

Resources

Music



Most of us like music. Most of us play music at our private parties, or listen to music in the car, or as we're dropping off to sleep...

Now it's time to think about what the soundtrack will be for your end-of-life farewell. What pieces of music reflect who you are? What songs have specific meanings for you/your family/your friends?

There's a section coming up all about music selection with headings to jog your memory around music pieces that have significance for you.

When you want to use recorded music at your farewell, there are some copyright issues to consider...

If you are holding a private get-together in your own home or somewhere you've hired exclusively, and it's not a "ticketed event", then just as you would play whatever music you like at your home without needing to be concerned about copyright (as long as the music was obtained legitimately) for a birthday celebration or general party, then you should be good to go and can play what you like!

But what if you are holding your event at a hire venue or restaurant and the space is also open to the public, or you're selling tickets to this farewell? (Selling tickets isn't such a bad idea really as it can be a reasonable way to help offset costs with any profit to go to the funeral expenses – but don't be surprised if people find this a little tacky. You could ask for "a small donation to put towards costs" instead).

Frankly, you need to ensure you cover yourself in terms of copyright.

Most venues that hold regular functions will have appropriate licences and you don't need to worry. Equally, you can hire a DJ and provide a list of your preferred music. Just ensure you check that the DJ/venue has the right copyright/live performance licence.

If your venue or DJ doesn't have the appropriate licences, AND you are setting up your farewell as a ticketed gig (i.e., pay to attend), then it's up to you to ensure you have permission from the recording artists/publishing company to use their music, or you've obtained a licence for your event. Use the internet to establish what your requirements are in your particular part of the world.

Most licence fees are based around the number of music pieces, their length, who owns copyright etc. You will be required to submit a full list of who the artist is you want to use, the composer, the title, etc. Licencing organisations usually provide you with a form to fill in. If your event is to last 3 hours, and you want 30 minutes of music, that will cost you less than if your event is 3 hours long and music will be played for 2 hours.

If you're going the live musician/band/orchestra route, ask them about their licence to perform music live if they are doing covers and the venue is public. If all their music is original or out of copyright (most of the classical music is), no problem!

If your event will be at a funeral home, then your funeral director should have all the copyright issues covered.

An alternative is to use recorded music that has been obtained under the Creative Commons Licence option (CC), or that clearly falls under Public Domain recordings.

If you aren't looking for specific songs, but rather, want some music that covers a variety of styles and moods, then I thoroughly recommend <https://incompetech.com/music/> and the music you can download from there, courtesy of Kevin MacLeod, the composer. He is quite happy to let people use his music under the CC approach as long as he is attributed as the composer.

I've used lots of his music in shows I've written/produced, and he's been amazing. And no, we aren't affiliates and he didn't ask me to make this plug – it's a genuine recommendation.

The best way to keep it simple is to:

- Keep your event private
- Don't charge a fee

If your event is private and you intend to have a friend in charge of playing the music, then you'll need to arrange to get all your choices handed over so that he or she can organise the right equipment such as any wifi items, CD player, even a turntable and speakers, and learn how to run them all smoothly.

Readings

Readings suffer from the same copyright licence issues as music if your event is a public one. If you're having a private get-together, it's no different than a bunch of you reading each other favourite excerpts from books you happen to own. If your event is "public", then any reading is deemed as part of a live performance.

There are, of course, out-of-copyright books that can provide you with wonderful material, so there are no copyright issues at all.

Now, in terms of researching what kind of readings you might want, go ahead and dig out your favourite books, do some internet research on favourite authors, and check out poetry anthologies. Even speeches from famous figures might have a relevant paragraph or saying that resonates with who you are and where you find yourself at the end of your life.

If something is in print format, the copyright information will be in the front of the book. If the book is relatively current (i.e., printed with a timeframe from present day up until about 20 years ago), you should be able to find out about current copyright issues by contacting the publisher. Older books may require a bit more effort!

If your readings will be just that – something to be read aloud – unless you've gone with a public and paid event, you don't need to be concerned about copyright. Remember my analogy from before – it's like attending an afternoon tea where you and your friends read each other favourite excerpts from a loved novel or poetry anthology.

If you want the *content* of the reading shared with others in printed form (e.g., you want to give each person a copy of your favourite chapter from a book), then you *do* have to seek permission as you are *reproducing the material*. It's much safer to take the entire book to the event with a bookmark and have someone read the relevant passage/s aloud.

My suggestion with all written material you want to *reproduce* to give to your guests is to *ask the publisher!* Even if it's from a favourite greeting card and *especially* if you *won't* be at your event and it's *not* being held at a funeral home.

Funeral directors should have everything in place they need to ensure they do not infringe copyright for any material used – music or written.

Recordings of things like speeches may be trickier – some recordings, if made by the US Government for example, at a public gathering, *may* be copyright free as they are regarded as having been prepared for the public domain. Certainly, the texts of the speeches of any President are viewed as public domain. Actual *recordings* may indeed be copyright protected by the person/organisation that *made* the recording, and this is where it can get messy. For example, the inauguration of a President may have been audio recorded by several radio stations – the owners of each station own the copyright for their recordings...

Do your research and ask questions. In general, to be safe, do as I noted for music – keep your event private and don't charge a fee. As soon as you charge a fee, your event is classed as “public” and therefore any recordings, music or otherwise, are considered as being part of a performance or unauthorised broadcast.

Internet research is your friend here!

There are some great websites to help you find material – do an internet search using keywords like “readings for a funeral”. You will be amazed at how many sites result from the search. If you are even more specific, your search will better reflect your needs. For example, you might search for something like “appropriate funeral readings for a 35-year-old male”. I popped that into a search engine and got over 20 million results. You can narrow things further by adding an additional word or two. I added “atheist” at the end of the search and brought the results down to 2,200,000...

You can use the provided checklist for recording your notes on music and reading preferences.

Images/Video Clips



If the photos/images/clips are yours, go ahead and use them.

If you want to display a print you own, but where the original copyright for the artwork is with the artist or the company that produced the print, and your event is ticket entry/public, then you will need to seek permission... Gets messy again, doesn't it, as soon as something can be deemed as public?

Video is the same. Most commercial footage is copyrighted, so if your event is deemed public, you can't go ahead and play that favourite scene from your favourite movie (unless the movie itself is now out of copyright).

One caution – if you film your event and make copies of it to distribute to family/friends who couldn't be there, you need to remember that the music playing at the time and the readings, form part of your film's "soundtrack" and constitute a performance. You will need to ensure you have permission to include these when filming if your event is public/ticketed. This can usually be resolved by paying a licence, though some people may refuse to grant permission under any circumstances.

If your event is private, and you won't be selling your footage, you may be okay – however, you are still recording and storing it. As copyright laws are different in different countries and are also being frequently updated, don't get into trouble - *do your research!* 😊

How to Find Readings, Music, and Image/Video Resources



Internet searches are so valuable for this, so use them! Some links I've found interesting and helpful are below.

Readings can be from any source that inspires you – even Dr. Zeuss has some great words and using some of his could be wonderful if you will have kids at your party! Go through your favourite fiction and non-fiction books, read your poetry anthologies, ask friends/family.

Search the net...

<https://www.bustle.com/articles/152207-16-non-religious-funeral-readings-from-poems>

I applaud this webpage because it's been put together by Kristian Wilson, who clearly respects those who come from a faith background *and* those who don't.

Unfortunately, the formatting for some of the poetry selections is non-existent – you will need to pay attention to the punctuation as there are no line breaks. Other pieces are fine.

<https://www.funeralguide.co.uk/blog/non-religious-funeral-poems>

This site gives you a taste-test of the first verse of various poems, and if the words seem appropriate, you click on the title to reveal the full text.

While designed for after-death ceremonies, some of the poems could easily be used at a bon voyage.

If you intend to include religious readings of some kind, then just go for it with an internet search – I had nearly a million sites show up on a basic search of religious readings. Some were from the Bible, some were from Buddhist texts, some from the Torah, some from the Koran... just add the name of your faith to a search and narrow down the options.

Music choice should reflect you, significant events in your life, and possibly also pieces that have significance to family and friends. Some great sources for music that work well for presentations at wakes/memorials (even ones where you are there and partying), follow.

<https://www.sunlife.co.uk/blogs-and-features/music-to-go-out-to/>

This site has some wonderful song and music ideas that can work for your bon voyage whether you are there or not. The page has sections that take into account a person's age, relationships, etc., and while the assumption is that you won't be at the farewell, it is assumed you will take a hand in choosing the music. Choices and examples are contemporary and traditional – there are even some very funny options. It's an excellent site. Sound clips and videos make it easy to listen to the moods of certain pieces too.

<https://www.loveliveson.com/top-ten-funeral-songs-of-all-time>

This site has (it claims), the most popular 200 funeral song titles separated under headings like Popular, Classic, Alternative, Love etc. Once again, the site assumes the songs will be used after someone has gone, but there are some great options among the titles. There are Youtube links so you can listen to various suggestions. You can even click a link to buy a particular recording if you don't already have it!

<https://www.musicademy.com/suitable-songs-for-a-funeral-or-memorial-service/>

While this site is a religious music site, it also has some excellent secular suggestions. Links to Youtube and sometimes to backing tracks (if you want to sing or you'd like someone to sing for you), are provided.

Video that's free is really hard to find. Stock footage that you might want to use as part of a video montage within a presentation about you/your life is likely to require a license or royalty payment of some kind.

If you have your own footage from mobile phones, video cameras etc., then you can use that, interspersed with your photos.

There are a number of excellent video tools you can use to create a presentation, but it's a good idea to find someone to put it together for you if you aren't skilled at video editing. Nero is a great platform and has simple and advanced editing options available, including special effects, text, music etc. I use it all the time for my social media pages and some theatre training videos.

If you own a PC that runs Windows 10, then the Microsoft Photo App has a *Create Video* option that is really easy to use and is certainly quite acceptable for a simple presentation. If I'm in a hurry to create something straight forward, it's my basic *go to*. A word of caution, it is *basic*. If you want something that looks amazing with all the whizbang special effects of a movie studio, then you might want to seek out a video production service that works with your footage and images.

I hear from Mac users that there are some great options available that run on Mac too.

Perhaps you're lucky enough to know someone who's a skilled video editor who'd be happy to be on your team of helpers. Many teens do video editing as part of their media studies at high school – why not see if you can find one who'd love to help out as a project?

One way you could get help would be to go to Fiverr and look for someone there. You pay for the service, but they are freelancers mostly and generally able to do a good job at a reasonable price.

www.fiverr.com

