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**Wealth Management &
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Can I disinherit relatives I don't like?

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Disinheritance is intentionally depriving someone who would otherwise be a rightful heir from receiving your estate. Typically, your heirs include your spouse, your descendants, and possibly other relatives. Although you may feel you have a good reason for disinheritance, be aware that a majority of non-community-property states provide statutory protection for spouses. That is, most states provide that if a spouse is disinherited under the decedent's will, he or she may elect to take under the state intestacy laws instead. These laws vary from state to state but generally entitle the spouse to receive from one-third to one-half of the decedent's estate.

Although only one state provides similar protection for the children of a decedent, simply leaving a child out of the will may not succeed in disinheriting that child. In the absence of any mention in the will, the child can either argue that this was an oversight on the part of the parent or contest the will on other grounds. Moreover, courts are often reluctant, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, to rule against the disinherited child. Therefore, if a child is disinherited, it is best to mention him or her in the will, even if only for a token amount.

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