

Bereavement terms and phrases

What does it all mean?

You'll probably hear lots of different terms and phrases used when you lose someone and you're dealing with their affairs. We've pulled together a list to help you understand some of the most common ones used.

Term or phrase	Explanation
Administrator	The person(s) put in charge of carrying out the wishes of the person who has passed away when no will is available, or the executor(s) is unable or unwilling to help.
Assets	The belongings owned by the person who has passed away e.g. property, vehicles and money.
Beneficiary	The person(s) who receive the assets belonging to the person who has passed away. The details are outlined in the will.
Confirmation of the estate (Scotland only)	This is the same as the grant of probate in the rest of the UK. It's a legal document giving the executor(s) the right to accept the assets owned by the person who has passed away and to make sure they're given out as mentioned in the will under Scottish law.
Death certificate	A legal document issued by a registrar when a person has passed away. This document is needed to deal with the affairs of the deceased.
Estate	The total value of all the assets owned by the person who has passed away.
Executor	The person(s) named in the will who is in charge of carrying out the wishes of the person who has passed away.
Grant of letters of administration	This gives a person(s) the right to deal with the affairs of the person who has passed away when there's no valid will made.
Grant of probate	When there's a will, this gives the executor(s) the right to deal with the estate of the person who has passed away. It also allows them to carry out the wishes of the deceased.
Inheritance tax	This is the tax due to be paid if the total value of the deceased's estate goes over a set limit. This limit is set by the UK Government.

Term or phrase	Explanation
Joint tenants	Normally where a couple own a property equally. When one of them passes away, the ownership of the deceased transfers automatically to their partner. See also tenants in common .
Letter of administration	This is sent instead of a grant of probate when a person has passed away without making a will. It's also sent if a will is deemed as invalid.
Next of kin	A relative who is related to someone by blood or marriage.
Personal representative	The person(s) dealing with the estate of the person who has passed away i.e. an executor or administrator.
Probate	States whether a will is genuine. It gives the executor or administrator the right to deal with the wishes of the person who has passed away as mentioned in their will.
Probate registry	The name of the public body responsible for sending out the grant of probate and letters of administration.
Tenants in common	Where a property is owned by two or more people and the share can be divided as they wish. When one of the owners passes away, their share becomes part of their estate. The beneficiaries of the will then take over the deceased's share of the property which may not be the co-owner. See also joint tenants .
Testator	A person who has made a will.
Will	A legal document a person signs to say what they want to happen to their belongings when they pass away. It will also name those in charge to carry out their wishes.

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