

# Organizing Your Important Papers – Part 1

## What Goes in the Safe Deposit Box and What Doesn't?

By Elaine Wiant and Carole Larkin

Q. I'm trying to organize my important papers and I'm confused about what should be in my safe deposit box. Do you have any suggestions?

A. A safe deposit box is the best place to keep some things, but other documents don't belong there. Documents you will need quickly in emergencies should NOT be kept in the safe deposit box. Here's a suggested list to keep in the safe deposit box.

1. Original Birth Certificates
2. Original Marriage Certificates
3. Original Death Certificates
4. Original Divorce Certificates
5. Original Adoption Papers
6. Original Citizenship Records
7. Original Military Records
8. Social Security Cards
9. Mortgages, Deeds, Titles, Lease Contracts, etc...
10. Titles to Vehicles
11. Original of Life Insurance Policies
12. Stock Certificates, Certificates of Deposit, Bonds, Money Market Account Numbers
13. Copy of Trust Documents
14. Copy of Will
15. Jewelry, Coin and Stamp Collections, Gold, Silver and other valuable Collections
16. Inventory of your Household Goods, (including Photos)
17. Duplicate list of Credit Card, Savings and Checking Accounts (with Passwords)

Q. So what shouldn't I keep in the safe deposit box and where should I keep those items?

A. Here's a list of items to keep in another place:

1. Original of the Will stays with the attorney who drafted it. A copy of the Will should be kept your document folder in your home. At least one other family member should know where the document folder is located within your home.
2. Original of Power of Attorney goes to the person you have named to act on your behalf financially. Your attorney should keep a copy and a copy should be kept in your document folder at home.
3. Originals of Health Care Directives (Health Care Proxy, Living Will, Power to Resuscitate, etc...) goes to the person you have named to act on your behalf for health care matters. The Doctors you have named in the Health Care Directives should get a

copy of the Directives, as well as you keeping a copy of the Directives in your document folder at home.

4. Original of Living Trust stays with the attorney who drafted it. A copy of the Living Trust goes to all Trustees named in the Document, and a copy of it should be kept in your document folder at home.

5. Original of Funeral Arrangements, cemetery deeds and other instructions regarding your burial and estate planning should be kept in your document folder in your home. At least one other family member should know where the document folder is located within your home.

6. Copies of the following should be in your document folder located within your home:

- a. Birth Certificates
- b. Life Insurance Policies
- c. Social Security cards, or a list of Social security numbers
- d. list of Credit Card, Savings and Checking Accounts (with Passwords)

7. Originals of insurance policies aside from Life Insurance, (i.e. Health Insurance, Long Term Care Insurance, Medigap Insurance, Disability Insurance, Homeowners' Insurance, Renters' Insurance, etc...)

8. Passports

9. Previous Tax Returns

10. Bills of sale, Warranties, Lists of Model and Serial Numbers for major items (Household and other).

11. Important cancelled checks

12. Copy of the inventory (including pictures) of your Household goods.

13. Inventory of what is inside the safety deposit box.

14. Document inventory – a list of your documents and where they are located. See [www.thirdageservices.com](http://www.thirdageservices.com) for a sample.

Next time we will discuss more about important papers, what you need to keep and where to keep it.

*Contact ThirdAge Services for more information on these and other issues relating to older adults at 214-741-4397 or 214-649-1392 or [ewiant@thirdageservices.com](mailto:ewiant@thirdageservices.com).*

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