

News Release
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Who Gets Grandma's Yellow Pie Plate

Are you the one deciding what to do with your family heirlooms or are you someone who has a loved one that needs to start thinking about these plans? Will you be the one to start the conversation?

Most will agree that dividing the titled property such as real estate, vehicles or the bank account is actually much easier than dividing the non-titled property such as furniture, jewelry, tools, dishes or photographs. Sometimes the items with little monetary value will have great emotional significance.

In some cases, the owner of the items may have a will with an attached list or a signed memorandum to help family members determine who the items will be passed on to. In some states if the list is mentioned in the will it is binding. It is always best to check with your attorney for details related to the will.

If there is not a list or the items are not marked, family members will want to set ground rules and together decide on how the distribution process will go. The following or a combination of the following could be used for a fair system.

- Take turns picking items. Some families may choose to have the oldest go first. Some may choose to draw a number each time. Some may change the order with each round of choosing. The person who went last might go first in the second round.
- If you gave it, you get it back. However not everyone gives gifts that they want back?

- Use colored stickers for each person to indicate what he wants. When there's only one sticker on an item, it will automatically go to that person. When there's more than one sticker, then the family may revert to taking turns on the contested items.
- Get appraisals. Deciding on who gets what can become more difficult if some items have more value than others. If families were to use the taking turns method of distribution, the person who gets the first pick may walk off with the only silver tea set. It may be necessary for a few rounds for everyone to choose items of similar value—some people getting a single item, while others choose several that together are worth as much as the most expensive possession. In other cases, the individual or individuals getting the most valuable items may have to pay the other family members for the value. Alternatively, the family members may decide that the appraised items are paid for out of the cash inheritance.
- Make copies. While many personal belongings are unique, in the case of photographs and videos, copies can be almost as good as the original. Many family members may be happy with a copy.
- Bring in a mediator. When there are conflicts among family members over particular items, a trained mediator can help the family members share their ideas so everyone can be heard and possibly heal past wounds.

The University of Minnesota Extension and Department of Family Social Science has developed a 100-page workbook to help families resolve issues around this distribution called *Who Will Get Grandma's Yellow Pie Plate? A Guide to Passing on Personal Possessions* which is available for \$9.25 at the Cottonwood Extension Offices in Great Bend and in Hays. The workbook is not meant to replace legal advice but it is a good place for families to start the discussion.

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