

**GATHER THE ESSENTIALS** by Patricia Kummer  
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Thanksgiving is a special time to gather around family and friends and count your blessings. Enjoy the crisp air, delicious food and make new (and remember old) memories. Just being grateful puts everyone in a good mood.

This may also be a good time to gather items you think are essential to your loved ones should you suddenly be out of the picture someday. Maybe when the kids or sibs are home for Thanksgiving is a good time to let them know where you have gathered all the essential information they may need to act on your behalf.

And yes, as you are going through your “stuff”, it is also a good time to feel grateful and give thanks for what you have amassed over the years.

Nowadays there are many ways to save information electronically or in the cloud. That will be a great place to scan items once you have them organized. For now, start with several folders or manila envelopes to start setting papers aside as you gather them. Many families start with a binder. Divide it into main sections including medical, financial plan, estate documents and final wishes. You should include information about how to find your passwords, safety deposit box, keys to the safe and any special instructions that only you may know. This will prove to be a good exercise for you to understand what you have, where everything is and keep the vital information organized.

I recommend starting with medical because often it is a health issue that causes a family member to go in search of the Book of Important Stuff (BIS). List your doctors, health insurance, and medical history. Include any recent diagnoses, life threatening allergies or illnesses and a list of medications you take. This is a good place to keep your Advanced Medical Directive, name your Health Care Agent and provide a copy of your living will.

Next, include the following items from your financial plan:

- Your financial planner's name, phone number and email address.
- Your monthly expenses and net worth statement listing assets and liabilities. Include loan and credit card information and on-line bill pay.
- Titles to the house, cars and other property; bank accounts, CDs and savings bonds.
- List your investment accounts. Include your brokerage accounts, retirement assets, any annuities or pensions and 529 plans.
- Last year's tax return along with your accountant's contact information and any estimated taxes you may owe.
- Insurance policies such as life, disability and long term care. Provide any agent information.

Make sure you include password information and digital access to any social media or on-line access to accounts. Include a section of important documents such as passports, a copy of your driver's license, birth and marriage certificates. Make note of any memberships, season tickets, or ongoing expenses that should be cancelled, such as AAA, EZ Pass or automatic investments or distributions.

Next, provide your complete estate plan including your will, Trust, Powers of Attorney, health care agents (primary and contingent) living will, beneficiaries, guardians, trustees, favorite charities, funeral arrangements and final wishes.

Last, but not least, list your wishes for all of your stuff. Others may not know about certain jewelry, furniture or dishes that have been in the family for five generations. List the people you think will enjoy having these items, so they don't accidentally end up in the trash. This is also a good place to give permission to get rid of some items, so others don't feel guilty about disposing of certain things.

Make certain all the documents you are using to create your Book are current. This can be a good reminder to get some things updated. Now you are ready for the cloud. A binder is great, but can

burn down with the house or get lost or misplaced. It will be easier to create a secure vault and upload all the information and replace it with current electronic statements as needed. Make sure someone knows how to access this and other important digital files.

Now after all of that good work, you deserve an extra piece of pumpkin pie.

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Patricia Kummer has been a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ for 30 years and is President of Kummer Financial Strategies, LLC., a Registered Investment Adviser with its physical place of business in the State of Colorado. Registration of an investment adviser does not imply a certain level of skill or training. Please visit [www.kummerfinancial.com](http://www.kummerfinancial.com) for more information or refer to the Investment Adviser Public Disclosure website ([www.adviserinfo.sec.gov](http://www.adviserinfo.sec.gov)). Any material discussed is meant for informational purposes only and not a substitute for individual advice. The opinions and forecasts are based on information and sources of information deemed to be reliable, but KFS does not warrant the accuracy of the information that this opinion and forecast is based upon. Securities offered through MSEC, LLC, Member FINRA & SIPC, 5700 W. 112<sup>th</sup> Street, Ste. 500, Overland Park, KS 66211.