

# WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS WHEN YOU DIE?

## A Guide for Families



It's the last question you thought you'd ever ask: what happens to social media accounts when someone dies? As we went through the process when our son Eric passed away last year, we wanted to share with you in one concise article the following information:

- A list of contact information for the most popular social media and web-based email account providers.
- Information they'll need from you in order to process your request efficiently.



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## Web-Based Email Providers

It's a bit more complicated for families than one would think if you've lost a loved one and want to gain access to their web-based email account from popular services like Yahoo! Mail, Gmail and Hotmail/MSN Live. So we found out, the process is two-fold: to protect the privacy of their clients and to ensure that you are, indeed, the proper person to be in receipt of the information. We'll begin with Hotmail/MSN Live and then move on to Gmail and Yahoo! Mail.



Hotmail/MSN Live is one of the more accommodating web-based email providers (along with Gmail) should you find yourself faced with needing to close a deceased family member's email account.

**Service provider:** Hotmail (@hotmail.com)/MSN Live (@msn.com and @live.com)

**What they will provide:** CD with complete contents of the decedent's email account, including contacts and emails

**How to submit your request:** Mail or fax

**How to format your request:** Include the name of the account holder and their email address on all pieces of paper and documentation accompanying your request.

Include the following information with your request for the most efficient process:

- Your name, phone number and email address.
- A document that states that you're the benefactor or the executor to the decedent's estate and/or that you have power of attorney for an incapacitated customer and/or are next of kin.
- A photocopy of your driver's license or other government-issued identification.
- A photocopy of the death certificate.
- The complete name, address, email address, and date of birth of the account holder.
- Approximate date of account creation and date of last login (if known). If this information is not known, please indicate that you do not know.
- If your request originates from a non-English speaking country, they ask that your request be made in English, while all official documentation may be sent in its native language (legal papers stating executor status, identification, death certificate, etc.).

Within five days of the receipt of all of the information listed above, the Custodian of Records will contact you to confirm your identity and then send you the CD with the decedent's account information.

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### Where to send your Hotmail/MSN Live Request

**Fax #:** (425) 708-0096

**Mailing address:** Windows Live/MSN Compliance, 1065 La Avenida, Building 4,  
Mountain View, CA 94043, Attn: Custodian of Records



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**Service provider:** Gmail (@gmail.com)

**What they will provide:** CD with complete contents of the decedent's email account, including contacts and emails, pursuant to a court order and verifiable next of kin/executor status.

**How to submit your request:** Mail or fax

**How to format your request:** Send a document including the following information via fax or mail to Google. It will take about 30 days to process your request:

- Your complete name, address and email address.
- The decedent's name (first and last) and email address.
- A copy of an email (including the FULL TEXT) you received at YOUR email address from the decedent, including complete headers. For more information on viewing headers from email providers other than Gmail, [click here](#).
- Proof of death (death certificate or equivalent).
- If decedent was over 18, legal proof that you are the next of kin or legal executor of the estate.
- If decedent was under 18, a copy of the decedent's birth certificate.

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## Where to send your Gmail Request

**Fax #:** (650) 644-0358

**Mailing address:** Google Inc., Attention: Gmail User Support, 1600 Amphitheatre Parkway,  
Mountain View, CA 94043



Here's the sticky widget. Gmail and MSN were nice enough to tell you how THEY could help you. Yahoo! isn't so nice. Here's the direct clause from their Terms of Service telling you that, unfortunately, you're out of luck:

“No Right of Survivorship and Non-Transferability. You agree that your Yahoo! account is non-transferable and any rights to your Yahoo! ID or contents within your account terminate upon your death. Upon receipt of a copy of a death certificate, your account may be terminated and all contents therein permanently deleted.”

Yahoo! Customer Service  
(866) 562-7219 or (408) 349-3300  
cc-advoc@yahoo-inc.com or  
[mail@cc.yahoo-inc.com](mailto:mail@cc.yahoo-inc.com)



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Facebook has several uniquely thoughtful features regarding what to do when an account holder passes away. They have for several years allowed current Facebook friends to memorialize the profile by leaving messages of remembrance on the decedent's timeline.

A recent update to Facebook's policy regarding the accounts of the deceased allows the profile's owner to either delete the account completely upon Facebook being notified of their death, or for the owner to designate a Facebook friend to become the "legacy contact," of the profile. If the owner elects to delete the account, all likes, posts, photos, comments, and notes, as well as the owner's timeline will be removed from Facebook.

Designating someone a legacy contact grants them access to much of the data associated with the owner's profile, allowing them to download photos for example. They will also be allowed to pin a post to the top of the deceased timeline

[You can find out more about designating a legacy contact here.](#)

If you find yourself in the painful position of having to memorialize a friend or family member's Facebook profile, but have not been designated as the legacy contact, [this link will take you to a specific page where you can complete your request.](#)

If you are the legacy contact of a friend or loved one, [click here to find out how to manage the decedent's memorial account,](#) download photos and other archival data, add a pinned notification post to the profile, and change the profile and cover photos if appropriate.

Please note that there are no phone numbers to contact Facebook. They communicate by contact form only. Additionally, the form above is used to both memorialize and request the deletion of a decedent's account. You can specify your preferred action on the form.



Perhaps one of the simplest processes on the web, LinkedIn has a simple Verification of Death form. Complete instructions on how to submit this form and the information required can be found on the [LinkedIn Customer Support Center.](#) You can opt to submit the form either online or via fax. You will need to know the account holder's most recent place of employment, as that's what LinkedIn uses to verify the person's identity. The form is simple to complete and does not require a death certificate for processing.



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Though MySpace is declining in popularity, you may find the need to contact them in the event of a loved one's death. They seem to have pretty helpful procedures to follow to assist you.

- Make note of the decedent's MySpace ID.
- Send an email to [accountcare@support.myspace.com](mailto:accountcare@support.myspace.com) with the decedent's MySpace ID, your email address, relation to the deceased and proof of death (i.e. death certificate, obituary).
- Include in your request whether you would like to PRESERVE, DELETE or REMOVE INFORMATION from the profile.

Note that MySpace will not let you edit any of the information yourself, but will work with you to remove any content you may find objectionable.



Strangely, we cannot locate any information on how to remove a deceased's Twitter account. We've rifled through pages of help and gone through forums, but there's nothing that tells us anything that we can pass along to you. Crazy, right?

Our best advice is to visit their [Support Forum](#) and submit a "ticket" to address your concern. Be as thorough as possible and understand that they're notorious for not responding promptly. We hope they'll be able to assist you should the need arise.

## In Closing

Granted, the above is more information than you ever likely wanted to know about your social media accounts and their status after you've died. However, we hope it can serve as a resource for families in need and maybe give you, as a social media account holder, a guide.

It's never a bad idea to add to that list of important bank and credit card accounts and whatnot your social media account information. Put it in a safety deposit box and make sure you update it every year. We never want to plan for the unexpected, yet should it happen, we'll ease our loved ones' journeys since we thought of something they might not have.

In our research, we found this [well-crafted video](#) that illustrates the eternal nature of our online information.



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