

A jargon crunching A-Z of the language of wills

Beneficiary

A person or an organisation you leave a gift in a will to.

Bequest/legacy

A gift in a will to a person or organisation.

Codicil

A change or addition you make to your will.

Contingent bequest

A gift in your will that is dependent upon an event which may or may not happen. For, example, a gift to a charity which applies only if other beneficiaries named in your will die before you die.

Estate

The total sum of your possessions, property and money left at your death after any debts have been paid.

Executor

Person(s) appointed by you to make sure the wishes in your will are carried out.

Inheritance Tax

Inheritance tax is paid if what you leave in your will adds up to more than the limit set by the government. For the tax year 2014/15 this is £325,000. For anything above this amount inheritance tax is paid at 40%. For each £1 over £325,000 60p will go to the beneficiary and 40p to the government.

BUT charities are exempt from inheritance tax so any gift you leave to a charity will be tax free.

Intestate

The term for a person who dies without a will. Under the Rules of Intestacy, if you die without a will certain members of your

family are entitled to apply for your estate. If you do not have any surviving blood relations the state will apply for your estate.

Life interest

The right of a beneficiary to benefit from part or all of your estate during their lifetime. For example, in your will you give a relative/friend the right to live in a property for their lifetime.

Pecuniary legacy

A gift of a fixed sum of money.

Probate

Official proof that a will is valid.

After your death, probate must be applied for by your executors if your estate is over £5,000. It is granted by the court on production of the necessary documents. Granting probate allows your executors to administer your will and distribute your estate according to your wishes.

Residuary legacy

A gift of what's left of your estate after all other gifts have been made and any debts cleared. You may leave either the total of the remainder or a percentage of it.

Residue

The total of your possessions, property and money that's left after your death and gifts of fixed sums paid to beneficiaries.

Specific legacy

A specific named item such as a piece of jewellery or a painting for example.

Testator

A person who has made a will.

