

Summary of an Executor's Duties

- Find the will, if any.
- Notify the post office, utility companies, credit card companies, banks, and other businesses of the death.
- Notify the Social Security Administration and any agencies from which the deceased person was receiving benefits.
- Inventory all assets and, if necessary, have valuable ones appraised.
- Determine whether or not probate is necessary; if it is, conduct the probate court proceeding or hire a lawyer to do it (or help you).
- If there's a living trust, work with the successor trustee to coordinate bill-paying, property management, and other tasks.
- Notify beneficiaries named in the will or people entitled to inherit under state law.
- Take good care of estate assets until you turn them over to the beneficiaries.
- Solicit beneficiaries' input on and consent to important decisions such as selling assets or changing investments.
- Collect money owed to the estate—for example, final wages or insurance benefits.
- Pay bills owed by the estate.
- File final income tax returns for the deceased person.
- If the estate was large, file estate tax returns.
- Distribute the assets.