

# Our Digital Afterlife

**Coping With The Digital Footprint Of Our Lost Loved Ones**

**Rewriting Myself Grief Support Group**

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# Our Digital Afterlife

Whether we just take photos on our phones or utilize social media sites, most people do not put much thought into what happens to these digital profiles when they pass away.

Because of that, when someone passes away it is difficult for many of those living when they lose a loved one, yet that persons online presence still exists.

According to Statista.com, in 2021, **82 percent of the population in the United States had a social networking profile.**

In addition, photos taken on a smart phone often will continue to “pop up” years after being taken as a memory, often blindsiding the user who wasn’t expected to get this unsolicited and sometimes painful reminder.

# Our Digital Afterlife

This document covers some of the more popular software and apps that live on long after we do not. Please keep in mind, these apps and devices are always changing, so the processes described here may also change as well.

## *This tool will cover:*

- How to plan ahead and setup a “legacy” account so that when you pass, someone you trust will have access to your accounts
- How to edit settings so that you will not get blind sided by old photos and memories
- How to “memorialize” a deceased person’s social media account
- How to request a deceased person’s account be deleted

# facebook

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*Facebook offers the following ways to manage an account in the event of a passing:*

- Create a legacy account allowing access of your account to others after you pass away
- Memorialize an account
- Request to have an account removed
- The ability to customize or inactivate unsolicited “memory” photos from appearing to you

## What is a legacy contact and what can they do with my Facebook account?

A legacy contact is someone you choose to look after your main profile if it's memorialized after you've passed away. If you add a legacy contact, that person will be able to make decisions about your main profile once it is memorialized.

### Your legacy contact can

- Write a pinned post for your profile (example: to share a final message on your behalf or provide information about a memorial service).
- Update your profile picture and cover photo.
- Request the removal of your account.
- Download a copy of what you've shared on Facebook, if you have this feature turned on

### Your legacy contact can't

- Log into your account.
- Read your messages.
- Remove any of your friends or make new friend requests

## How do I add, change or remove my legacy contact on Facebook?

You can add, change or remove your legacy contact in your General Profile Settings at any time. Choosing your legacy contact is currently only available for your main profile and doesn't apply to additional profiles.

### Add a legacy contact for your main profile

1. From your main profile, click your profile photo in the top right of Facebook.
2. Select **Settings & Privacy**, then click **Settings**.
3. Below **General Profile Settings**, click **Memorialization Settings**.
4. Type in a friend's name in **Choose a friend** and click **Add**.
5. To let your friend know they're now your legacy contact, click **Send**.

To change or remove a legacy contact, follow steps 1–3 above, then click **Remove**. From there, you can add a new legacy contact if you'd like.

If your main profile is memorialized, your legacy contact will be notified.

**Note:** You must be 18 or older to select a legacy contact

## How to hide memories in the Facebook app

1. Open the Facebook app on your phone.
2. Tap the **Menu** button. On Android it will be in the top-right corner of the screen, and on iPhone it will be in the bottom-right corner.
3. Tap **Memories**.
4. Tap the **Gear icon** in the top-right corner to access **Memories Settings**.
5. You can choose between **All Memories**, **Highlights** or **None**. **All Memories** means Facebook will show you all your memories from that day, **Highlights** will only show you special videos and collections, and **None** means you won't get notifications for any memories.

If you want something more specific, you can choose to hide memories involving specific users. Follow the steps above, but instead tap **People** in the **Memories Settings** page. You can type in a user's name that you want to hide from your memories. They won't be notified, and your selections are saved automatically.

You can also tap **Dates** in the **Memories Settings** page to hide memories from a specific date range. You can enter almost any span of time -- a day, a week, month or an entire year -- going back in time to 1900. When you're done, tap **Done** and then tap **Save**.



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*Instagram offers the following ways to manage an account in the event of a passing:*

- Memorialize an account
- Request to remove the account of a deceased person

## You cannot turn off “On This Day” memories

Short of turning off push notifications from Instagram altogether, there's no way to opt out of the On This Day notifications.

Instagram confirmed this over email, saying, "much like other notifications in your activity feed, you cannot turn these off."

You can control getting a notification if someone follows you, or posts for the first time in a long time, or likes or comments on your content. But a memory isn't something Instagram lets you turn off.

# Instagram Account Memorialization

Memorialized accounts are a place to remember someone's life after they've passed away. Memorialized accounts on Instagram have the following key features:

- No one can log into a memorialized account.
- The word **Remembering** will be shown next to the person's name on their profile.
- Posts the deceased person shared, including photos and videos, stay on Instagram and are visible to the audience they were shared with.
- Memorialized accounts don't appear in certain places on Instagram, like Explore.

Once memorialized, no one will be able to make changes to any of the account's existing posts or information. This means no changes to the following:

- Photos or videos added by the person to their profile.
- Comments on posts shared by the person to their profile.
- Privacy settings of their profile.
- The current profile photo, followers or people the person follows

## How do I report a deceased person's account on Instagram?

If you see an account on Instagram that belongs to someone who's passed away, you can request that they memorialize the account, or, remove it. If you're an immediate family member of the person, you can request that the account be removed from Instagram.

### Memorializing the account:

Instagram will memorialize the account of a deceased person when they receive a valid request. They try to prevent references to memorialized accounts from appearing on Instagram in ways that may be upsetting to the person's friends and family, and also take measures to protect the privacy of the deceased person by securing the account.

To report an account to be memorialized, please contact Instagram. They require proof of death, such as a link to an obituary or news article, to memorialize an account.

Please keep in mind that they can't provide login information for a memorialized account. It's always against Instagram policies for someone to log into another person's account.

# How do I report a deceased person's account on Instagram?

## Removing the account:

Verified immediate family members may request the removal of a loved one's account from Instagram. When you submit a request for removal, Instagram requires proof that you're an immediate family member of the deceased person, such as:

- The deceased person's birth certificate.
- The deceased person's death certificate.
- Proof of authority under local law that you are the lawful representative of the deceased person, or his/her estate.

# twitter

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**Twitter doesn't provide any way to posthumously transfer your account to a family member or friend.**

Somebody who wants to close down the account of a deceased Twitter user will have to fill out a form and then send in various forms of paperwork, including their own ID and a death certificate.

They will not be allowed access to the account.

# LinkedIn

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*LinkedIn offers the following ways to manage an account in the event of a passing:*

- Memorialize the account of a deceased person
- Request a deceased persons account be closed

# LinkedIn Options For A Deceased Account

## **Memorialization**

Memorialized Accounts allow a person's legacy to remain on LinkedIn after they've passed away. The profile will be marked as Memorialized and access to the account is locked.

## **Close Account**

Closed accounts are permanently removed from LinkedIn. All information related to the account is completely removed and the profile is no longer visible on LinkedIn. Note: It can take up to 21 days to completely delete the data from our system.

Learn more about reporting a deceased member and memorialization.

## Fill Out LinkedIn's Online Request Form

### **To complete this form, you will need the following:**

- 1. Deceased member's full name
- 2. URL to their LinkedIn profile
- 3. Deceased member's email address
- 4. Date of member's passing
- 5. Copy of death certificate

### **Additionally, you'll need one of the following legal documents to show you have the authority to take action on behalf of the deceased member:**

- 1) Letters of Administration issued by a court,
- 2) Letters of Testamentary issued by a court,
- 3) Letters of Representation issued by a court, or
- 4) Other court order appointing the requestor as an authorized representative for the deceased member's estate



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*Google offers the following ways to manage an account in the event of a passing:*

- Prepare ahead of time by initiating Google's Inactive Account Manager
- Modify Google Photo memory notifications from appearing

# Google Inactive Account Manager

Google's **Inactive Account Manager** is one of the more complete tools for taking care of your digital legacy — even if you're just temporarily too ill to handle things.

- Begin by going to the Inactive Account Manager and clicking on Start. You're going to go through three setups: when the inactive account manager will kick in, who to notify, and whether everything should be deleted.

- First, you decide whether the manager should activate if your account is inactive for three, six, 12, or 18 months. You're also asked to verify a phone number and / or one or more email accounts where you can be contacted. If you haven't gone into the account, Google will then use the phone number or email addresses to contact you a month before your set time is up to make sure that you're really no longer around (and haven't simply forgotten you had that account).

- The next page lets you list up to ten people who should be notified by Google that your account hasn't been used. For each person, you can specify exactly which apps they should have access to, ranging from your calendar and contacts to your Google account and purchases. You can also simply let them have access to all your apps.

# Google Inactive Account Manager

- If you want, you can add their phone number so that Google can use it to verify their identity (and, rather eerily, you can include a personal message to send them).
- You can also activate a Gmail message to anyone who emails you after the manager kicks in, telling them that the account is no longer active. You can have the message sent to everyone who emails you or only to people in your contact list.
- Lastly, you can arrange for your entire account to be deleted three months after it is declared inactive. This will also include, according to Google, any shared public data such as YouTube videos. (If you've named someone who will have access to your account, this will give them three months before the account is pulled to save anything they want to.)
- Finally, you'll be given the chance to look over your plan and confirm that this is what you want.

# Google Photo Memory Management

If you use Google Photos, you're probably familiar with the Memories feature, which resurfaces photos from the same date in previous years. While it can be fun to look back and reminisce on certain events, not all memories are ones you'd necessarily want to relive -- like a painful breakup, the loss of a loved one or the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic

- 1. Open Google Photos.** Above **Photo View** in the app, you should see Story-style creations like **Spotlight, Recent Highlights, One Year Ago** and more.
- 2.** If you tap one of the creations, you'll see options in the bottom right to favorite an image, share it or further interact with settings. Tap the **Settings** icon.
- 3.** Choose **Memories Settings** in the menu. From there, you can get pretty specific about what images you do or don't want to see.

You can even further customize which creations you see above Photo View -- or turn them off entirely -- by **tapping Featured Memories**. From there you can adjust whether you see **Previous Years, Recent Highlights** or **Themed Memories** when you open Google Photos.

Tapping Notifications also gives you control over what Google Photos lets you know about -- like when new creations or memories are available, as well as printing promotions and suggestions.



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*Apple offers the following ways to manage an account in the event of a passing:*

- Create a legacy account allowing access of your account to others after you pass away
- The ability to customize or inactivate unsolicited “memory” photos from appearing to you

# Apple iCloud Legacy

## To set up your Legacy Contacts:

- Go to Settings and tap on your name at the top of the page.
- Select Password & Security > Legacy Contact.
- This is where you can add the names of people who will be able to access and download your data after your death; it will also list anyone who has listed you as a Legacy Contact. Tap on Add Legacy Contact to add a name.
- The next page explains that you should choose someone you trust, and that the person will need to have your access key and a copy of your death certificate. Tap on the Add Legacy Contact button.
- You will be presented with a list of your contacts. Choose one.
- Again, a page will explain what info the contact will have access to. Tap on Continue.
- You can now choose how to share you access key (which is a very long string of numbers and letters). If you message your chosen legacy contact with the access key *and* if they accept it, *and* if they have iOS 15.2, the key will be stored in their Apple settings. Otherwise, you can print out a copy for them in hard copy or as a PDF.

## Apple Photo Memory – iOS 14

### On an iOS 14 device:

- If Photos presents you with a memory you'd rather avoid, long-press the video or photo and then tap on the “Suggest Fewer Memories Like This” button below the photo... and hope for the best, as iOS 14 does not provide options to exclude certain people or dates from its Memories feature.
- You can also go to the “For You” section of Photos (found at the bottom of your screen), find the photo or video you want to avoid, and long-press it to get the same menu.
- To stop Photos from notifying you of new Memories, open the Settings app, select “Notifications” > “Photos” > “Memories” and toggle off “Allow Notifications.”
- If you've added the Photos widget to your iPhone's home screen, pictures from your Featured Photos memory collection can also show up there. To remove one from that list, tap and hold it until a menu appears, then scroll down and tap on “Remove from Featured Photos.”

## Apple Photo Memory – iOS 15

### On an iOS 15 device

The iOS 15 operating system adds an option to feature a particular person less often in Memories, or delete that person entirely:

- In the Photos app, tap on the Albums icon at the bottom of the screen, and then tap on People (under “People & Places”). Select the person whose Memories you want to change.
- Tap on the three dots at the top right. You’ll get a pop-up menu that lets you, among other things, feature that person less or remove them from the “People” list entirely.
- If you tap on “Feature This Person Less,” you’ll get two choices: to feature that person less in Memories or never feature them at all.
- If you tap on “Remove This Person from People,” you’ll be invited to reset the people album, which will clear it of all names and favorites from all your iCloud-connected devices.

## Apple Photo Memory – On a Mac

### On a Mac

- Right-click on the photo and select “Suggest Fewer Memories Like This” to get fewer such reminders.
- To stop the operating system from notifying you of new Memories, go to the Photos menu at the top left-hand corner of the screen, select “Preferences...” and under the “General” tab, uncheck the box next to “Show Memories Notification.”
- You can also uncheck “Show Holiday Events” if holiday photos are a special irritation for you.

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