



Using an Apple Legacy Contact After a Death

A Gentle, Step-by-Step Guide Reach a loved one's iCloud photos and files with the key they left you

————— **An Extended Guide · No. 1802** —————

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

Bill Davis — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · bill@billshometech.com · Atwater, Ohio

Book a visit — billshometech.com/book

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THE 60-SECOND VERSION

1. The Whole Plan on One Page

If you read only one page, read this. Here is the whole idea as a short checklist.

If someone you love has passed away and named you as their Apple Legacy Contact, you have a way to reach the photos, files, and other information in their iCloud. You do not need their password. You need two things: the access key they left for you, and a copy of the death certificate. You send those to Apple, a real person reviews your request, and once approved you can get in. This guide is for you, the survivor — the person using the key, not setting one up.

- 1 Find the access key the person left you — a long code, often printed and kept with their will.
- 2 Get a copy of the death certificate ready as a clear photo or scan.
- 3 Request access using the link on the access key screen, or at Apple's digital legacy web page.
- 4 Wait for Apple to review and approve your request — a person checks each one.
- 5 Set up the special Legacy Contact Apple Account you are given, and sign in.
- 6 Download the photos, contacts, and files that matter, well within the access window you are allowed.

GOOD TO KNOW

Your access lasts up to three years, and then the account and its data are permanently deleted. There is no rush in the first days, but do not leave it for years — download what you want to keep in good time.

The rest of this guide walks each step slowly, in plain words, with exactly what you will see on the screen. There is no wrong pace, and no silly question.

WHO THIS IS FOR

2. The Survivor's Side of the Story

There are two sides to an Apple Legacy Contact. One side is the person setting it up while they are alive — choosing who to trust and sharing a key. That is covered in a different guide. This guide is the other side: you are the survivor, the trusted person, and the day has come when you need to use what was left for you. The tone here is gentle on purpose, because this is hard work done at a hard time.

The good news is that if the setup was done in advance, your path is clear and official. Apple built this feature exactly so a grieving family would not be locked out of a lifetime of photos and records. You are not sneaking in or breaking a rule. You are following the path the person chose for you.

- You were named as a Legacy Contact by the person who has passed.
- You hold, or can find, the access key they left.
- You want to reach their iCloud photos, files, and information.
- You do not need, and will not be given, their old password.

GOOD TO KNOW

If no Legacy Contact was ever set up, this guide still helps — a later chapter covers the harder road through Apple Support when there was no key left behind.

WHAT IT IS

3. What an Apple Legacy Contact Really Is

An Apple Legacy Contact is a person the account holder chose, in advance, to be able to reach their Apple data after they pass away. It is Apple's version of leaving a spare key with a trusted neighbor. The person set it up in their own settings and named up to five people they trusted. You were one of them.

Each named contact was given a unique access key — a long string of letters and numbers. That key, together with a death certificate, is what unlocks the process. The key alone does nothing while the person is alive; it only matters later, and only when paired with proof that the person has passed.

- It is chosen in advance by the account holder, not requested after the fact.
- Up to five people can be named, each with their own key.
- The access key plus a death certificate is what grants access.
- It is the official, Apple-approved way into a late loved one's iCloud.

GOOD TO KNOW

The person did not need to tell you every detail when they named you. Many people simply share the key, or print it and tuck it with their will. If you have the key, you have what you need to begin.

WHAT YOU NEED

4. The Two Things to Gather First

Before you start, gather two things. With both in hand, the request itself takes only a few minutes. Without them, you cannot use this particular path, though other routes may still help. So it is worth checking you have both before you sit down to do this.

- The access key: a long code the person left for you, often printed and stored with estate papers, or shared with you directly.
- A death certificate: a clear photo or scan of the official certificate issued after a death.
- A device or computer with a web browser, to make the request.
- An email address of your own, which Apple will use to reach you.

The access key is the piece people most often misplace, so look for it carefully. It may be on a printed sheet, in a letter, in a safe, or saved among the person's important documents. If you truly cannot find it, do not panic — a later chapter explains what to do when no key can be found.

TIP

Order several certified copies of the death certificate from the start. Almost every company — banks, Apple, insurers — will ask for one, and copies are easier to gather all at once than one at a time.

THE ACCESS KEY

5. What the Access Key Looks Like

The access key can look intimidating, but it is simply a long code. It is a run of letters and numbers, sometimes broken into groups, that Apple generated when the person named you. It may also appear as a square scannable code, like the ones on a boarding pass, alongside the written-out version. Either form works.

The person may have handed you the key in any of several ways. They might have texted or emailed it to you, printed it on a sheet, written it in a letter, or stored it with their will at the attorney's office. There is no single right place; the key simply had to be kept somewhere you could reach it.

- It is a long string of letters and numbers, sometimes with a scannable square code too.
- It may be printed, written, texted, emailed, or filed with legal papers.
- It is specific to you — each named contact got a different key.
- It does not expire and does not change, so an old copy is still valid.

TIP

If you have the key as a scannable square code, you can hold it up to an iPhone's camera during the request. If you only have the written code, you can type it in by hand. Both are fine.

NO KEY YET

6. If You Cannot Find the Access Key

Sometimes the person named a Legacy Contact but the key cannot be found — it was never shared, or it is lost among their papers. This is a common worry, and it is not the end of the road. There are a few places worth checking before you give up on the key.

- Look through printed estate papers, the will folder, and any home safe or lockbox.
- Search their email and text messages to you for the words 'access key' or 'legacy'.
- Ask the person's attorney, if they had one, whether a key was filed with the will.
- Check with other family members — the person may have named more than one contact. If another relative was also named as a Legacy Contact, they would have their own separate key, and theirs works just as well as yours would have. Only one valid key is needed to start the process, so it does not have to be yours.

GOOD TO KNOW

If no key can be found anywhere, you are not stuck — you simply shift to Apple's support process for a deceased account, which asks for a death certificate and proof you are the rightful person. A later chapter covers that path in full.

WHERE TO REQUEST

7. Where to Make the Request

There are two doors into the same request, and both lead to the same place. Pick whichever is easier for you. Neither requires you to know the person's password, and both will ask for your access key and the death certificate.

- On the access key screen itself: if you have the key open on an iPhone or iPad, there is a Request Access link right there.
- On the web: go to Apple's digital legacy page, at digital-legacy.apple.com, from any browser.
- Either path starts the same official review by Apple.

- You only need to use one — there is no need to do both.

If you have an iPhone or iPad handy and the key stored on it, the on-device link is the smoothest. If you are working from a computer, or you only have the key written on paper, the web page is the simplest. Both end in the same place: your request lands with Apple's review team.

TIP

Write down the web address — digital-legacy.apple.com — before you begin, so you can type it straight into the browser's address bar rather than hunting for it through a search.

STEP BY STEP

8. Submitting the Request

Here is what the request itself looks like. Have your access key and the death certificate photo ready before you start, so you can finish in one sitting. The whole thing usually takes just a few minutes once you have your two items in hand.

- 1 Open Apple's digital legacy page in a browser, or tap Request Access on the access key screen.
- 2 Sign in with your own Apple Account, or create one if prompted — this is yours, not the person's.
- 3 Enter or scan the access key when asked.
- 4 Upload the death certificate as a clear photo or scan.
- 5 Review the details and submit the request.
- 6 Watch your own email for Apple's confirmation and any follow-up.

WATCH OUT

Make sure the death certificate photo is clear and the whole page is visible, with no glare or cut-off corners. A blurry or partial image is the most common reason a request is sent back for another try.

Once you submit, your part is done for the moment. There is nothing more to do but wait for Apple's review. You will not be charged anything to make this request; the process is free.

APPLE REVIEWS

9. Apple Checks Every Request by Hand

After you submit, a person at Apple reviews your request. This is not a machine stamping an instant approval. Apple looks at the access key and the death certificate together, to be sure the request is genuine and that you are truly the person the key was meant for. That care is a good thing, even though it means the answer is not immediate.

Because a human is involved, there is a short wait. You may hear back within a few days, though it can take a little longer. Apple may email you if something needs clarifying — a clearer copy of the certificate, for instance. Answer any such note promptly and kindly, and the process will continue.

GOOD TO KNOW

The review is careful on purpose. It is the same carefulness that would protect your own account from a stranger. Being patient with it is being glad it exists.

- A real person reviews the access key and the death certificate.
- Approval often comes within a few days, sometimes longer.
- Apple may email you for a clearer document — watch your inbox and spam folder.
- There is no fee, and nothing more you must do but answer any questions.

THE LEGACY ACCOUNT

10. The Special Legacy Contact Apple Account

Here is a point that surprises many people, so it helps to understand it early. When Apple approves your request, you do not log into the person's old Apple Account with their old password. Instead, Apple sets up a separate, special account — a Legacy Contact Apple Account — that gives you access to their data. You sign into that.

Think of it as Apple handing you a dedicated set of keys to a specific room, rather than the person's whole house key. This keeps things tidy and safe. The person's original account and password stay untouched; you are given your own doorway into their data, created just for this purpose.

- You do not use the person's old Apple ID or password.
- Apple creates a separate Legacy Contact Apple Account for you to use.
- That account is how you reach the person's photos, files, and information.
- You set it up with a password of your own during the process.

GOOD TO KNOW

Because you never need the old password, you can proceed even if the person never wrote it down anywhere. The access key and certificate are all this path requires.

SETTING IT UP

11. Setting Up the Legacy Account, Step by Step

Once approved, Apple guides you through creating the special account. It is a short, friendly process, much like setting up any new account. You choose a password you will remember, and from then on that is how you get in. Here is the general shape of it.

- 1 Open the approval message or link Apple sent you after the review.
- 2 Follow the prompt to set up the Legacy Contact Apple Account.
- 3 Choose and confirm a password of your own for this new account.
- 4 Note that password somewhere safe, so you can return to the data later.
- 5 Sign in with the new account to reach the person's data.

TIP

Write down the new password the moment you create it, and keep it with your own important papers. You will likely want to come back more than once over the coming weeks, and a forgotten password means starting over.

That is the gateway built. From here on, signing in brings you to the person's photos, files, and information, ready to view and download at your own pace.

WHAT YOU'LL SEE

12. What You Can Reach Once You Are In

Once you are signed in, you can reach the kinds of personal data most families are hoping for. The exact layout depends on whether you are on an iPhone or a web browser, but the categories are the same. It helps to know in advance roughly what is there.

- Photos and videos stored in iCloud — often the thing families most want.
- Contacts — the person's address book of friends, family, and businesses.
- Files and documents kept in iCloud Drive.
- Notes, and in many cases mail, calendars, and reminders.

This is a genuine comfort for most families. A lifetime of photographs, the phone numbers of old friends, important documents — these are exactly the things that would otherwise be

lost behind a password. The Legacy Contact path is designed to hand them back to the people who loved the person.

GOOD TO KNOW

Not everything is included, though. The next chapters explain clearly what you can reach and what you cannot, so there are no unhappy surprises when you go looking for something in particular.

NOT INCLUDED

13. What Is Not Included — Purchases

It is just as important to know the limits as the contents, so no one expects something that is not there. The first thing that does not come across is the person's purchased entertainment. Movies, music, books, and apps the person bought are tied to their original account and its licenses, and they do not transfer through the Legacy Contact.

- Purchased movies and television shows do not transfer.
- Purchased music and books do not transfer.
- Apps and in-app purchases do not transfer.
- Active subscriptions — streaming, storage, services — are not handed over either. This is because these are licenses to watch, listen, or read, granted to the person, rather than files the person owned outright. It is the same as a library card: the borrowing right belonged to them. Photos the person took, by contrast, are their own and do come across.

GOOD TO KNOW

Subscriptions that keep charging are worth cancelling separately, through the billing records or the card on file, so the estate is not billed for services no one is using. That is a different task, covered in guides on closing accounts.

NOT INCLUDED

14. What Is Not Included — Saved Passwords

The second thing that does not come across is the person's saved passwords and payment details — what Apple calls iCloud Keychain. This includes the passwords the iPhone remembered for websites, saved payment card information, and the newer passkeys used to sign into some accounts. None of these transfer through the Legacy Contact process.

- Saved website and app passwords in iCloud Keychain are not included.
- Stored payment card details are not included.
- Passkeys — the newer sign-in method some sites use — are not included.
- This is a deliberate privacy protection, not an oversight.

Apple keeps these sealed on purpose. If a loved one's saved passwords came across freely, so could anyone's who got hold of a key and a certificate, and that would be a serious risk. The trade-off is that you may need other routes — a bank's bereavement line, for instance — to settle accounts whose passwords were only in the Keychain.

WATCH OUT

Because saved passwords do not come across, do not count on finding a login for the bank or utilities inside iCloud. For those, work through each company's own process for a deceased account, with the death certificate in hand.

PHOTOS

15. Downloading the Photos

For most families, the photos are the whole point. A lifetime of pictures is exactly what you do not want to lose, and the Legacy Contact path gives you a way to save them for good. Once you are signed in, you can view the library and download what you want to your own computer or device.

- 1 Sign in and open the Photos area of the person's data.
- 2 Look through the library — it may be large, so give yourself time.
- 3 Select the photos and videos you want, or select all to save everything.
- 4 Choose to download them to your own computer or device.
- 5 For a very large library, download in several smaller batches rather than all at once.

TIP

Downloading in batches — a year or an album at a time — is gentler on your internet connection and less likely to stall than trying to pull thousands of photos in one go. Patience here saves frustration.

Once the photos are on your own computer, they are truly yours to keep, print, and share with family, regardless of what happens to the Apple account later. Getting them safely off the cloud is the single most valuable thing you can do here.

CONTACTS

16. Saving the Contacts

The person's address book is quietly precious. It holds the phone numbers and addresses of old friends, distant relatives, doctors, and businesses — people you may need to reach to share news of the passing, and connections the family would be sad to lose. These can be saved too.

- 1 Open the Contacts area within the person's data.
- 2 You can scroll through to find particular people you need to reach.
- 3 To keep them all, look for an option to export the contacts as a file.
- 4 Save that file to your own computer.
- 5 You can later import that file into your own phone or email if you wish.

GOOD TO KNOW

The contacts are often the first thing a family needs in the earliest days, to tell friends and relatives the news. Even if you download nothing else at first, saving the contacts early can be a real help.

Having the address book in hand also helps with the practical side of settling affairs — the person's accountant, insurance agent, or lawyer may be listed there, saving you a search later.

FILES

17. Downloading Files and Documents

Beyond photos and contacts, the person may have kept documents in iCloud Drive — letters, spreadsheets, scanned papers, records. For someone settling an estate, these can be valuable: a document may hold an account number, an insurance policy, or a note of wishes. It is worth a careful look.

- 1 Open the Files or iCloud Drive area of the person's data.
- 2 Browse the folders — people often keep documents sorted by topic.
- 3 Open anything that looks relevant to settling affairs or to family memory.
- 4 Download the files you want to keep to your own computer.
- 5 Organize them into your own clearly named folder as you go.

TIP

Keep an eye out for anything labeled with words like 'passwords,' 'accounts,' 'insurance,' or 'will.' People often leave a helpful document for exactly this moment, and it can save the whole family hours of searching.

Do not feel you must read everything at once. Download what looks important now, and you can revisit the rest later, as long as you are well within your access window.

NOTES & MAIL

18. Notes, Mail, and the Rest

Alongside photos, contacts, and files, you may also be able to reach the person's notes, calendars, reminders, and in many cases their iCloud email. These can hold small treasures — a recipe, a list, a half-written letter — as well as practical information for the estate.

- Notes often hold lists, passwords the person jotted down, recipes, and personal thoughts.
- Calendar and reminders can reveal appointments and commitments to wind down.
- iCloud mail may contain correspondence with banks, insurers, and services.
- Save or copy anything the family will want to keep, or the estate will need.

The email can be especially useful, because so many other accounts send their statements and reset links there. Looking through it can reveal which banks, utilities, and subscriptions the person used, giving you a to-do list for settling the estate.

GOOD TO KNOW

If the person wrote passwords into their Notes — many people do — those notes do come across, even though the iCloud Keychain passwords do not. It is always worth checking the Notes for a 'passwords' entry.

TWO WAYS IN

19. iPhone or iCloud.com — Two Doors to the Data

There are two ways to reach the data once you have access: on an Apple device like an iPhone or iPad, or through a web browser at iCloud.com on any computer. Both show the same information. Which you choose comes down to what you are comfortable with and what you have to hand.

- On an iPhone or iPad: the data appears in the familiar Apple apps, through your Legacy Contact account.
- On a computer: sign in at iCloud.com in any web browser, on a Mac or a Windows PC.
- The web route is often easiest for downloading large batches of photos or files.
- The device route can feel more familiar if you already use an iPhone.

If you are more comfortable on a computer with a big screen and a real keyboard, the web at iCloud.com is often the simpler choice for the downloading work. If you live on your iPhone, that path will feel more natural. There is no wrong choice; use what suits you.

TIP

For saving a large photo library or many files, a computer with plenty of storage space is usually easier than a phone, which can fill up quickly. If you have both, lean on the computer for the heavy downloading.

USING ICLOUD.COM

20. Reaching the Data on a Computer

If you choose the web route, here is what it looks like. You use any ordinary web browser — the one you already use for email or the news is fine — on a Mac or a Windows computer. The web address is iCloud.com, typed into the address bar at the top.

- 1 Open your web browser and type iCloud.com into the address bar.
- 2 Sign in with the Legacy Contact Apple Account you set up, not the person's old one.
- 3 You will see tiles for Photos, Contacts, Drive, Notes, and more.
- 4 Click a tile to open that area, then browse and select what you want.
- 5 Use the download option to save items to your computer.

GOOD TO KNOW

Working on a computer makes it far easier to organize what you save into clearly named folders — one for photos, one for documents, one for contacts. A little tidiness now saves confusion later.

Take it one tile at a time. There is no need to tackle everything in a single afternoon. Save the most precious things first, and come back for the rest when you have the energy.

USING AN IPHONE

21. Reaching the Data on an iPhone or iPad

If you prefer to work on an Apple device, the data appears through your Legacy Contact account on the iPhone or iPad. The person's photos, contacts, and files show up in the familiar apps you already know. This can feel more comfortable if you are used to an iPhone and less at home on a computer.

- Add the Legacy Contact account in the device's settings, signing in with the account you set up.
- The person's data appears alongside, clearly as a separate account.
- Open Photos, Contacts, or Files to browse, just as you would your own.
- Save or share items using the usual share and save options.

One caution on a phone: a large photo library can quickly fill up the device's storage. For big downloads, it is often wiser to use a computer with more room, and keep the phone for quick browsing and saving a few favorites.

WATCH OUT

Keep the person's account clearly separate in your mind from your own, so you do not accidentally mix their photos into your own library. Labeling and tidiness help you keep the two apart.

NO KEY AT ALL

22. When No Legacy Contact Was Set Up

Perhaps you are reading this because a loved one passed away and never set up a Legacy Contact, so there is no access key at all. This is the harder road, but it is not hopeless. Apple has a separate support process for a deceased person's account, and families do get through it with patience.

Without a key, the Legacy Contact path is not available, so you turn instead to Apple Support directly. They will ask for proof that the person has passed and that you are a rightful family member or the estate's representative. Expect this to be slower and to involve more back-and-forth than the key-based path would have been.

- There is no access key to use, so the Legacy Contact path does not apply.
- You contact Apple Support about a deceased person's account instead.
- Apple will ask for a death certificate and proof of your relationship or authority.
- A court order may be required in some cases, especially for full account access.

GOOD TO KNOW

This is exactly why setting up a Legacy Contact in advance is such a kindness. If you are facing the no-key road now, it is slower, but official help exists — take it one step at a time and do not try to guess passwords.

APPLE SUPPORT

23. Working With Apple Support Without a Key

If you are on the no-key road, the path runs through Apple Support rather than a web form you fill alone. You explain the situation, and they guide you through what they need. Being organized before you call makes the whole thing smoother and less wearing.

- Gather the death certificate and any document proving your relationship or legal authority.
- Have the person's Apple ID — usually their email address — if you know it.
- Contact Apple Support and explain you are handling a deceased person's account.
- Be ready for them to ask for more, and to involve the estate's attorney for a court order if needed.

Even on this route, Apple will not simply hand over a password. They work to confirm you are who you say you are and have the right to act, and only then help you reach the data, within the limits the law allows. It is slower, but it is a real path.

WATCH OUT

Do not try to guess the person's password or force your way into the account. Repeated wrong guesses can lock the account tighter and make the official process harder. Use the support channel, slow as it is.

THE DEVICE ITSELF

24. The iPhone in Your Hand Versus the Data in the Cloud

It helps to separate two different things that people often confuse. There is the physical iPhone or iPad — the device itself, sitting in a drawer. And there is the data in iCloud — the photos and files stored online. The Legacy Contact gives you the second, the data, not necessarily a way past the lock screen of the device itself.

To unlock the physical phone, you generally need its passcode — the four or six digits the person tapped in to open it. If you have that passcode, the phone opens. If you do not, the

Legacy Contact path still gets you the iCloud data, which is usually what families most want anyway, through a computer or your own device.

GOOD TO KNOW

The person's photos and files live in iCloud, not only on the phone. So even a locked phone you cannot open does not mean the memories are lost — the Legacy Contact reaches the cloud copy.

- The physical device usually needs its passcode to unlock.
- The Legacy Contact gives you the iCloud data regardless of the device lock.
- Most precious things — photos, contacts, files — live in iCloud, not only on the phone.
- If you have the passcode, keep it noted safely; it still has its uses.

THE ACCESS WINDOW

25. The Three-Year Window

Once your request is approved, your access does not last forever. Apple allows up to three years of access through the Legacy Contact account. During that window you can sign in as often as you like, browse, and download. After the window closes, the account and its data are permanently deleted.

Three years sounds like plenty, and in the first raw weeks of grief it is a mercy that there is no rush. But years slip by, and it is easy to mean to download the photos 'soon' and then look up to find the window has passed. The safest habit is to save everything you want to keep well before the window closes.

WATCH OUT

When the access window ends, the data is permanently deleted and cannot be recovered. Do not treat the Legacy Contact account as long-term storage. Download the photos and files you want onto your own computer, where they are yours to keep for good.

- You have up to three years of access after approval.
- You can sign in and download as often as you like during that time.
- After the window, the account and its data are permanently deleted.
- Save what you want to keep onto your own device, well in advance.

AFTER THE WINDOW

26. What Permanent Deletion Means

It is worth being plain about what happens at the end. When the access window closes, Apple permanently deletes the account and the data within it. There is no memorialized version left behind, as some social networks offer. The iCloud data simply ends. This makes downloading in good time all the more important.

This is not meant unkindly. It is how Apple keeps a departed person's data from lingering indefinitely in the cloud, exposed to risk. But it does place the responsibility on you, the Legacy Contact, to rescue what matters while you can. Think of yourself as carrying the memories to safety before the door closes.

GOOD TO KNOW

The remedy is simple: get the photos and files onto your own computer or an external drive. Once they are on a device you own, the eventual deletion of the Apple account no longer touches them. They are safely in the family's hands.

If you only remember one thing from this guide, let it be this: download the precious things onto something you own, and do it well before three years pass. Everything else is detail.

KEEP IT SAFE

27. Keeping the Downloaded Memories Safe

Once you have rescued the photos and files, give a thought to keeping them safe for the long run. A single copy on one computer is one spilled cup of coffee away from being lost again. A little care now protects a lifetime of memories for the whole family.

Technology people describe a simple rule, sometimes called three-two-one: keep three copies of anything precious, on two different kinds of storage, with one copy kept somewhere else. It sounds fussy, but in plain terms it just means: do not trust everything to one place.

- Keep a copy on your computer, and a second on an external hard drive or USB stick.
- Keep a third copy in a trusted cloud service, as a safety net.
- Share copies with other family members, so the memories live in more than one home.
- Label the drives clearly, so a relative could find the photos years from now.

TIP

A plain external hard drive or USB stick, loaded with the photos and handed to each close relative, is one of the kindest gifts you can give a grieving family. The memories then live safely in several homes at once.

LEGAL CARE

28. Staying on the Right Side of the Rules

A gentle word on doing this properly. The Legacy Contact path exists precisely so that reaching a loved one's data is lawful and above board. Using it means you are acting with the person's blessing and Apple's approval. That peace of mind is worth having, especially where an estate is being settled and others may be watching.

- The Legacy Contact path is the official, authorized way in — use it in preference to any workaround.
- Do not try to guess passwords or bypass locks; in some places that can carry legal risk.
- If several relatives disagree, let the estate's process and the attorney guide who acts.
- Keep a simple note of what you downloaded and when, in case the estate asks.

None of this is meant to alarm you. In the ordinary case — a named Legacy Contact quietly saving a parent's photos — there is nothing to worry about. The caution matters most where there is money, disagreement, or a formal estate, and there the official path protects you.

GOOD TO KNOW

When in doubt about whether you are allowed to do something with the estate's digital property, a short conversation with the estate's attorney settles it. It is always cheaper than undoing a mistake.

STAY SAFE

29. Scams That Target the Grieving

Grief, sadly, draws predators. Scammers read obituaries and death notices to find the in recent years bereaved, then call or message with schemes dressed up as urgent business. Knowing their tricks ahead of time is the best defense, and none of these are ever your fault if they happen.

- A caller claims the person owed a debt and demands quick payment. Hang up and verify independently.
- Someone arrives with a 'package the person ordered' and wants a fee on the spot. Decline.
- A message pretends to be from Apple, asking you to 'verify' a password or key. Apple does not do this.
- A stranger befriends a newly widowed person online, often claiming their own recent loss.

WATCH OUT

Apple will never phone you out of the blue to ask for a password, an access key, or a code read aloud. If someone does, it is a scam. Hang up, and if unsure, contact Apple yourself through their official site.

When in doubt, slow down. Nothing real is ever lost by taking a day to check. A scammer's whole game is to rush you while you are grieving. Taking your time is itself a form of protection.

PRIVACY

30. Handling the Person's Private Life With Care

Reaching into someone's digital life is an act of trust, and it is worth holding gently. You will see personal things — messages, photos, notes never meant for an audience. A little care about what you keep, share, and discard honors the person and protects the living too.

- Share photos widely, but think twice before forwarding private notes or messages.
- Keep documents with account numbers or personal details secure, not on a shared screen.
- Delete your downloaded copies of sensitive papers once the estate no longer needs them.
- Respect that some things the person kept private were meant to stay that way.

Families sometimes stumble on things they did not expect in a loved one's private files.

Where that happens, kindness is the best guide. Ask what the person would have wanted, and let compassion rather than curiosity decide what is kept and what is quietly set aside.

GOOD TO KNOW

The things worth sharing with the whole family — the photos, the warm notes, the recipes — are usually obvious. When something feels private, it probably is, and there is no harm in simply leaving it be.

PLAN YOUR OWN

31. Set Up Your Own Legacy Contact Now

Going through this for a loved one often sparks a thought: what about my own account? It is a good instinct. Having seen how much smoother this path is for the survivor when a key was left in advance, you can spare your own family the harder road by setting up your own Legacy Contact now.

The setup is covered fully in a companion guide, but the short version is that you name up to five trusted people in your own Apple settings, and each gets an access key. You share the key, or print it with your will. That single afternoon's work is a lasting kindness to whoever will one day stand where you stand now.

TIP

Keeping the same person as your Apple Legacy Contact, your Facebook legacy contact, and your executor keeps the whole plan simple. One trusted name, clearly chosen, is easier for everyone to follow later.

- Name your own Legacy Contact in your Apple settings while you are well.
- Share the access key with them, or print it and keep it with your will.
- Tell them it exists and where the key is kept.
- Review your choice once a year, on a date you already remember.

COMMON WORRIES

32. Common Worries, Answered — Part One

People circle back to the same handful of questions when they face this. Here are plain answers to the ones that come up most often as you begin.

- Do I need the person's password? No. The access key and death certificate are what you need.
- Is there a fee? No. Making the request and setting up the Legacy Contact account is free.
- Can I do this from a Windows computer? Yes. The web path at iCloud.com works on any computer.

- Will I see their private messages? You may reach their data broadly; handle anything private with care.

GOOD TO KNOW

If more than one family member was named as a Legacy Contact, each can use their own key. Only one valid approval is needed to reach the data, so coordinate rather than racing each other.

If your particular worry is not here, the next page covers a few more. And if it is still not answered, it is almost certainly a simple answer worth a short phone call.

COMMON WORRIES

33. Common Worries, Answered — Part Two

Here are a few more of the questions families ask, with plain answers. If something still troubles you after these, that is exactly the kind of thing worth talking through with a patient helper.

- How long does approval take? Often a few days, since a person reviews each request; sometimes longer.
- What if the certificate photo is rejected? Resend a clearer, fuller image; that is the usual fix.
- Can I get their purchased movies and music? No — purchases and subscriptions do not transfer.
- What happens after three years? The account and data are permanently deleted, so download in good time.

WATCH OUT

If you get stuck partway through the request, or a document keeps getting sent back, you do not have to puzzle it out alone at a hard time. A patient helper can sit beside you and work through it.

No question here is silly. This process was built for a painful moment, and feeling unsure is completely normal. Ask, and then take it one small step at a time.

A SIMPLE START

34. If You Only Do Three Things

Perhaps all of this feels like a great deal at a heavy time. That is understandable. If you do nothing else, these three small steps handle the most important part, and the rest can follow at your own pace.

- 1 Find the access key and get a clear copy of the death certificate ready.
- 2 Make the request — on the access key screen, or at Apple's digital legacy page.
- 3 Once approved, download the photos first; they are the thing most families least want to lose.

That is a complete, working start. Everything else in this guide — contacts, files, notes, the three-year window, keeping backups — makes things better and safer, but those three steps secure the heart of it. Begin there.

TIP

Done gently is better than done perfectly. Even just rescuing the photos onto your own computer puts the family's most precious memories safely in hand. Start small, and let the rest follow.

FINISH THE JOB

35. Finish the Job Soon

You now know the whole path — how to use the access key and death certificate, how Apple reviews the request, how to set up the Legacy Contact account, and how to download the photos, contacts, and files before the three-year window closes. The only thing left is to begin, gently and at your own pace.

If any step gives you pause — if you cannot find the access key, or the certificate photo keeps getting sent back, or you are simply not sure where to click — that is exactly the kind of thing I help neighbors with. There is no such thing as a silly question here, and no judgment about where you are starting from.

GOOD TO KNOW

You do not have to remember all of it. You just have to remember you can call. Friendly, in-home help, and I come to you — (330) 200-8042.

Rescuing a loved one's photos and records is a thoughtful, loving thing to do. Take the time it needs, do it gently, and then let it rest, knowing the memories are safely in the family's

hands.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this page handy. It points you straight to what to do for each task. I want to... Do this

Gather two things The access key the person left you, and a copy of the death certificate

Make the request Request Access on the key screen, or at digital-legacy.apple.com Expect a review A person at Apple checks every request — often a few days, free

Set up the account Apple creates a separate Legacy Contact account; you never use the old password

Know the limits No purchased movies, music, books, subscriptions, or saved Keychain passwords

Download what matters Photos first, then contacts and files, via [iCloud.com](https://icloud.com) or an iPhone

Mind the window Access lasts up to three years, then the data is permanently deleted

Keep it safe Save to your own computer and a backup drive; never pay a surprise demand

Get help Call Bill: (330) 200-8042

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

What a Legacy Contact Opens

With the access key and a death certificate, you reach the person's iCloud — but not everything.

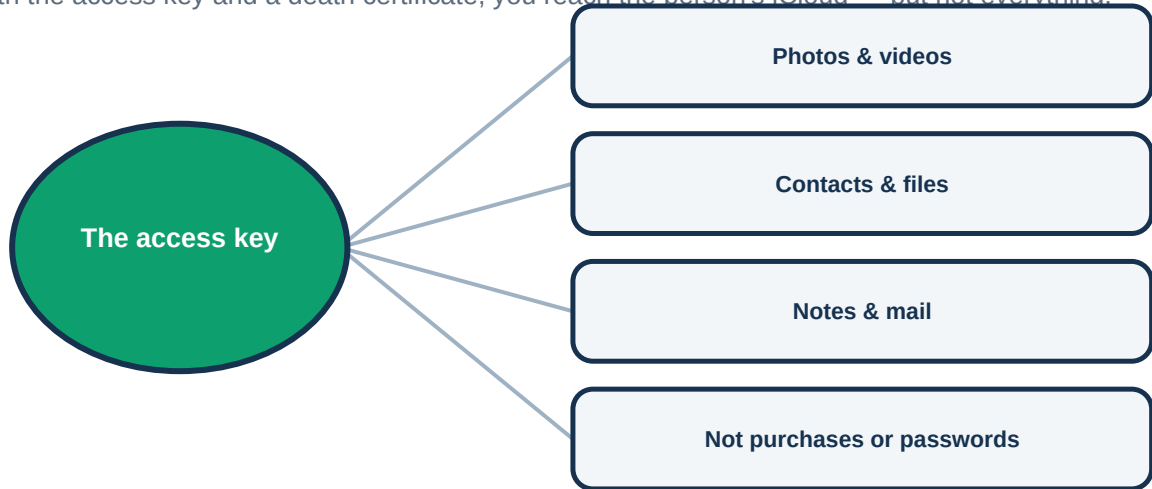


Illustration — a schematic. Set-up screens differ; each takes only a few minutes.

AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

Getting In, Step by Step

Gather two things, request access, wait for Apple, then download what matters.

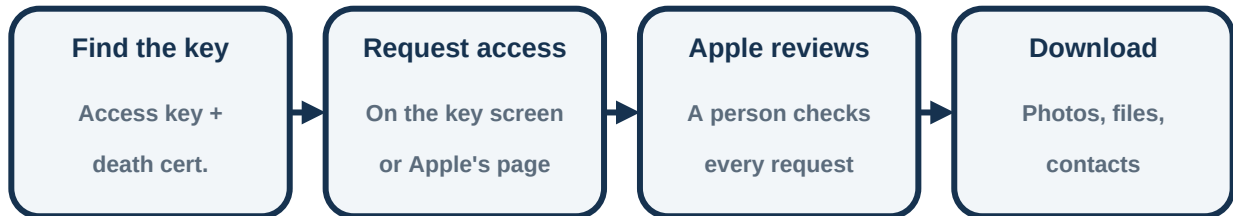


Illustration — a schematic. The order is a suggestion; do one box at a time.

A schematic of the plan — company steps vary; the order does not have to.

BEFORE YOU GO

A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill. I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results.



HOW I CAN HELP

Your Visit — and My Promise

In-home visit — \$99 flat for your first visit. No contracts and no surprise charges, and a 30-day follow-up is included.

Remote Support — \$49 for a screen-share session. I only connect with your permission, you watch the whole time, and you can end anytime. If I can't fix it over the screen-share, I refund the \$49 — and if it turns out you need me in person, that \$49 goes toward your visit. It's included free for Support Plan members (\$39/mo).

GOOD TO KNOW

My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full \$99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated.

Call or text **(330) 200-8042** · Book a visit: **billshometech.com/book** · **bill@billshometech.com**

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