

## The Most Complicated Part of Your Estate

In recent years, a new category of assets has appeared on the scene, which can be more complicated to pass on at someone's death than stocks, bonds and cash. The list includes such valuable property as digital domain names, social media accounts, websites and blogs that you manage, and pretty much anything stored on the cloud. In addition, if you were to die tomorrow, would your heirs know the passcodes to access your iPad or smartphone? Or, for that matter, your email account or the Amazon.com or iTunes shopping accounts you've set up? Would they know how to shut down your Facebook account, or would it live on after your death?

A service called Everplans has created a listing of these and other digital assets that you might consider in your estate plan, and recommends that you share your logins and passwords with a digital executor or heirs. If the account or asset has value (airline miles or hotel rewards programs, domain names) these should be transferred to specific heirs—and you can include these bequests in your will. Other assets should probably be shut down or discontinued, which means your digital executor should probably be a detail-oriented person with some technical familiarity.

The site also provides a guide to how to shut down accounts; click on “F,” select “Facebook,” and you're taken to a site (<https://www.everplans.com/articles/how-to-close-a-facebook-account-when-someone-dies>) which tells you how to deactivate or delete the account. Note that each option requires the digital executor to be able to log into the site first; otherwise that person would have to submit your birth and death certificates and proof of authority under local law that he/she is your lawful representative. (The executor can also “memorialize” your account, which means freezing it from outside participation.)

The point here is that even if you know who's would get your house and retirement assets if you were hit by a bus tomorrow, you could still be leaving a mess to your heirs unless you clean up your digital assets as well.

Sources:

<https://www.everplans.com/articles/a-helpful-overview-of-all-your-digital-property-and-digital-assets>

<https://www.everplans.com/articles/how-to-close-online-accounts-and-services-when-someone-dies>

<https://www.everplans.com/articles/digital-cheat-sheet-how-to-create-a-digital-estate-plan>