



# Organise your digital legacy

With so many of us holding masses of personal media, it makes sense to plan for when we are no longer here, says **Rosalyn Page**

**Our collections of emails, photos, videos, ebooks and social media posts are growing all the time. Just think for a moment about the precious family history contained in these files, the important personal documents and valuable ebooks. A computer failure could create major headaches when attempting to recover important keepsakes that could one day form a collection to pass on to loved ones. A bit of computer housekeeping could help to organise and protect your precious digital legacy.**

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## Carry out an audit

**If you tackle the project systematically, you can catalogue, review and organise the files you want to protect. Start a Word file and list what you've got in the way of documents, music, photos and so on.**

■ **Gather old drives, CDs, memory sticks etc**  
Get out the storage boxes, empty the drawers and

cupboards and collect everything that's got files stored on it. Have you still got a CD drive or an old disk drive? If not, you might need to decide if it's worth paying for old files to be retrieved or buying a separate plug-in **USB** drive to do it yourself.

■ **Digital entertainment library**  
You might want a list of your ebooks, software, games or films in your audit document. Review your purchase history in online stores and record the title and which digital store it was bought from. However,

passing on many of these purchases to family members isn't straightforward. See 'Do I own my digital library?' (above, right) for more details.

■ **Photo library**  
Your films and digital photos could well number into the thousands thanks to years of using smartphones and digital cameras that have enabled us to capture many life moments. It's sensible to do some editing and culling before storing these files.

■ **Don't forget analogue**  
What about all those old

## Do I own my digital library?

It might come as a shock to discover that you buy a 'licence' when you buy media through iTunes, Amazon or the Google Play stores. This allows you to use the films or music according to the terms and conditions, but it doesn't give you ownership in the conventional sense as when you buy a physical book or DVD.

Amazon clearly states in the Kindle Store terms and conditions that content is 'licensed not sold to you ... and you may not assign rights to any

third party'. Apple has similar terms, stating that you buy a 'non-transferable licence ... and you cannot redistribute the application'. Google Play Store terms also state that you buy a 'licence to use content'.

The sticking point comes if you want to pass on your library, say through a will. Technically you can't because you don't 'own' these files, just the licence to use them. To get around this, there are a few options, not without some hassle and risk.



- Pass on your ebook readers and other physical devices so content can continue to be accessed.

- Record and share account details, but note that files can't be

transferred to someone else's account. Beware also that future system updates could make this an increasingly unworkable process.

- Copy files on to a storage drive and

pass that on to loved ones. Beware that doing so could breach user agreements. You're not allowed to do so if the files have copy protection, known as Digital Rights Management (DRM).

slides, VHS tapes and other things? Now might be the time to convert the old family videos and holiday slides to digital so they can be saved and stored with your other files. There are transfer and restoration businesses that can do this for you, although if you still have any of the old playback equipment, there are analogue-to-digital converter hardware devices that plug into the USB port on your computer so you can do it yourself.



Your films and digital photos could well number into the thousands



### Store photos, videos, ebooks, games and other files

**The next step after completing your digital audit is to choose how and where to safely store all the files that form part of your personal digital library.**

- **Cloud vs storage drive**  
Do you want to store your files in the **cloud** via the internet or on a physical drive in your house? The choice depends on a number of factors such as the size of the file to be stored, the cost of storage, ease of access via physical or online,

and your own preferences. If you prefer to have physical storage, then you will need at least one storage drive for your files. No type of storage is completely safe from failing. Just like fading photos or crumbling paper, drives can fail or be damaged. If you can afford the storage and the files are valuable to you, you might want to store an original and a copy. If using storage drives, keep them in cool, stable conditions and check them regularly to ensure the files remain accessible. If you prefer cloud storage, compare prices on platforms such as Apple iCloud, DropBox, OneDrive and Amazon Drive, and record login details for relatives to use at a future date.

- **Future-proofing your files**  
From disk to CD and DVD to cloud, file storage has



No storage is completely safe from failing

changed a lot over the years. This can pose a problem if your files are stored on a CD and CD drives are eventually no longer commonplace. If you have old storage media, you might want to consider buying a CD/DVD drive that, for example, plugs into a computer via USB to keep with your discs. Applications such as Microsoft Word and PDF readers should be backwards-compatible, so files should be accessible when you are using future versions of the program.



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## Create a list of accounts

If you've completed your audit and safely stored your files, it's time to turn your attention to recording details of your online accounts.

Have you ever tried to unlock an email account or recover a lost password? Then you'll have experienced the pain of trying to get your identity verified by the tech behemoths that hold the keys to our digital lives. Now imagine trying to do that on behalf of someone else. It's surprising that the likes of Microsoft and Apple, for example, don't have better processes for managing accounts of the deceased. In short, if you're without the password, it could be very difficult to access an account. It's why making a record of your accounts for loved ones can save a lot of hassle later on.

In a Word document or similar, list your accounts such as email, website logins, online banking details, streaming accounts, social media accounts, app store accounts, online subscriptions and so on.

You might need to add to this file as more accounts come to mind at a later date. Note URLs, usernames, emails and passwords in your list along with any details for ongoing subscriptions.

This file will eventually hold a lot of important financial and private information, so use a password manager (see right) to ensure its security, or set a password on the file to protect it locally on your computer.



Making a record of your accounts for loved ones can save a lot of hassle later on

## Do I need a password manager?

The National Cyber Security Centre recommends password managers as an easier way to keep your online logins secure. A password manager can securely store passwords, generate complex passwords and fill in login fields online. It can also securely store other information such as bank account details, and passport and social security numbers. Some password managers include a feature

that allows users to grant one or more people access after a designated period of time in the event that you can no longer manage your own account.



## Do I need a digital executor?

A digital executor, while not formally recognised, might be someone you trust who's comfortable with technology and operating online accounts to manage your digital estate on your behalf. They can carry out your wishes to ease the process

of accessing and closing online accounts and safely storing or sharing your digital library. It's not a legal position – such as with the executor who manages your will – but they'll require access to personal details for online accounts.

## Making sense of storage capacity

It can be baffling perusing the shelves of a computer store trying to work out how much storage you need for your laptop or desktop. Digital storage is expressed in bytes, which are units of digital information. The size of your files will vary depending on numerous factors, such as resolution of photos and videos,

and compression on audio files. This makes it somewhat difficult to calculate your storage needs. The more digital information a file has, the larger it will be.

To help work it out, try right-clicking on some files and then make a note of the size and then multiply by the number of these files you need to store.

### STORAGE CAPACITY

Here's a breakdown from smaller to larger

**KB** = Kilobytes = 1,000 bytes  
**MB** = Megabyte = 1,000 kilobytes

**GB** = Gigabyte = 1,000 megabytes  
**TB** = Terabyte = 1,000 gigabytes

### FILE SIZE GUIDE

Here's a rough rule of thumb on file size



Plain-text email  
**2KB**



Three-minute MP3 music  
**3MB**



Uncompressed high-res image  
**12MB**



One-hour MP4 video  
**4GB**

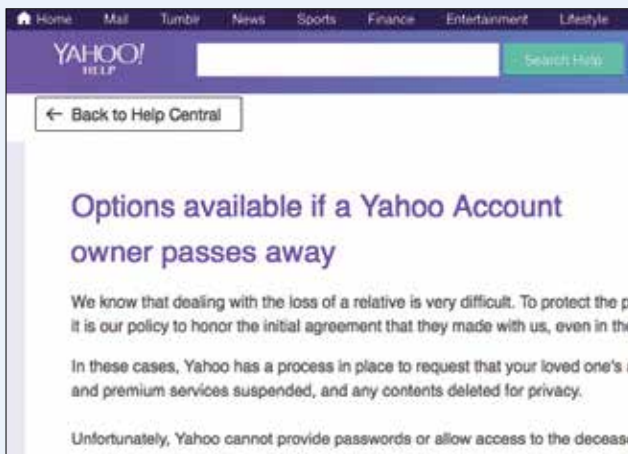
## Your digital legacy

Your digital legacy, like your personal estate, holds a wealth of important material. It's a valuable collection of your digital life in terms of the time, money and memories it holds and it's worth thinking about how to manage

it in the future. How do you want your Facebook profile to be treated? Where are your passwords? What accounts do you have? Questions such as these can be answered more easily if you make specific instructions

on how you'd like your digital legacy managed on your behalf.

If you're responsible for a digital legacy, here are some of the important accounts that you'll need to know how to manage.



### ■ Microsoft and Yahoo! accounts

The simplest way is to log in, if you have the email and password, and then close the account. There are a lot of references online to the Microsoft Next of Kin process, but not a lot of detail. You might need to log a support query on the Microsoft site to get some help if you need access to someone's account without their password. There's more information at this link: [support.microsoft.com/en-gb/help/12412/microsoft-account-how-to-close-account](https://support.microsoft.com/en-gb/help/12412/microsoft-account-how-to-close-account).

Yahoo! has a procedure for closing an account via this link: [help.yahoo.com/kb/SLN2021.html?guccounter=1](https://help.yahoo.com/kb/SLN2021.html?guccounter=1).

## facebook

### ■ Memorialise, export or close a Facebook account

Facebook has a feature to memorialise an account so that it's still viewable, except the word 'Remembering' is displayed next to the name. The formal request is made through the **Help Center**. Facebook does however recommend nominating a legacy contact who can manage the account when it's memorialised. The legacy contact can also download an archive of the Facebook account for creating a digital keepsake.

Go to **Settings > Manage Account** and add a name in **Your Legacy Contact** field and **Close**.

Personal accounts can also be permanently deleted through the **Settings** menu, then **Your Facebook Information**, and **Delete Your Account and Information**.

## Google

### ■ Save and close Google account

Google encourages users to set up an **Inactive Account Manager** for instances when an account will no longer be used.

Go to [myaccount.google.com/inactive](https://myaccount.google.com/inactive) and follow the steps for the timeframe of the account to be deemed inactive and to nominate a contact person who could have access to some user content and close the account.

## LinkedIn

### ■ Remove professional directories, listings and other accounts

Using the digital inventory as a guide, loved ones will be able to find all of your accounts, such as professional directories or listings and group memberships, and then take steps to have the accounts closed or listings removed.

LinkedIn has a formal process for closing inactive accounts, although not all platforms will have this, which is why recording all accounts and passwords is vital to limit the hassle of this task.

Go to [linkedin.com/help/linkedin/ask/ts-rdmlp](https://linkedin.com/help/linkedin/ask/ts-rdmlp) via this link to start the process: [linkedin.com/help/linkedin/ask/ts-rdmlp](https://linkedin.com/help/linkedin/ask/ts-rdmlp). ■