

## What Happens to Email Accounts When Someone Dies



It's hard to imagine a world without email. We use it to communicate with our colleagues, set up appointments, and keep in touch with friends and family. Billions of emails are sent every day. But what happens to an email account when someone passes away? Life is not a science fiction movie, and accounts do not just close with death. Emails will continue to be sent, spam messages will continue to be received, and there will not be anyone there to deal with the backup.

By planning for your own passing, you can ensure that your loved ones know what to do with your email accounts (and your [social media accounts](#)) after you are gone. **Write down your passwords in a personal log and include your wishes in your will** or work with your email provider (if you have a Gmail account) to create a plan for account inactivity. This will save your loved ones the stress of trying to figure it out on their own and the possibility of legal complications. If you have a loved one who passed with no plan in place, though, and you want to close their accounts, you still have options, depending on the platform.

### AOL

AOL automatically deactivates accounts after 90 days of inactivity (or 30 if the account was a free account) – which will wipe all the content from the account – but it does not actually delete the account. If you want to ensure that your loved one's account is permanently deleted, you can call AOL customer support at **1-800-827-6364**. You will be asked questions about your relationship to the deceased and their passing and may have to submit associated paperwork, like a copy of the deceased's death certificate. If your request is approved, AOL will provide you with next steps.



If you have an AOL username that is listed under the same account, for example, if your loved one paid for multiple people's accounts, it is a simple process to transfer ownership of the account. If you have login information, you can do this online through the AOL account, or you can contact [AOL Customer Service](#).

## Google

Deleting a Google account will affect all things Google: YouTube, Google Drive, Gmail, Google Plus, and any other Google products associated with the account. The best way to prepare for death is to set up your preferences in the [Inactive Account Manager](#). You can choose when Google should consider your account inactive, decide who should be notified and what information should be shared with them, and tell Google whether you want your inactive account to be deleted.

You can list up to 10 people and give them access to whatever information you want (e.g., contacts, Google Drive, your entire account, your calendar, etc.). They will have access to this information for three months, after which the account will either be deleted or remain open, depending on your selection in the Inactive Account Manager. You have the option of adding a personal message to each of the people you choose to be notified upon Google's detection of account inactivity, telling them your wishes and – quite literally – sending them a message after your death.

If a loved one passes away without leaving instructions for their Google account, you can [submit a request to Google](#) asking them to close the account. You must be an immediate family member or a legal representative of the deceased for Google to consider your request, be able to furnish a copy of their death certificate, and provide proof that you received an email from the Gmail account in question. The process can take multiple months to complete.

## iCloud

Apple IDs are tied to all sorts of data: payment methods, music or video purchases, applications, and iCloud email accounts. Privacy is a core value at Apple, so it is not easy to delete the account of a deceased individual unless you know their login information. If you do not have their password, you can make a formal request to Apple to close the account. You will be required to submit proof that you are authorized to make the request, as well as provide a death certificate for your loved one.

If you do have the login information for a loved one's iCloud, you can sign in to the "Account" page, select "Data and Privacy," "Manage Your Data and Privacy," and then follow the directions under "Delete your account." The process takes several days. All email messages will be permanently deleted, and the account will become inaccessible.

Contact [Apple ID Support](#) or call **1-800-275-2273** for more information.

## Microsoft

Microsoft accounts are those that end in @outlook.com, @hotmail.com, @live.com, and @msn.com. Closing a Microsoft account deletes more than the email account – it also deletes files on OneDrive, Skype, Xbox Live data, and the balance of the account. If you know the password to the account, you



can [close it yourself](#). It takes 60 days for an account to fully close – just in case you want to reopen the account or access any associated data. If you do not know the password to the account – and you do not mind waiting – accounts are closed and deleted automatically after two years of no activity.

Microsoft will not grant you access to the account contents unless you serve the company with a valid subpoena or court order.

### **Yahoo!**

Yahoo will not release passwords to the email accounts of deceased individuals, but they do have a [process in place](#) for loved ones to request the permanent closure and deletion of an account. You must create a written request asking for the closure of the account and listing your loved one's Yahoo ID and enclose both a copy of their death certificate and a copy of a document that states that you are the executor of their estate or a personal representative of the deceased. Mail all documents to:

Concierge Executive Escalations  
Verizon Media Inc.  
22000 AOL Way  
Dulles, VA 20166

Navy Mutual is here to help with your estate planning efforts. Download our [Estate Planning: Personal Log](#) to document information regarding your email accounts and your wishes. If you'd like to speak with a representative, [schedule an appointment](#) or email us at [counselor@navymutual.org](mailto:counselor@navymutual.org).