

The Executor's Deceased Estate Tax Checklist

Eight steps to settle SARS correctly, finalise the estate and avoid personal liability.

Prepared by Roy Bregman, admitted attorney with over 51 years' experience in wills and deceased estates. Updated October 2026.

R23 800

interest exemption
for the estate each year

R440 000

capital gains exclusion
in the year of death

R3 million

primary residence
capital gains exclusion

R3.5 million

estate duty
basic deduction

20% / 25%

estate duty, up to and
above R30 million

Key figures for the 2026/27 tax year (from 1 March 2026), including Budget 2026 changes. Check current figures before relying on them.

1 Report the estate

Within 14 days

- ☐ Lodge the death notice and supporting documents with the **Master of the High Court**.
- ☐ Obtain your **letters of executorship**, the Master's document authorising you to act.
- ☐ Open a separate bank account for the estate. Do not mix estate money with your own.

2 Gather the documents

Weeks 1 to 4

- ☐ Death certificate and the deceased's income tax reference number.
- ☐ Certified copy of your identity document and proof of your address.
- ☐ Power of attorney, if an agent will deal with SARS for you.
- ☐ Bank statements, IRP5 and IT3 tax certificates, policies and investment statements.
- ☐ Title deeds, vehicle papers and details of all debts owed by and to the deceased.

3 Notify SARS

Month 1

- ☐ Ask SARS to mark the deceased's tax number as **deceased**, through eFiling or at a branch.
- ☐ Check SARS's records for any returns the deceased had not yet submitted.

4 File the deceased's final return

Months 1 to 4

- ☐ Submit all outstanding returns of earlier years.
- ☐ Submit the **final ITR12** for the period from 1 March to the date of death.
- ☐ Declare the **deemed disposal**: all assets are treated as sold at market value on the date of death, which may trigger capital gains tax.
- ☐ Apply the reliefs: assets left to a spouse roll over tax free, the year of death exclusion and the primary residence exclusion.

5 Value every asset

Months 1 to 3

- ☐ Obtain **market valuations at the date of death** for property, shares, vehicles and business interests. They are needed for capital gains tax and estate duty.
- ☐ Keep the valuation reports. SARS may ask for them.

6 Register the deceased estate

When income arises

- ☐ Register the estate with SARS as a **separate taxpayer** as soon as it earns interest, rent or dividends after death (deaths from 1 March 2016).
- ☐ File the estate's own ITR12 each year until the liquidation and distribution account is final.
- ☐ Remember: no personal rebates and no provisional tax, but the interest exemption applies.

7 Calculate and pay estate duty

Within 1 year of death

- ☐ Deduct debts, costs, bequests to a surviving spouse and the **R3.5 million** basic deduction (up to R7 million with a predeceased spouse's unused portion).
- ☐ Lodge the **liquidation and distribution account** with the Master, usually within six months of your appointment, with the **REV267** estate duty return.
- ☐ Pay duty within one year of death, or 30 days after assessment if later. Late payment attracts interest.

8 Before you pay the heirs

Final step

- ☐ Keep enough cash in the estate to cover **every** tax liability.
- ☐ Obtain SARS's confirmation that all returns are filed and all taxes are paid.
- ☐ Only then pay the heirs. An executor who pays out early can be **personally liable** for unpaid tax.

My key dates

Date of death _____

Letters of executorship issued _____

Estate's SARS tax number _____

Estate duty due by _____

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