

Getting into someone's accounts after they have died is one of the most frustrating parts of this process. Every platform has its own rules, its own required paperwork, and its own timeline. Some are surprisingly cooperative. Others feel needlessly difficult when you are already dealing with so much. This section walks through the major platforms one at a time, so you know what to expect before you start.

## THIS CAN WAIT

Non-email account recovery (social media, streaming, shopping) can wait weeks or months unless an account is actively being misused or draining significant funds. Email is the priority. Once you have email access, most other accounts become easier through password resets.

## Google (Gmail, Drive, Photos)

Go to Google's deceased user support page: [support.google.com/accounts/troubleshooter/6357590](https://support.google.com/accounts/troubleshooter/6357590)

Select what you want: obtain data, request account closure, or report Google Pay funds

Gather: your government-issued photo ID

Gather: the deceased person's death certificate

Gather: proof of your legal authority (executor letters, letters testamentary, or power of attorney)

For data requests: you will also need a U.S. court order specifically naming Google and the data requested

Submit the initial request and wait for Google's review (2 to 6 weeks)

If approved, Google provides template language for the required court order

Work with your attorney to obtain the court order (2 to 4 weeks additional)

*Google will never provide the account password or allow you to sign in. Total expected timeline: 1 to 4 months. Practical workaround: check for an open Chrome session and `chrome://settings/passwords` on any unlocked computer.*

## Apple (iCloud, Photos, Messages)

### With Legacy Contact

Go to [digital-legacy.apple.com](https://digital-legacy.apple.com)

You need: your Legacy Contact access key AND a certified death certificate

Apple creates a special legacy access account (1 to 2 weeks)

Access lasts up to 3 years before Apple permanently deletes the account

### Without Legacy Contact (Court Order Required)

Apple requires a court order naming you as rightful inheritor

Gather: death certificate, court order, your government-issued ID

Submit through Apple Support or at an Apple Store

Processing: several weeks to months

*Apple provides: photos, videos, messages (if backed up), notes, files, contacts, calendar, health data. Apple does NOT provide: Keychain passwords, payment info, purchased media (music, movies, apps), or the account password.*

## Microsoft (Outlook, OneDrive, Xbox)

Contact Microsoft Support and request the Next of Kin process

Gather: certified death certificate

Gather: document proving your legal relationship as a close relative

A court order or subpoena may also be required depending on data sought

If approved, data is delivered on a physical DVD shipped to your address

*Important: Outlook.com and OneDrive data may be deleted after 1 year of inactivity. Microsoft accounts expire entirely after 2 years. Submit your request promptly. Timeline: 4 to 8 weeks.*

## Facebook

Request memorialization at [facebook.com/help/contact/305593649477238](https://facebook.com/help/contact/305593649477238)

Provide proof of death: obituary link, death certificate, or other documentation

To request a data download without a Legacy Contact, you may need a court order

A verified family member can request permanent account deletion

### CRITICAL WARNING

Do NOT request memorialization until you have accessed any content you need through an active device session. Once memorialized, all active sessions are terminated and no one can sign in again.

## Phone Carrier Number Transfer

Identify the carrier (check the phone, bank statements, or call the number)

Contact the carrier to transfer the number to your account (not cancel it)

Have ready: death certificate, executor documentation, account number or last four of SSN

Verizon (800-922-0204): executor transfer form; 3 business days

AT&T (800-331-0500): Transfer of Billing Responsibility form

T-Mobile (877-746-0909): call customer service; less strict documentation

## Password Manager Recovery

Determine which password manager was used (apps on phone/computer, browser extensions)

Check if Emergency Access or a family plan was set up

Look for the master password: sticky notes, notebooks, printed emergency kits

If the app is still signed in on any device, access it immediately before it locks

If no emergency access was configured and you do not have the master password, the vault is permanently inaccessible

## Locked Device Strategies

### Locked iPhone

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Try common personal PINs: birthdate, anniversary, street address numbers

Proceed with extreme caution -- after 10 failed attempts, the phone may erase itself

If locked but SIM is active, incoming 2FA codes may appear on the lock screen

### Locked Mac or Windows PC

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Mac with FileVault: check if recovery key was escrowed to the Apple ID

Mac without FileVault: boot into Recovery Mode and use Reset Password utility

Windows with BitLocker: check for recovery key at [aka.ms/myrecoverykey](https://aka.ms/myrecoverykey)

Windows without BitLocker: reset password using a Windows installation USB

Account recovery status and ticket numbers: