



FROM THE SHORE *The tide comes in, the tide goes out — and what you planted stays put.*

ESTATE PLANNING

Riding the Wave: *What a Trust Is, and Why You Might Want One*

A trust is a plan you put in place now so that, whatever the tides of life bring, the people and things you care about land exactly where you intend.

TAMARA L. HARPER, J.D., AEP® • 5 MIN READ • ESTATE · PLANNING

OCTOBER SERIES · PART 3 OF 4

Picture a favorite day at the beach: the tide comes in, the tide goes out, and your umbrella, cooler, and towels **stay exactly where you planted them** — because you set them up that way ahead of time.

A trust works a lot like that beach setup. Last issue covered why you might need a trust even with a will. This week we step back to explain what a trust actually is, how it works, and why so many families choose to ride this particular wave.

AT A GLANCE What this issue covers

01 **What a trust is**
The three roles: grantor, trustee, and beneficiaries.

02 **Revocable or irrevocable**
An adjustable umbrella, or a breakwater set in place.

03 **Seven reasons to have one**
From avoiding probate to reducing family friction.

04 **Why it matters**
A plan that keeps working even when you can't.

THE BASICS

What exactly is a trust?

A trust is a legal arrangement where you place assets — cash, property, investments, even a beach house — into the care of someone who manages them for the people you choose.

YOU

Grantor or Settlor

Creates the trust

Places assets into the trust and writes the instructions for how and when they are distributed.

THE MANAGER

Trustee

Holds and manages

Manages the assets and follows your written instructions — today, and long after you've packed up your beach chair.

YOUR PEOPLE

Beneficiaries

Receive the benefit

The people (or causes) you choose to benefit from what the trust holds.

“

Think of the trust as a sturdy sandcastle wall: it holds everything you value safely in place, following instructions you write today.

TAMARA L. HARPER, J.D., AEP®

Whatever form it takes, **the trust holds title to the assets**, and the trustee follows your written instructions for how and when they are distributed.

TWO KINDS

Revocable or irrevocable?

ADJUSTABLE

Revocable

Like moving your umbrella as the sun moves

You can **change the rules while you are alive**. A revocable living trust offers the most flexibility and is the foundation of many family estate plans.

SET IN PLACE

Irrevocable

Like a breakwater that doesn't move once built

Set firmly in place once created. That permanence is what makes certain irrevocable trusts useful for goals such as **minimizing estate taxes**.

WHY HAVE A TRUST?

You don't need a mansion on the shore

Anyone who wants more control, privacy, and ease for their loved ones can benefit from setting one up. Here is why so many people choose to ride this particular wave.

01

Avoid the undertow of probate

A trust keeps assets out of the public, often slow and costly, probate process — so your beneficiaries aren't stuck waiting for the tide to turn.

02

Keep things private

Unlike a will, a trust generally isn't a public record, so your family's affairs stay as private as a quiet, secluded cove.

03

Plan for the unexpected

If you become incapacitated, your **successor trustee can step in immediately** — no storm can catch your finances unattended.

04

Control the timing and terms

You decide when and how beneficiaries receive assets — in one wave or gradually, like the tide coming in at your own pace.

05

Protect loved ones who need extra care

Minor children, family members with special needs, or beneficiaries who need structure can be provided for thoughtfully and specifically.

06

Reduce family friction

Clear, documented instructions mean fewer disputes among heirs — smoother sailing for everyone left behind.

07

Potential tax advantages

Certain trusts can help **minimize estate taxes**, preserving more of what you've built for the people you love.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

A plan that keeps working when you can't

Just as a well-anchored umbrella keeps everyone shaded however the wind shifts, a properly structured trust keeps your wishes intact through illness, incapacity, market swings, and the passing of time.

**Certainty when it matters most.**

Your intentions are documented clearly, reducing guesswork for your family during an already difficult time.

**Continuity of care.**

Assets keep flowing to the people who depend on them, without interruption, even if you're unable to manage things yourself.

**A lasting legacy.**

You decide how your legacy is used — funding education, supporting a cause, or simply providing a soft landing for the next generation.



Every beach — and every family — is different.

LET'S TALK

Which trust fits your shoreline?

The right trust depends on your goals, your assets, and the people you want to protect. Start with our free Self Check-Up, then let's talk about which structure fits.

[FREE SELF CHECK-UP ↓](#)[SCHEDULE A REVIEW →](#)[CALL 805-409-0530 ↗](#)

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This article is provided for general informational purposes and does not constitute legal advice. Tamara L. Harper is a proud member of the Conejo Valley Estate Planning Council and WealthCounsel, and holds the AEP® accreditation with the National Association of Estate Planners and Councils.