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Searching online, you can find a variety of will templates that allow you to make your own will, without a lawyer. They each require a varying amount of work, and they range in price and quality. Here is an overview of what's available. Types of DIY Wills Fill-in-the-Blank Forms These templates come to you as fill-in-the-blanks documents. They vary greatly in quality and often do not come with detailed instructions or descriptions of the clauses. Some require you to build your will need to figure out what goes in each blank, and you'll need to fill it in in a uniform way. These forms require quite a bit of work, and they require you to be very careful and detailed because you are truly writing your own will. In fact, the biggest downside of these forms do not come with adequate instructions. Statutory Forms These forms are written into state laws and are designed to be a free estate planning alternative for those who cannot afford a lawyer. The upside to these will templates (besides the fact that they provide pre-approved language (which you shouldn't do), you can be fairly certain that there won't be any problems with your will after you die. The downside is that they are usually extremely simple wills that do not provide many, if any, options for tailoring to your own situation. This often means that it won't reflect your wishes, and it is therefore not sufficient for most people. If your state has a statutory form, and not all states do, you can find it by doing a web search for the name of your state and "statutory will." You can copy and paste the text of the statute into a blank document on your computer and fill in the blanks there. Or you may be able to find a pre-formed one like this one created by the State Bar of California. Again, these wills rarely come with instructions, so your best bet is to use the exact language of the statute, changing nothing, just filling in the blanks. Like all wills, to make it legal, you'll need to sign it and have it witnessed by two people who are not beneficiaries of the will. Will books usually come with downloadable forms or with forms on a CD. The book provides detailed instructions about how to fill out the form. Like forms sold without a book, these forms take some effort to fill out, but you have instructions to help you. These books also usually contain general information about estate planning. Will Software These are programs that you use to make your will after downloading the software to your computer. The program takes you through an interview—a series of questions designed to glean the key facts needed to make a will that reflects your wishes. Because the program is stored on your computer, you will be able to make changes to your will or make additional wills at no additional cost. Good programs also provide plenty of legal and practical support to help you make good choices in the will interview. Online Will Programs These increasingly popular programs work like will software. However, instead of installing the program on your computer, you access it online. Like will software, online wills take you through an interview to create a customized will. They usually provide legal and practical support as well. Although the program is not stored on your computer, you may be able to download your will or save your answers online in case you want to make changes at a later time. Nolo Wills Nolo will products are created and maintained by lawyers and time-tested over decades. They each come with detailed help and plain-English, step-by-step instructions. The Quick and Legal Will Book. This will book provides several simple will forms that you can edit with your word processor. It comes with clear plain-English instructions, and an overview of estate planning issues. Use this book if you want an inexpensive way to make a simple will, and if you don't mind doing a little bit of legwork putting it together. Quicken WillMaker allows you to make multiple wills for you and your family, both online as well as on your desktop. Beyond providing a high-quality will, WillMaker is an amazing value, since the program comes with much more than a will. Also included is a suite of other essential estate planning documents and dozens of other useful forms, including healthcare directives, powers of attorney, transfer on death deeds, living trusts, final arrangement documents, and more. To learn more about wills and other estate planning issues, visit the Wills, Trusts & Estate Planning once seemed the sacred domain of lawyers, it's now increasingly common to write your own will using a template, form, or will-writing program. Most people do not want to pay a lawyer for simple estate planning, and many just want an inexpensive will that they can download to their computer. Is It Safe to Use a Will Template? Whether it's safe to use a will template depends almost entirely on the quality of the form. Legally, there are very few requirements to make a will. In the United States, to make a written will, you must be an adult with "capacity" to sign a will state your wishes in writing sign the document, and have witnesses sign the document. do it with or without a will template or form. The trick is making sure that the will does what you want it to do. What Makes a Good Will Template A good will template is clear, simple, and effective. The template should allow you to create a document that reflects your wishes and isn't married down in a bunch of legalese that you don't understand. A good will template will also provide thorough instructions that explain your options, instruct you on completing and finalizing your will, and alert you when your situation requires help from a lawyer. Types of Will Templates Using the internet, you can find a smorgasbord of will templates that require varying amount of work at a range of prices and qualities. Types of will templates include: These options also range in the amount of guidance, and therefore have more room for error. If you're using a fill-in-the-blank form or statutory forms offer the least amount of guidance, and therefore have more room for error. the form. Some services (such as WillMaker) offer a guided interview with more thorough and tailored information. Read Types of Will Templates to learn more about these options and for help choosing the product that's right for you. Who Can Use a Will Template Although many people can safely make a will using a will template, it's not for everyone. Do-it-yourself wills are best for those with simple estate planning needs. For example, if you consider yourself in the middle class and you want all or most of your property to go to your spouse or children, you should be able to make your will yourself. On the other hand, don't try to use a will template if you: are not sure what property you own want to put conditions on your gifts think that someone might contest your will. have a complicated business situation want to leave property to a person with a disability, or own property valued at more than the federal estate tax exemption (\$12.06 million for deaths in 2022). Also, even if there is no particular complication that might keep you from making your own will, you may still prefer an attorney-drafted will—either because you feel more comfortable having a professional do it, or because you feel more complicated situation, you can consult an attorney to find an estate planning solution that fits your exact circumstances and goals (see below). You might also consider making a simple living trust if: you would like to plan your estate so that it avoids probate you want more flexibility in designing how your property is distributed to your loved ones you're concerned about privacy. Learn more about how living trusts avoid probate and the other benefits of living trusts. How a Lawyer Can Help Even if you choose to write your will using a will template, you may still want a lawyer can answer. Or, you may want a lawyer to look over your document to make sure it reflects your wishes. In either case, you may be able to hire a lawyer on an hourly basis to help you, but be prepared for push back. Most lawyers are familiar only with the forms they use, and so may not be able to give you advice about your will without suggesting that you would be better off with his or her form. If that happens to you, the best you can do is to gather as much information you can about the lawyer's concerns and then decide for yourself whether your will is up to snuff. This issue underscores the importance of using a high-quality will product to make your will. To find a lawyer near you who is more likely to be sympathetic to do-it-yourself wills, check out Nolo's Lawyer Directory for Estate

