

Funeral program planner

A funeral program is one sheet of paper folded once, which gives you four panels and no more. Deciding what goes on each panel before you open a design tool is what keeps the finished program from feeling crowded. Work through this sheet, then lay it out.

The four panels

Sketch or note what belongs in each. Resist adding a fifth idea.

Front cover Photograph, full name, birth and death dates, service location and date. One photograph only, and one that looks like them.	Inside left Order of service, with the name of each reader, musician, and speaker beside their part.	Inside right Obituary or life summary. Usually 150 to 350 words once a photograph shares the panel.	Back cover Pallbearers, the family's acknowledgement, reception details, donation information, and a closing verse.
--	---	--	--

Service details

FULL NAME AS IT SHOULD APPEAR		BIRTH AND DEATH DATES
SERVICE TYPE	DATE AND TIME	OFFICIANT
VENUE	COMMITTAL OR GRAVESIDE LOCATION	
RECEPTION LOCATION AND TIME		ESTIMATED ATTENDANCE

Order of service

Write the part on the left and the person on the right. If a line has no name beside it, it is not confirmed.

PART OF THE SERVICE	WHO IS DOING IT

People to name in print

Confirm spellings with one person. Someone left out of this list will notice, and will remember.

PALLBEARERS

HONORARY PALLBEARERS

READERS

MUSICIANS AND SOLOISTS

SPEAKERS

Acknowledgement from the family — who cared for them, who traveled, who fed everyone

Readings and music

Check the copyright before printing the text of a poem or song lyric. Reading a work aloud and reprinting it are different acts.

OPENING MUSIC

READING AND WHO READS IT

HYMN OR SPECIAL MUSIC

CLOSING MUSIC

Verified public-domain poems and scripture, printed in full with their copyright status stated, are at tributeready.org/funeral-readings. Complete order-of-service outlines by tradition, including Catholic, Baptist, military, graveside, memorial, and celebration of life, are at tributeready.org/order-of-service-templates

Printing checklist

Print quantity: roughly two-thirds of expected attendance, plus twenty-five. Families almost always print too few.

Paper: 28 lb text or heavier reads as a keepsake. Standard 20 lb copier paper does not.

Layout: US Letter, printed double-sided, flipped on the short edge, folded once to 8.5 x 5.5 inches.

Photographs: at least 300 dpi. A photo that looks sharp on a phone will often look soft in print.

Proof: print one copy, fold it, and have someone who was not involved read it before you print the rest.

Timing: confirm the print shop's turnaround the day you book the service, not the day before it.

Extras: set aside ten unfolded copies. Families are asked for them for years afterward.