

Cost-Effective Wills

Online software and ready-made forms make creating your own will a snap
by **Lynnette Khalfani-Cox**, March 24, 2011

If you've put off making a last will and testament because you don't want to pay a lawyer, you should know that it's not necessary to hire an attorney to draw up a will.

Many people who require a basic will can create one online or simply use store-bought legal forms. Each of these methods of creating a will is far less expensive than retaining a lawyer to do the job.

For instance, several Internet-based companies — including Nolo.com, lawdepot.com and Legalzoom.com — allow you to create a will from your own desktop computer.

When you create a will online, you are walked step-by-step through a series of questions to help you create the will. You then print out the will, and get it signed by at least two witnesses and notarized. Most online software programs for wills also let you go back into the will and make changes or additions to the document as you see fit.

The cost of making an online will usually ranges from about \$20 to \$100. For as little as \$5 to \$20, you can also buy a standard will and testament on ready-made forms sold in stores such as OfficeMax, Office Depot or Staples.

By comparison, a lawyer may charge anywhere from roughly \$100 to \$1,000 to create a will, depending on the part of the country in which you live and the complexity of your personal circumstances.

So don't let money be an obstacle to creating your will. You really do have easy, convenient, low-cost alternatives to get the process completed.

There are some situations, however, when you may want to hire a lawyer. For example, it's best to get an attorney involved if:

- You have a large estate and want some estate planning guidance.
- You want to disinherit a spouse.
- You are concerned that someone may contest your will or try to claim that you weren't of sound mind when you signed it.

I used an online software program to create my will; my husband did, too. So if your situation is pretty straight-forward, you can do the same thing. And rest assured that a will prepared on online software — or one prepared on a store-bought form — is just as legal as if an attorney drew it up.

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