

# How to Pick Music for a Funeral

Though a funeral is a time of mourning, it is also a time to commemorate and celebrate the life of someone who has passed. As such, the ceremony should convey who the deceased was, what was important in their life, and how others felt...

Part 1 of 3:

## Researching Your Options



**Take the venue into account.** If the memorial service is going to take place at a funeral home, you will be able to play almost any music that you like. However, if the service will be held at a religious establishment like a church, then you may be held to the traditions and restrictions of that religion. Be sure to consult with a clergy member to discuss any possible rules in regards to music.<sup>[1]</sup>

1. Even if you can't play particular songs during a service, you may be able to play them while people are entering/exiting.

2.



**Decide if you will use recorded or live music.** Though recorded music is both cheaper and easier to find, live musicians can add a more intimate touch to a service. If the funeral is taking place in a religious organization, you may also be able to utilize whatever musicians participate in regular services. For example, many churches employ choirs and guitarists.<sup>[2]</sup>

1. If you are going through a funeral home, check with the service director for what music they have on hand. Many funeral homes have a large collection of music from varying genres.

3.



**Ask a friend or family member to sing.** Though it can be difficult and emotional, asking a family member or close friend of the departed to sing can add a deeper sense of intimacy to a funeral. However, be sure to double-check with whoever you ask, as this can be quite a sensitive undertaking. You don't want them to be unable to perform or feel overly pressured because you asked.

1. Try something like, 'Hey Sarah, I was wondering if you would want to sing at Mary's service? I know this is a difficult time, so please don't feel pressured to say yes. I just know the two of you

were close and she always appreciated your voice.'

Part 2 of 3:

## Gathering Selections

1.



**Look at the music the deceased enjoyed.** A funeral is both a memorial and a celebration of the life of someone who has passed. As such, it's important to choose music that reflects who they are. For example, if they had a favorite song or artist, try considering these options first. Also, if there is a particular song connected to an important event or memory of this person, it can be a heartfelt way to pay tribute to their life.

2.



**Talk to family, friends, and others close to the deceased.** Not only will these people have a good idea of what the departed listened to and enjoyed, they will also be able to contribute ideas. For example, they can tell you about special songs that reflect moments of the deceased's life. Perhaps a song linked to a shared childhood memory, or a significant family moment.

1. Try approaching them in a private moment and saying, 'Hey, I'm trying to put together some meaningful songs for Mary's service. Is there anything special you know she wanted or that you would like?'

3.



**Search funeral songs on the internet.** If you are still having trouble after speaking to family and friends, try searching online for typical funeral songs. There are a multitude of sites that offer song ideas from every genre, like the Funeral Celebrants Association. Try browsing through lists for things like 'the top 10 funeral songs,' or 'common songs for funerals.' These lists should give you a good general idea, which you can then build from and tweak to meet your own needs.

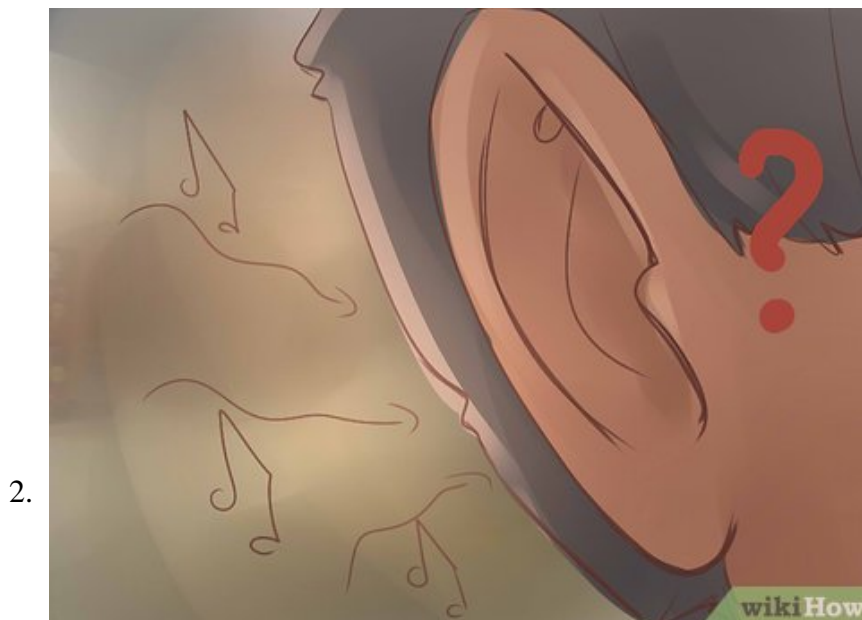
Part 3 of 3:

## **Finalizing Your Decision**



**Create a possible setlist of songs.** Once you have a good idea of what kind of music you want, it's important to decide what songs will be played when. For example, when people are arriving and being seated, while people are waiting for the funeral to start, and between readings or eulogies. During times of procession or waiting, playing some of the deceased's favorite songs can be a good idea. You can also try sticking to instrumentals between readings.<sup>[3]</sup>

1. Ask other family members or close friends of the deceased for their opinion. They can help you put together a list to try and narrow things down.
2. You can also ask the funeral home or a clergy member for what is typically played and when. They should also give you a good idea of how many songs you need for the service.



**Review every song choice.** Before you pick a song, make sure to thoroughly go over every piece of it. For example, listen to it a few times and make sure the lyrics are appropriate in context. Certain songs, even if a favorite of the deceased, are not acceptable for a funeral service. Songs with copious swearing or dark

lyrics are likely to make guests uncomfortable.

1. Some standard funeral songs with good lyrics are Louis Armstrong's 'What a Wonderful World,' or Michael Crawford's 'One Eagle Wings.'

3.



**Put everything together.** After you've chosen your songs and decided on a setlist, try to get all of the music together. If you are going to use music directly from the funeral home, make sure you pick up the CDs as soon as you can. If you are using your own music, then burning a CD of your own, transferring songs to a USB drive, or putting songs into a playlist on a music player like iTunes is a good idea. You don't want to get to the service and realize you've forgotten something. Having everything altogether will also make playing the music much easier.

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