



Using Google's Inactive Account Manager & After-Death Requests

A Gentle, Step-by-Step Guide Reach a loved one's Gmail, photos, and files — the right way, in order

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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.

When someone passes away, their Google Account — their Gmail, photos, contacts, and files — does not simply vanish. How you reach it depends on one thing: did the person set up a tool called Inactive Account Manager in advance? If they did, you may receive a download of the data they chose to share. If they did not, you can ask Google through a special request, though Google will never hand over the password. This guide is for you, the survivor, walking either road.

- 1 First, find out if the person set up Inactive Account Manager — check your email for a message from Google naming you as a contact.
- 2 If they did: follow the link Google sent you to download the data categories they chose.
- 3 If they did not: use Google's request form for a deceased user's account.
- 4 Decide your aim first — getting contents, or closing the account — and ask for contents first.
- 5 Gather a death certificate and proof of who you are before you begin.
- 6 Be patient; Google reviews these requests carefully and by hand.

WATCH OUT

If you ask Google to close the account, you cannot later ask for its contents. So if you want any photos, emails, or files, request those first and finish that before asking for closure.

The rest of this guide walks each road 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 Google's Inactive Account Manager. One side is the person setting it up while they are alive, choosing who to trust and what to leave behind. That is covered in a different guide. This guide is the other side: you are the survivor, trying to reach a loved one's Google Account now that they are gone. The tone here is gentle on purpose, because this is hard work done at a hard time.

Your path depends entirely on whether the person planned ahead. If they set up Inactive Account Manager and named you, your road is smooth and official. If they did not, you turn to Google's request process, which is slower and more uncertain but still a real path. This

guide covers both, so you can follow whichever fits your situation.

- You are trying to reach a loved one's Gmail, Google Photos, contacts, or files.
- You may or may not have been named in advance — both roads are covered here.
- You do not need, and will never be given, the person's password.
- Everything here uses Google's official, approved channels.

GOOD TO KNOW

Even if nothing was set up, do not lose heart. Families do reach data, close accounts, and protect a loved one's digital life through Google's request process every day. It simply takes patience.

WHAT IT IS

3. What Inactive Account Manager Really Is

Inactive Account Manager, which Google often shortens to IAM, is a tool a person can set up in advance to decide what happens to their Google Account if they ever stop using it. It is Google's version of leaving instructions in a sealed envelope. The person chooses how long of a quiet gap counts as 'inactive,' names trusted people, and picks what those people may receive.

If the account goes untouched for the chosen length of time — three months, six, a year, or longer — Google first tries to reach the person by text and backup email. Only if there is still no response does it act on the plan: notifying the named contacts and offering them a download of the chosen data. It is a thoughtful, quiet system, built for exactly this moment.

- The person sets it up in advance, in their own Google account settings.
- They choose a waiting period of inactivity before anything happens.
- They name up to ten trusted contacts.
- They choose which data categories each contact may download.

GOOD TO KNOW

Google warns the person first, by text and backup email, before ever acting. So the plan only triggers when the person truly is no longer able to respond — never by accident after a short absence.

THE WAITING PERIOD

4. How the Inactivity Timer Works

At the heart of Inactive Account Manager is a simple idea: a quiet gap. When the person set it up, they chose how long the account must sit untouched before Google treats it as inactive — perhaps three months, six, a year, or longer. Only once that quiet gap passes does anything begin to happen. This is why there can be a wait before you, as a named contact, hear anything at all.

Even then, Google does not act at once. First it tries to reach the person directly, by text message and by their backup email, in case they are simply on a long holiday or in hospital. Only when those go unanswered does Google conclude the account is truly inactive and move to notify the contacts the person chose.

- The person chose the length of quiet gap that counts as inactive.
- Nothing happens until that full period has passed.
- Google then tries to reach the person by text and backup email.
- Only after no response does it notify the named contacts.

GOOD TO KNOW

This careful, stepwise approach is why the plan never triggers by accident. If you were named but have heard nothing yet, it often simply means the waiting period has not finished running.

WHAT THEY CHOSE

5. The Data Categories a Contact May Receive

When the person set up their plan, they did not have to share everything. They chose, category by category, what each trusted contact would receive. So what lands in your download depends entirely on what the person decided to leave you. It helps to know the kinds of data that can be included, so you understand what you are looking at.

- Google Photos — the person's pictures and videos.
- Gmail — their email messages.
- Google Drive — documents, spreadsheets, and files.
- Contacts, calendar, and data from other Google services they used.

You might receive all of these, or only one or two, depending on the person's wishes. If you expected photos but received only contacts, it is not a mistake or a glitch — it reflects the choices the person made when they set the plan up. They decided, in advance, what they

wanted in your care.

GOOD TO KNOW

Because the person hand-picked the categories, the download often reflects something personal — the photos they wanted you to keep, or the documents they trusted to you. It is worth receiving it in that spirit.

YOU RECEIVE A DOWNLOAD

6. If a Plan Was Set Up — You Get a Download

If the person set up Inactive Account Manager and named you, here is the heart of what happens: you receive a download of the data categories they chose to share with you. Not a login, not a password, not the run of their whole account — a copy of the specific data they decided, in advance, to leave in your care.

This is a gentle and dignified arrangement. The person themselves chose what you would receive. Perhaps they left you their photos, or their contacts, or their Drive documents — whatever they felt you would need or treasure. Google simply delivers that copy to you when the time comes, through a secure link sent to your email.

- You receive a copy — a download — of the chosen data, not access to the live account.
- The person decided in advance exactly which categories you would get.
- Google sends you a notification and a secure link to collect the download.
- The data is yours to keep on your own computer once downloaded.

GOOD TO KNOW

Because the person chose what to share, a download through Inactive Account Manager feels less like prying and more like receiving a gift they left for you. It is the smoothest road there is.

NEVER THE PASSWORD

7. Why You Never Receive the Password

It is worth being clear about an important limit, because it surprises people. Inactive Account Manager never gives anyone the password or a direct login to the account. Even as a named, trusted contact, you do not get to sign in as the person. You receive a download of data, and that is all.

This is a deliberate protection, and a wise one. If being a named contact handed over the full login, then anyone who tricked their way onto the list could take over an entire digital life. By giving only a download of chosen data, Google keeps the account itself sealed while still letting the person leave their memories and records to those they trust.

GOOD TO KNOW

The same rule holds on the other road too: even when there was no plan, and you ask Google directly, Google never gives out the password. No path through Google ends in a login. Expect data, never a password.

- A named contact receives a download, never a login or password.
- You cannot sign in to the account as the person.
- This protects the account from anyone who should not have it.
- It is true on both roads: Google never hands over a password.

THE NOTIFICATION

8. Spotting Google's Notification to You

If you were named as a contact, the whole thing begins with an email from Google. This is the message that tells you the person's account has become inactive and that they left you some of their data. It can be easy to miss among other mail, so it helps to know what you are looking for.

- The email comes from Google and mentions Inactive Account Manager or an inactive account.
- It names the person whose account it concerns.
- It contains a secure link to download the data they left you.
- Check your spam or junk folder too, in case it was filed there.

If you believe the person named you but no email has come, it may be that the inactivity waiting period they chose has not yet elapsed, or that Google is still trying to reach them. These things take time. If you are unsure whether you were named at all, the other road — a direct request to Google — remains open to you.

WATCH OUT

Scammers imitate Google's emails. Before clicking any link, check that it truly leads to a google.com address. When in doubt, do not click; instead go to Google's own site and sign in to look. A genuine link can wait a day while you check.

NOT SURE

9. If You Are Not Sure You Were Named

A common and worrying situation: you believe the person may have named you, but no notification has come, and you cannot be certain. This uncertainty is uncomfortable, but there are calm, sensible steps to take rather than simply waiting and hoping.

- Check your email carefully, including spam and junk, for any message from Google about the person's account.
- Remember the waiting period may not have passed — a plan can take months to trigger.
- Ask other family members whether any of them received such a notice.
- If you are fairly sure no plan existed, prepare instead for the direct request road.

There is no way for you to look inside the person's account settings to check whether a plan was made — that would require their login, which you do not have and will not be given. So if months pass with no notification, it is reasonable to conclude either that no plan was set up, or that you were not among those named, and to turn to Google's request process instead.

GOOD TO KNOW

Not being named is not a judgment on your relationship. Many people set up a plan hastily, name only one person, or never set one up at all. The request road is open to any close family member regardless.

COLLECTING IT

10. Downloading the Data Left for You

When the notification arrives and you have confirmed it is genuine, collecting the data is straightforward. The link leads you to the download Google has prepared. You save it to your own computer, and from then on the memories and records are safely in your hands.

- 1 Open the genuine notification email from Google.
- 2 Follow its secure link, confirming it leads to a google.com address.
- 3 Sign in with your own Google Account if asked — this is yours, not the person's.
- 4 Download the data files to your own computer.
- 5 Save them somewhere safe and clearly named, and make a backup copy.

TIP

The download may arrive as one or more compressed files, sometimes called ZIP archives. These open like folders once you double-click them. If that is unfamiliar, a patient helper can show you how in a few minutes.

Do not leave the link unused for too long. Download links like these can expire after a time. Collect the data soon after the notification arrives, and you will not have to worry about a missed window.

NO PLAN

11. If Nothing Was Set Up — The Request Road

Many people never set up Inactive Account Manager, simply because they did not know it existed. If that is your situation, you are on the second road: asking Google directly. Google provides a special process for exactly this, often called a request regarding a deceased user's account. It is slower and more uncertain than a prepared download, but it is a genuine, official path.

On this road, you fill out a form explaining the situation and what you are asking for. A team at Google reviews it carefully, weighing your proof and your relationship to the person. They will not rush, and they will not simply open the account — but they do help many families each day, whether by closing an account or, in some cases, releasing content.

- This road is for when no Inactive Account Manager plan was set up.
- You use Google's form for a request regarding a deceased user's account.
- A Google team reviews your request by hand, carefully.
- Google may help close the account, or in some cases release content.

GOOD TO KNOW

The form is reached through Google's help pages — search for 'submit a request regarding a deceased user's account.' A later chapter walks through the steps and what to have ready.

THE TROUBLESHOOTER

12. Finding Google's Request Form

Google's request process is sometimes called a troubleshooter, because it asks you a series of questions to guide you to the right path. It is not a single blunt form but a short, branching set of questions that lead you to what Google needs for your particular aim. Knowing this in advance keeps it from feeling confusing.

- Find it by searching Google's help for 'request regarding a deceased user's account.'
- It begins by asking what you are trying to do — close the account, obtain funds, or obtain data.
- Your answers steer you to the right set of questions and the right proof to supply.
- You fill it out as yourself, on behalf of the person who has passed.

Because it branches, the questions you see depend on your aim. If you want the person's photos and emails, you follow the content path. If you only wish to close the account, you follow the closure path. Choosing your aim clearly at the start saves you from backtracking later.

TIP

Read all the way through the questions once before you start answering in earnest. Knowing where the path leads helps you gather the right documents before you commit, so you can finish in one sitting.

THREE OUTCOMES

13. What Google Can and Cannot Do

It helps to understand the range of what Google might do before you ask, so your expectations are realistic. Broadly, there are a few possible outcomes, and which one you reach depends on your aim, your proof, and Google's careful judgment. None of them involves a password.

- Google may help you close the account, ending it respectfully.
- In some cases, Google may release content — photos, emails, files — to the family.
- If there were funds tied to the account, there is a path to address those too.
- Google never gives out the password or a direct login, on any path.

Releasing content is handled with great care and is not guaranteed; Google weighs each request. Closing an account is more straightforward. Because these aims are treated differently, and because one choice can close off another, the order in which you ask

matters a great deal — which the next chapters make clear.

GOOD TO KNOW

Google does not need to be told about a death for the account to eventually go quiet, but making a request is the only way to actively close it or to try to obtain its contents. Doing nothing leaves it in limbo.

CLOSING THE ACCOUNT

14. Closing the Account Respectfully

Sometimes closing the account is the whole aim — the family wants no data, only to lay the digital life gently to rest and stop the account lingering. Google provides for this through the same request process, choosing the closure path rather than the content path. It is more straightforward than a content request, though still reviewed by hand.

- 1 Open Google's request process and choose the option to close the account.
- 2 Enter the person's account email and the details requested.
- 3 Upload the death certificate and your proof of identity and relationship.
- 4 Submit, and watch your email for Google's confirmation or questions.
- 5 Be patient; even a closure is reviewed by a person before it is carried out.

WATCH OUT

Close the account only once you are certain you need nothing from it. Closure ends any chance at the photos, email, and files inside. If there is the slightest doubt, pursue the contents first and leave closure for later.

For some families, closing the account brings a quiet sense of completion — one more thing settled and at rest. Just be sure that completion is truly what you want before you ask, because it cannot be undone once done.

FUNDS

15. If There Is a Balance or Funds Tied to the Account

A Google Account sometimes has a little money attached to it — a store balance, or funds from purchases or a wallet. If that is the case, Google's request process includes a path to address those funds, separate from closing the account or obtaining data. It is worth knowing this exists, so a balance is not simply forgotten and lost.

- A balance may sit in the account's store credit or wallet.

- Google's request process has a path specifically for funds.
- You will need proof of your relationship and authority over the estate.
- Policies on paying out funds vary and are decided by Google case by case.

Do not expect a large sum, and do not count on it; often the amounts are small, and the rules around them can change. But if the person mentioned a balance, or you see signs of one, it is reasonable to raise it in the request. The estate's attorney can advise on whether it is worth pursuing for your situation.

GOOD TO KNOW

Never log into the account yourself to try to move money, even if you find a way in. Spending or transferring after a death can look as though the person acted after passing, and it can complicate settling the estate.

THE ORDER MATTERS

16. The Catch: Contents Before Closure

This is the single most important thing to understand on the request road, so it has a chapter of its own. If you ask Google to close the account, you cannot afterward come back and ask for its contents. The closure ends that possibility. So the order of your requests is not a small detail — it can mean the difference between keeping a lifetime of photos and losing them.

The safe rule is simple: if there is any chance you will want the person's photos, emails, or files, pursue that content request first, and see it all the way through, before you ever ask to close the account. Closure is final for the contents; do it last, if at all.

WATCH OUT

Do not request closure to 'tidy things up' while a content request is still in your mind. Closing the account first can permanently end your chance at the contents. Finish the contents request completely before thinking about closure.

- Requesting closure ends any later chance at the account's contents.
- If you want any data, request the contents first and finish that process.
- Only ask to close the account once you are sure you need nothing more from it.
- When in doubt, pursue contents first — you can always close it later.

DOCUMENTS

17. The Documents to Have Ready

Whichever aim you choose on the request road, Google will ask for proof. Gathering the likely documents before you begin makes the whole thing smoother and spares you stopping partway to hunt for a paper. Here is what families are commonly asked to provide.

- A death certificate — usually a certified copy, as a clear scan or photo.
- Proof of your own identity, such as a government-issued photo document.
- The email address of the person's Google Account, if you know it.
- Proof of your relationship or legal authority, especially for releasing content.

The more sensitive the request — releasing content rather than merely closing the account — the stronger the proof Google asks for. A simple closure may need less; obtaining a loved one's emails and photos will need more, often including proof that you are a close family member or the estate's legal representative.

TIP

Order several certified copies of the death certificate at the outset. Google, banks, insurers, and other services will each want one, and it is far easier to gather copies all at once than one at a time.

THE REQUEST, STEP BY STEP

18. Submitting the Request

Here is what making the request looks like in practice. Have your documents ready as clear scans or photos before you start, so you can move through it without stopping. You fill the form out as yourself, signed in to your own Google Account, on behalf of the person who has passed.

- 1 Open Google's request process for a deceased user's account from its help pages.
- 2 Answer the first questions to set your aim — content first if you want any data.
- 3 Enter the person's account email and the details requested.
- 4 Upload the death certificate and your proof of identity and authority.
- 5 Review everything carefully, then submit.
- 6 Watch your own email for Google's confirmation and any follow-up questions.

WATCH OUT

Make sure every uploaded document is clear and complete, with no glare or cut-off edges. A blurry or partial scan is the most common reason a request is sent back, which only adds to the wait.

Once submitted, your part pauses. There is nothing more to do but wait for Google's review and answer any questions they send. The process is free; no one should ever ask you to pay a fee to Google for it.

GOOGLE REVIEWS

19. Google Reviews Carefully and by Hand

After you submit, a team at Google reviews your request. This is deliberately careful work done by people, not an instant automatic decision. They weigh your proof, your relationship, and the sensitivity of what you are asking for. That care protects every account, including the one you are asking about, from being opened to the wrong person.

Because people are involved and the stakes are high, this can take time — often longer than families expect, and longer for content than for a simple closure. Google may write back asking for clearer documents or more proof. Answer promptly and kindly, and the process continues. Silence from you, not from Google, is the most common cause of delay.

GOOD TO KNOW

The carefulness is the same protection that guards your own account from a stranger. Being patient with a slow review is being glad that Google does not simply hand accounts to anyone who asks.

- A team of people reviews each request, weighing proof and relationship.
- Content requests take longer than simple closures.
- Google may email you for clearer or additional documents.
- Answer any follow-up promptly; that keeps the process moving.

GOOGLE TAKEOUT

20. What Google Takeout Is

If you do gain access to the account — because the person left you the login among their papers, or a court or Google process has given you a way in — there is a wonderful tool for saving everything at once. It is called Google Takeout, and it lets you export a copy of the account's data to keep on your own computer.

Takeout gathers the person's photos, emails, contacts, calendar, and files into downloadable archives. It is the proper way to rescue a whole digital life in one organized effort, rather than saving things piecemeal. Think of it as packing up the contents of a house into labeled boxes you can carry home.

- Takeout exports a copy of a Google Account's data to download.
- It covers Gmail, Google Photos, contacts, calendar, Drive, and more.
- You choose which services to include before you export.
- The export arrives as compressed archive files you save to your computer.

GOOD TO KNOW

Takeout only works when you can already sign in to the account. If you only received a download through Inactive Account Manager, you already have your copy and do not need Takeout. It is for when you have full access.

TAKEOUT: PHOTOS

21. Using Takeout to Save the Photos

For most families, the photos matter more than anything. If you have access to the account and want to rescue a lifetime of pictures from Google Photos, Takeout is the way. One point to know in advance: Takeout exports whole albums at a time, not individual photos picked one by one, so it is built for saving everything.

- 1 Signed into the account, go to Google Takeout at takeout.google.com.
- 2 From the list of services, choose Google Photos.
- 3 Start the export and let Google prepare the archives — a large library can take a while.
- 4 Download the archive files when Google says they are ready.
- 5 Save them to your computer and open them to find the photos inside.

TIP

Takeout can even send the export straight to some other services, such as iCloud Photos, if that is easier than downloading archives yourself. Look for that option when you set up the export.

Once the photos are on your own computer, they are truly yours to keep, print, and share. Getting them safely out of the cloud is the single most valuable thing you can do, whatever else happens to the account.

TAKEOUT: EMAIL

22. Saving the Gmail and Contacts

Beyond photos, the person's Gmail and contacts are worth saving, both for memory and for the practical work of settling affairs. Takeout handles these too, gathering the emails and the address book into files you can keep. The email in particular can be a map to the rest of the person's accounts.

- In Takeout, choose Mail to export the Gmail messages.
- Choose Contacts to export the person's address book.
- Start the export and download the archives when ready.
- Open the contacts file to find phone numbers and addresses you may need.

Saving the contacts early is often a real help, because the family may need to reach old friends and relatives to share news. The person's accountant, insurance agent, or attorney may also be in that address book, saving you a search later when settling the estate.

GOOD TO KNOW

Exported email usually comes in a format that email programs can open, though it may look unfamiliar at first. If you need to read through it and are not sure how, a patient helper can set it up so it opens normally.

OTHER SERVICES

23. YouTube, Drive, and the Rest of Google

A Google Account is often more than Gmail and Photos. The person may have had a YouTube channel, documents in Drive, a calendar full of history, or notes in Google Keep. When you rescue a digital life, it is worth casting a wide net so nothing quietly meaningful is left behind in a corner of the account.

- YouTube: the person may have uploaded videos, or saved playlists worth keeping.
- Drive: documents, spreadsheets, and scanned papers, sometimes including important records.
- Calendar: a record of the person's appointments and commitments to wind down.
- Keep or Tasks: small notes and lists that can hold passwords or personal thoughts.

Google Takeout can export most of these at once if you have access to the account, letting you save a complete copy rather than hunting through each service. If a video or document is especially precious — a home movie, a letter — make sure it is among what you save, and keep a backup copy of it.

TIP

If the person kept a YouTube channel that mattered to them or the family, think about whether to keep it running as a memorial, download the videos, or close it. There is no rush to decide; save the videos first, then choose.

PATIENCE

24. What to Expect While You Wait

Whichever road you are on, waiting is part of it, and knowing that in advance spares you the worry that something has gone wrong. A download through Inactive Account Manager comes only after the inactivity period and Google's attempts to reach the person. A direct request waits on a careful human review. Neither is instant, and that is normal.

- Content requests generally take longer than simple closures.
- Google may email you more than once, asking for clearer documents.
- Use the same email throughout, and check its spam folder regularly.
- A long silence usually means the review is ongoing, not that it failed.

TIP

Check the spam or junk folder of the email you used now and then. Google's reply can land there, and a missed message is the most common reason a request seems to stall for no reason.

There is nothing more you need to do while you wait but answer any questions kindly and promptly. The account sits safely in the meantime. Let the process take its course; for most families, it gets there in the end.

GMAIL IS THE KEY

25. Why Gmail Unlocks So Much Else

There is a reason the email account deserves special attention: Gmail is often the key to nearly everything else the person did online. Almost every other account — the bank, the utilities, the shopping sites, the subscriptions — resets its password by sending a link to the email. Whoever can read the email can, in time, reach much of the rest.

For you as the survivor, this cuts two ways. If you gain lawful access to the Gmail, it becomes a powerful tool for settling the estate: you can see which companies the person dealt with and work through each one's bereavement process. But it is also why Google guards email so carefully, and why no path simply hands it over.

GOOD TO KNOW

Looking through the inbox reveals a to-do list for the estate: statements from banks, bills from utilities, receipts from subscriptions. Each tells you another account that needs attention, closing, or cancelling.

- Most other accounts reset their passwords through email.
- Lawful access to Gmail helps you identify every account to settle.
- This is also why Google protects email access so carefully.
- Work through each company's own bereavement process from what the email reveals.

ANDROID PHONES

26. The Google Account Is the Key to an Android Phone

If your loved one used an Android phone — a Samsung, a Pixel, a Motorola, or another maker — there is an important point to understand. On Android, most of the person's data lives in their Google Account rather than only on the phone itself. So reaching the Google Account, through the roads in this guide, is usually the real way to reach their digital life.

The physical phone may be locked behind a passcode or pattern, and without that, the device itself is hard to open. But the photos, contacts, and emails are backed up to Google. That means even a locked Android phone does not lock away the memories, as long as you can reach the Google Account behind it.

- On Android, the data lives largely in the Google Account, not only on the handset.
- Samsung, Pixel, and other makers all rely on a Google Account behind the scenes.
- Reaching the Google Account is the main route to the person's data.

- A locked phone does not mean the memories are lost — they are backed up to Google.

WATCH OUT

Do not repeatedly guess the phone's lock pattern or passcode. Too many wrong tries can lock the device further. The Google Account roads in this guide are the surer path to the data anyway.

DEVICE VERSUS DATA

27. The Phone in Your Hand Versus the Account Online

As with any modern device, it helps to separate two things people often blur together. There is the physical phone — the handset in a drawer. And there is the Google Account — the photos, mail, and files stored online. The roads in this guide reach the account and its data, which is usually what families most want, rather than necessarily unlocking the handset.

If you happen to know the phone's passcode, the handset opens and you can use it normally. If you do not, that is all right: the Inactive Account Manager download or the Google request still reaches the data in the account, through a computer or your own device, regardless of the locked handset.

GOOD TO KNOW

Because Android backs data up to the Google Account, the account is where the lasting value lives. Rescuing the account's data matters more than unlocking an old phone that may simply be retired.

- The handset usually needs its own passcode or pattern to unlock.
- The Google Account roads reach the data regardless of the handset lock.
- Most precious things are backed up to Google, not trapped on the phone.
- A known passcode is handy, but not essential to reaching the data.

KEEP IT SAFE

28. Keeping the Rescued Data Safe

Once you have the photos, emails, and files safely downloaded, give a thought to keeping them for the long run. A single copy on one computer is one accident 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. In plain terms, it just means do not trust everything to a single place that could fail.

- 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

29. Staying on the Right Side of the Rules

A gentle word on doing this properly. Google's roads — Inactive Account Manager and the deceased-user request — exist precisely so that reaching a loved one's data is lawful and above board. Following them means you are acting with Google's approval, which gives real peace of mind, especially where an estate is being settled and others may be watching.

- Use Google's official roads rather than any workaround or guessing.
- Do not try to break into the account or bypass its locks; that can carry legal risk in some places.
- If several relatives disagree, let the estate's process and the attorney guide who acts.
- Keep a simple note of what you requested and received, in case the estate asks.

None of this is meant to alarm you. In the ordinary case — a close family member quietly rescuing 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 may 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

30. 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 fake email pretends to be from Google, asking you to 'verify' a password or sign in through a link.
- A stranger befriends a newly widowed person online, often claiming their own recent loss.

WATCH OUT

Google will never phone you out of the blue to ask for a password or a code read aloud, and a real Google link always leads to a google.com address. When an email pushes you to act fast, slow down and check.

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

31. Handling the Person's Private Life With Care

Reaching into someone's email and files is an act of trust, and it is worth holding gently. You will see personal things — messages, photos, and 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 warmly, but think twice before forwarding private emails or messages.
- Keep documents with account numbers or personal details secure, not on a shared screen.
- Delete your 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 inbox. 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 useful records — are usually obvious. When something feels private, it probably is, and there is no harm in simply leaving it be.

PLAN YOUR OWN

32. Set Up Your Own Inactive Account Manager 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 the download road is than the request road, you can spare your own family the slower path by setting up Inactive Account Manager now, while you are well.

The setup is covered fully in a companion guide, but the short version is that you go to your Google account settings, choose a waiting period, name up to ten trusted people, and pick what data each may download. 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 Google contact, your Apple Legacy Contact, and your executor keeps the whole plan simple. One trusted name, clearly chosen, is easier for everyone to follow later.

- In your Google settings, find the plan for your account — Inactive Account Manager.
- Choose how long of a quiet gap should count as inactive.
- Name your trusted people and choose what each may download.
- Tell them it exists, and review your choices once a year.

COMMON WORRIES

33. 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.

- Will Google give me the password? No. No path through Google ends in a password or login.
- Is there a fee? No. Both the Inactive Account Manager download and the request process are free.
- I was named a contact but got no email — why? The inactivity period may not have passed yet.
- Can I get the contents after I close the account? No — request contents first, closure last.

GOOD TO KNOW

If more than one person was named in the plan, each receives their own download of the categories chosen for them. You do not have to coordinate; each contact's download is separate.

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

34. 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 a request take? Often longer than expected, and longer for content than for closure.
- What if my document is rejected? Resend a clearer, fuller scan; that is the usual fix.
- Does Google need to be told about the death? Not for the account to go quiet, but you must ask to close it or obtain contents.
- Can I pick out just one photo with Takeout? No — Takeout exports whole albums, so it is for saving everything.

WATCH OUT

If you get stuck partway through the form, 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

35. 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 Check your email for a genuine notification from Google naming you as a contact.
- 2 If there is one, download the data it offers; if not, open Google's deceased-account request.
- 3 Whatever you do, pursue the contents you want before ever asking to close the account. That is a complete, working start. Everything else in this guide — Takeout, backups, the finer points of the request — 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 puts the family's most precious memories safely in hand. Start small, and let the rest follow.

FINISH THE JOB

36. Finish the Job Soon

You now know both roads — the smooth download when a plan was set up, and the careful request when it was not. You know that Google never hands over a password, that the order of your requests matters, and that Takeout and Gmail are the keys to rescuing a whole digital life. The only thing left is to begin, gently and at your own pace.

If any step gives you pause — if you cannot tell whether a plan was set up, or the request form is confusing, or a document keeps getting sent back — 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
Check for a plan Look for a genuine Google email naming you as an Inactive Account
Manager contact Collect a download If named, follow the secure link to download the data
they left you Request when no plan Use Google's 'request regarding a deceased user's
account' form Get the order right Request contents first and finish it — closure ends any
chance at the data Expect no password No Google path ever gives a password or a direct
login Gather documents Death certificate, your ID, and proof of relationship or authority
Use Google Takeout With account access, export photos, Gmail, and contacts to keep
Stay safe Real Google links go to google.com; never pay a surprise demand Get help Call
Bill: (330) 200-8042

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

Two Roads Into a Google Account

If a plan was made, you get a download. If not, you ask Google — but never get a password.

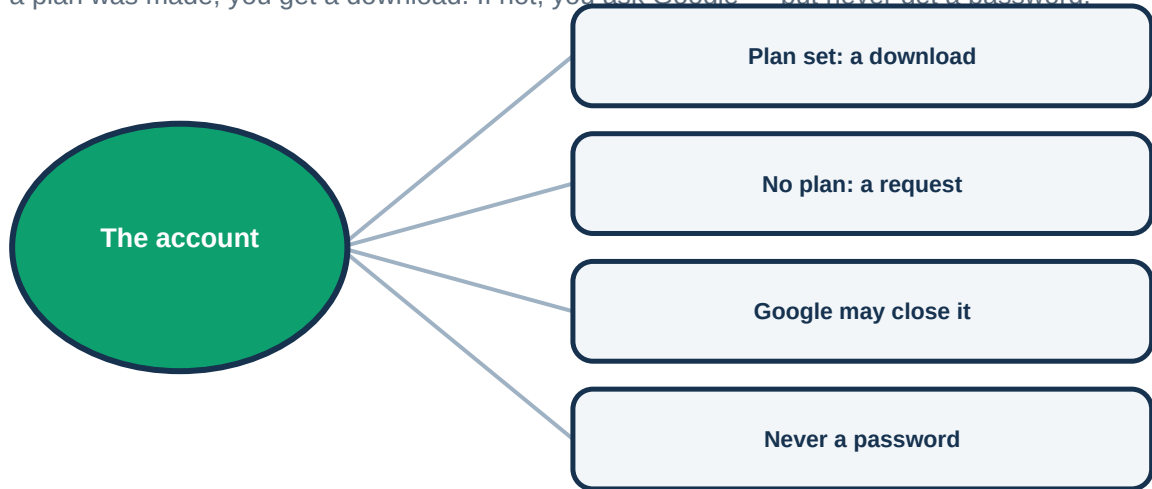


Illustration — a schematic. Set-up screens differ; each takes only a few minutes.

AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

A Deceased-Account Request, Step by Step

Gather proof, open Google's form, choose what you want, then wait for review.

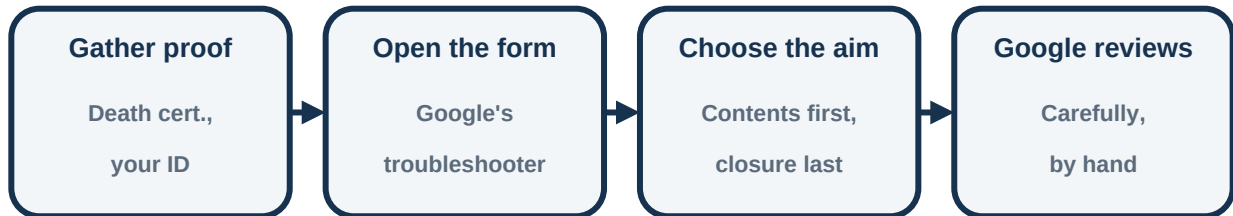


Illustration — a schematic. The order is a suggestion; do one box at a time.

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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