



# Should You Treat Your Kids Equally in Your Will?

*The “right” decision is most aligned with your wishes for your family’s future*

As parents approach their retirement years, they often grapple with the task of writing their wills and deciding how to allocate their assets among their children. One of the most pressing questions that arise is: should children be treated equally in a will?

While the notion of equality sounds like the epitome of fairness, real-life circumstances often challenge this idea.

## The Case for Equality

**Avoiding Family Conflict:** Treating all children equally can help prevent potential disputes or feelings of resentment after your passing. Money can be a contentious topic, and perceived favoritism can lead to rifts between siblings.

**Simplicity:** It’s straightforward. Divide assets equally, and there’s little room for misinterpretation.

**Fairness as a Principle:** For many, treating children equally in a will is a reflection of their values. It sends a message that you love and value your children equally, regardless of their life choices or circumstances.

## When Might Unequal Shares be Justified?

**Financial Disparities:** One child may be financially stable, while another may have faced hardships or has additional needs (like a child with a disability). Some parents choose to provide more to the child who might benefit most from additional financial support.

**Prior Financial Assistance:** You might have already provided significant financial aid to one child during your lifetime, such as paying for an expensive education, helping with a home purchase, or supporting them through a crisis. Some parents adjust their wills to account for these disparities.

**Caregiving Roles:** If one child has taken on a primary caregiving role, especially if it led to career sacrifices, some parents might see fit to compensate them for their time and effort.

**Relationships:** It’s an uncomfortable topic, but not all parents have the same relationship with each of their children. Some parents might choose to leave more to those they were closer with or who were more involved in their lives.

**Encouraging Responsibility:** There are instances where parents might be concerned about a child’s ability to manage a large inheritance due to addiction issues or financial irresponsibility. Structured inheritances or trusts can be set up in such scenarios.

## Important Considerations

**Communication is Key:** If you’re thinking about not treating your children equally in your will, it might be wise to discuss your reasons with them.

Clear communication can prevent misunderstandings and reduce the potential for conflict after you’re gone.

**Work with a Professional:** Estate planning can be complex. Consider working with a financial advisor and an attorney who can provide guidance and ensure that your wishes are legally documented.

**Periodic Reevaluation:** Life circumstances change. Regularly review your will and consider whether the allocations still align with your intentions and your children's needs.

### **It's Up to You**

Deciding whether to treat your children equally in your will is a deeply personal decision. What's most important is ensuring that the distribution of your assets aligns with your values, intentions, and the unique needs of your family.

Remember, equality is not always synonymous with fairness, and the "right" decision is the one that feels most aligned with your wishes for your family's future.