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# MEMORIAL SERVICE PLANNING GUIDE

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Creating a Meaningful Tribute



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MEMORIAL MERITS  
[MemorialMerits.com](http://MemorialMerits.com)

## MEMORIAL SERVICE PLANNING GUIDE *Creating a Meaningful Tribute*

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**Use this guide to plan a service that honors your loved one and provides comfort to those gathering**

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### BASIC INFORMATION

**Person being honored:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of death:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Planning for:** ☐ Immediate service ☐ Future/delayed service ☐ Pre-planning

**Primary planner/contact:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

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### SERVICE TYPE SELECTION

**Choose the format that best fits your needs and preferences:**

☐ **Traditional Funeral Service**

- Viewing/visitation with body present
- Formal ceremony
- Followed by burial or entombment
- Timeline: Usually 3-7 days after death

☐ **Memorial Service**

- Held after burial/cremation has occurred
- Body not present
- More flexible timing (can be weeks or months later)
- Focus on memories and celebration of life

Read the full guide at: [Memorial Merits | Honoring Life & Legacy  
https://memorialmerits.com/memorial-service-planning-options-and-considerations/](https://memorialmerits.com/memorial-service-planning-options-and-considerations/)

☐ **Celebration of Life**

- Emphasis on joyful remembrance
- Less formal, more personalized
- Often in non-traditional venues
- Upbeat, positive atmosphere

☐ **Graveside Service Only**

- Brief ceremony at burial site
- No separate funeral home or church service
- More economical and simple

☐ **Direct Burial/Cremation with No Service**

- No formal gathering
- Private family time only or no ceremony

☐ **Virtual or Hybrid Service**

- Online attendance via video platform
- Or combination of in-person and virtual

☐ **Multiple Services**

- Private burial/cremation + public memorial
- Services in multiple locations

**Service type selected:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Reason for this choice:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## BURIAL VS. CREMATION DECISION

### ☐ Burial

- Cemetery plot location: \_\_\_\_\_
- Plot already owned? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Casket needed: ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Vault/liner required by cemetery? ☐ Yes ☐ No

### ☐ Cremation

- Crematory: \_\_\_\_\_
- Viewing before cremation? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Disposition of cremated remains:
  - ☐ Burial in cemetery plot
  - ☐ Placement in columbarium
  - ☐ Kept by family
  - ☐ Scattered (location: \_\_\_\_\_)
  - ☐ Divided among family members
  - ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Decision made:** ☐ Burial ☐ Cremation

**Religious/cultural considerations affecting this choice:**

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## DATE AND TIME

**Preferred date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Alternate dates (if needed):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Factors affecting timing:** ☐ Travel time needed for out-of-town family ☐ Religious restrictions on certain days/times ☐ Venue availability ☐ Officiant availability ☐ Weather considerations (outdoor elements) ☐ Work schedules of key attendees

**Final date and time:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## LOCATION SELECTION

**Service location options to consider:**

☐ **Funeral Home Chapel**

- Name: \_\_\_\_\_
- Address: \_\_\_\_\_
- Capacity: \_\_\_\_\_ Cost: \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ **Church/Synagogue/Mosque/Temple**

- Name: \_\_\_\_\_
- Address: \_\_\_\_\_
- Capacity: \_\_\_\_\_ Cost: \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ **Cemetery/Graveside**

- Cemetery name: \_\_\_\_\_
- Section/plot: \_\_\_\_\_

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- Shelter available? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Seating provided? ☐ Yes ☐ No

☐ **Home or Private Residence**

- Address: \_\_\_\_\_
- Indoor capacity: \_\_\_\_\_ Outdoor capacity: \_\_\_\_\_
- Parking available for \_\_\_\_\_ vehicles
- Accessibility considerations: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ **Community Center/Hall**

- Name: \_\_\_\_\_
- Address: \_\_\_\_\_
- Capacity: \_\_\_\_\_ Rental cost: \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Kitchen available? ☐ Yes ☐ No

☐ **Park or Outdoor Venue**

- Location: \_\_\_\_\_
- Backup plan for weather: \_\_\_\_\_
- Permit required? ☐ Yes ☐ No Cost: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ **Other Location:**

- Description: \_\_\_\_\_
- Why meaningful: \_\_\_\_\_

**Location selected:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Backup location (if needed):** \_\_\_\_\_

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## OFFICIANT/CELEBRANT

**Who will lead the service:**

☐ **Clergy Member**

- Name: \_\_\_\_\_
- Religious affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_
- Contact: \_\_\_\_\_
- Honorarium/fee: \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Knew deceased? ☐ Yes ☐ No

☐ **Professional Celebrant**

- Name: \_\_\_\_\_
- Contact: \_\_\_\_\_
- Fee: \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Will meet with family to learn about deceased? ☐ Yes ☐ No

☐ **Family Member**

- Name: \_\_\_\_\_
- Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ **Close Friend**

- Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Meeting scheduled with officiant:** Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**Topics to discuss:** ☐ Deceased's life story and personality ☐ Religious/spiritual preferences ☐  
Desired tone (formal, casual, somber, celebratory) ☐ Length of service ☐ Who will  
speak/participate ☐ Special requests or requirements

## SERVICE STRUCTURE & ORDER

Plan the flow of your service:

### 1. GATHERING/PRELUDE

- Prelude music: ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Type: ☐ Recorded ☐ Live musician
- Selections: \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. OPENING

- Opening words by: \_\_\_\_\_
- Opening prayer/reading? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- By whom: \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. MUSIC

- Song 1: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Performed by: \_\_\_\_\_
- Song 2: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Performed by: \_\_\_\_\_
- Song 3: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Performed by: \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. READINGS

- Reading 1: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Read by: \_\_\_\_\_
- Reading 2: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Read by: \_\_\_\_\_
- Scripture/religious texts: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Read by: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 5. EULOGY/REMEMBRANCES

- Main eulogy by: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Approximate length: \_\_\_\_\_ minutes
- Additional speakers:
  1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Topic: \_\_\_\_\_
  2. Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Topic: \_\_\_\_\_
  3. Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Topic: \_\_\_\_\_
- Open microphone time? ☐ Yes ☐ No
  - Time limit per person: \_\_\_\_\_ minutes

**6. VISUAL TRIBUTES** ☐ Photo slideshow (length: \_\_\_\_\_ minutes) ☐ Video tribute ☐  
Memory boards/displays ☐ Other:

**7. SPECIAL ELEMENTS** ☐ Candle lighting ceremony ☐ Moment of silence ☐ Military honors (if veteran) ☐ Cultural/religious rituals: \_\_\_\_\_ ☐  
Symbolic gestures (releasing balloons, planting seeds, etc.) ☐ Other:

## 8. CLOSING

- Closing words/prayer by: \_\_\_\_\_
- Recessional music: \_\_\_\_\_
- Committal information (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

**Estimated total service length:** \_\_\_\_\_ minutes

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## PERSONALIZATION IDEAS

### Ways to reflect the unique person being honored:

**Hobbies & Interests:** ☐ Display related to:

\_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Incorporate into decorations:

\_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Mention in eulogy/remembrances

### Favorite Music:

- Genre: \_\_\_\_\_
- Specific songs to include: \_\_\_\_\_

### Meaningful Quotes/Sayings:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Career/Volunteer Work to Acknowledge:

\_\_\_\_\_

### Organizations to Recognize:

\_\_\_\_\_

**Display Items:** ☐ Photos (number of displays: \_\_\_\_\_) ☐ Memorabilia ☐ Artwork/creations by deceased ☐ Collections or hobbies ☐ Military medals/honors ☐ Awards/achievements ☐ Other:

\_\_\_\_\_

**Interactive Elements:** ☐ Memory table (attendees add items/notes) ☐ Guest book with memory prompts ☐ Video recording station for sharing stories ☐ Charitable donation station ☐ Memory cards to fill out ☐ Other:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## FLOWERS & DECORATIONS

[Memorial Merits | Honoring Life & Legacy](https://memorialmerits.com/memorial-service-planning-options-and-considerations/)

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**Flower preferences:** ☐ Traditional funeral flowers ☐ Favorite flowers of deceased:  
\_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Seasonal/garden flowers ☐ Potted plants ☐ No  
flowers (donations instead)

**Arrangements needed:** ☐ Casket spray ☐ Standing sprays ☐ Arrangements for service space  
☐ Boutonnieres for family/pallbearers ☐ Corsages

**Florist:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Budget for flowers:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Decoration elements:** ☐ Candles ☐ Photo displays ☐ Banners or signs ☐ Themed decorations  
related to interests ☐ Seasonal decorations ☐ Simple/minimal ☐ Other:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## PROGRAMS/SERVICE FOLDERS

**Will you create programs?** ☐ Yes ☐ No

**Contents to include:** ☐ Order of service ☐ Song lyrics/hymns ☐ Readings and prayers ☐  
Photo(s) of deceased ☐ Obituary or life summary ☐ Poem or meaningful text ☐ Pallbearers'  
names ☐ Acknowledgments/thank yous ☐ Information about reception ☐ Charitable donation  
information

**Design:** ☐ Simple photocopied sheets ☐ Printed folded programs ☐ Custom designed booklets  
☐ Template-based design

**Number of copies needed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Who will create:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Printing:** ☐ Home printer ☐ Print shop ☐ Funeral home ☐ Online service

**Budget:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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## RECEPTION/GATHERING

**Will there be a reception?** ☐ Yes ☐ No

**Location:** ☐ Funeral home ☐ Church fellowship hall ☐ Restaurant:

\_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Community center ☐

Home ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Type of reception:** ☐ Light refreshments (coffee, cookies) ☐ Appetizers/finger foods ☐ Full meal ☐ Potluck (family/friends contribute) ☐ Catered

**Caterer (if applicable):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Menu:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Number of expected attendees:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Budget for reception:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Setup needs:** ☐ Tables and chairs (number: \_\_\_\_\_) ☐ Linens ☐ Serving dishes/utensils ☐ Coffee service ☐ Decorations ☐ Audio-visual (for photos/videos)

**Who will coordinate setup:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## NOTIFICATIONS

**How will you notify people:**

☐ **Newspaper Obituary**

- Newspaper(s): \_\_\_\_\_
- Submission deadline: \_\_\_\_\_
- Cost: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ **Online Obituary Sites**

- Sites to use: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ **Social Media**

- Platforms: \_\_\_\_\_
- Who will post: \_\_\_\_\_

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☐ **Direct Contact**

- Email list created? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Text/phone tree organized? ☐ Yes ☐ No

☐ **Word of Mouth**

- Key people to notify who will spread word: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Service details to include in notifications:** ☐ Date and time ☐ Location with address ☐

Whether service is public or private/invitation only ☐ Reception information ☐ Dress code (if any) ☐ Flower/donation preferences ☐ Livestream link (if applicable)

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**VIRTUAL/LIVESTREAM DETAILS**

**Will service be livestreamed?** ☐ Yes ☐ No

**Platform:** ☐ Zoom ☐ Facebook Live ☐ YouTube ☐ Funeral home service ☐ Other:

\_\_\_\_\_

**Who will manage technology:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Test scheduled:** Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**Link to share:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Recording the service?** ☐ Yes ☐ No

**Who will have access to recording:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**SPECIAL ROLES & PARTICIPANTS**

**Pallbearers (if applicable):**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

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4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

**Honorary pallbearers:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Ushers/greeters:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

**Guest book attendant:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Memorial table coordinator:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Reception coordinator:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Technology/AV coordinator:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parking attendants (if needed):** \_\_\_\_\_

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## **CULTURAL/RELIGIOUS CUSTOMS**

**Specific traditions to observe:**

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**Clergy/cultural advisor consulted:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Special requirements:** ☐ Specific prayers or rituals ☐ Dress code for attendees ☐ Dietary restrictions for reception ☐ Gender-specific seating or participation ☐ Timing restrictions ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **BUDGET SUMMARY**

Item	Estimated Cost	Actual Cost
Venue rental	\$	\$
Officiant honorarium	\$	\$
Musicians/music	\$	\$
Programs/folders	\$	\$
Flowers	\$	\$
Reception/catering	\$	\$
Audio-visual rentals	\$	\$
Decorations	\$	\$
Transportation	\$	\$
Other: _____	\$	\$
Other: _____	\$	\$
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>

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## CHECKLIST OF TASKS

**2-4 Weeks Before (if time allows):** ☐ Decide on service type and format ☐ Select date, time, and location ☐ Contact and secure officiant ☐ Reserve venue ☐ Plan order of service ☐ Contact speakers/participants ☐ Gather photos for displays ☐ Begin writing/requesting eulogies

**1-2 Weeks Before:** ☐ Finalize service order ☐ Create and print programs ☐ Order flowers ☐ Arrange catering for reception ☐ Confirm with all participants ☐ Create photo displays/video ☐ Write and submit obituary ☐ Send notifications about service ☐ Arrange for musicians ☐ Test audio-visual equipment

**Few Days Before:** ☐ Confirm all vendors and participants ☐ Prepare remarks if speaking ☐ Gather items for displays ☐ Prepare reception space ☐ Brief ushers/helpers on duties ☐ Test technology for livestream

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**Day Before:** ☐ Set up venue (if allowed) ☐ Deliver flowers ☐ Final confirmation with officiant  
☐ Prepare programs and materials ☐ Rest and self-care

**Day Of:** ☐ Arrive early to oversee setup ☐ Test sound system and technology ☐ Greet speakers and participants ☐ Take time for yourself before service ☐ Have water and tissues available

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## **AFTER THE SERVICE**

**Follow-up tasks:** ☐ Thank you notes to participants, officiant, musicians ☐ Thank you notes to those who sent flowers/donations ☐ Preserve programs, photos, guest book ☐ Share recording/photos with family (if applicable) ☐ Return any borrowed items ☐ Final payments to vendors

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## **NOTES & REFLECTIONS**

**What mattered most in planning this service:**

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**Elements that were most meaningful:**

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**Things I'm grateful for:**

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**Additional thoughts:**

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**REMEMBER:**

There is no "perfect" memorial service. The most meaningful tributes are those that feel authentic to the person being remembered and provide comfort to those gathered. Trust your instincts about what feels right.

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**Download more free funeral planning resources at [MemorialMerits.com](https://MemorialMerits.com)**

**Read the complete guide: "Memorial Service Planning: Options and Considerations"**

**Need support? Talk to Solace 24/7 at [MemorialMerits.com/solace](https://MemorialMerits.com/solace)**

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