



# 8 Mistakes to Avoid When Choosing a Guardian

01

## Choosing Based on Money

Your primary criteria for choosing a guardian should be shared values. It's your responsibility to provide for your children. If you value expensive things then it's your responsibility to make sure that the guardian has access to the financial resources to pay for those things.

## Worrying about Hurt Feelings

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This comes up with families where there are many potential candidates - aunts, uncles, etc. It's understandable; you don't want to hurt your sister's feelings. But the focus must be 100% on your kids, and what's best for them. If worried about hurt feelings, maybe list them as an alternate.

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## Not Naming Alternates

We always recommend naming at least two or three back-ups because there is no guarantee that your first choice will be willing to serve if the time comes. If that occurs and there is no alternate named, then your family will have to go to court and a judge will have to decide.

## Relying on Informal Arrangements

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Here we are talking about situations where you are relying on a verbal agreement or tacit understanding. Without it written down, a judge won't put much value on who someone thinks you wanted to raise your kids. If you feel strongly that a person should be your children's guardian, you must put it in writing.

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## Naming Co-Guardians

Let's say you decide your best friend - Ashley - should be the guardian and she is married to Alex. So you nominate Ashley and Alex. What happens when Ashley passes? Now Alex is your children's guardian. Alex was only the husband on your best friend. Is that what you really wanted?

## Not Revisiting and Reviewing

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Nothing in life is constant. Your children grow and mature. The best guardian for a couple of toddlers isn't necessarily the best choice when they've grown to be teenagers. Likewise, your relationships change and people come and go. Make sure to review and update if necessary.

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## Ignoring What Your Kids Want

This one concerns older kids. The preferences of pre-teens and teens should definitely be a consideration. We are not saying they should get to choose or veto. But it doesn't make sense to name Uncle Pete as the guardian if your kids hate going to Uncle Pete's house.

## Not Leaving Instructions

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Even if you've chosen the very best guardian, it's important to leave instructions. You don't want your guardian guessing what your preferences would be. We instruct our clients to complete care instructions that include things like values, important relationships, religion, finances, and educational preferences to name a few.