special instructions (funeral wishes, pet care, etc.).**

Who Can Witness Your Will?

- Any two (or three) responsible adults who are **18 or older** and mentally competent.**
- They do **NOT** have to be family, lawyers, or “important” people. Neighbors, friends,**

church members, or even your mail carrier work great.

- **Best tip: Choose people who are **not** getting anything in your will. It avoids any questions later. Younger adults are often ideal—they're more likely to still be around if needed.**

- Even if a witness does inherit something, the will is still valid.

****Do you have to record their address?***

****No.** Michigan law does **not** require addresses, phone numbers, or any extra information from witnesses. They just need to print their name and sign. Many people add their address anyway (it helps if the court ever needs to reach them years later), but it is **not required** for the will to be valid.**

Quick Tips for Seniors

- You must be of “sound mind” (understand what you own, who your family is, and that this document gives away your things after you die). No one can pressure you.

- No notary is needed unless you want a “self-proved” will (makes probate faster and easier—optional).

- Store your will safely. Tell your Personal Representative where it is. You can file it with your county Probate Court for \$25 (they keep it safe).

- Update it if you marry, divorce, have a new grandchild, or anything big changes. Just make a new one—don't cross things out.

- Talk to your family. It's a gift to them.

You've worked hard your whole life—make sure your wishes are honored. A simple will gives you peace of mind today.

Questions? Ask your lawyer, probate court clerk or a trusted advisor.