

Five Ways to Create Your Own Heirloom

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Many families have things passed down through generations. The premise of my novel *The Sapphire Pendant* is based on my heroine trying to reclaim a family heirloom. However, there are a number of families that don't have heirlooms, and if you're one of them don't feel bad because it's never too late. With the upcoming holiday season, it's a perfect time to begin. Here are five ways to create a family heirloom.

1. Come up with a mission for it. You will need to answer several questions as to why you would like to have a family heirloom. Is it to instill pride? Connection? Love? All three? Write down why you want to create an heirloom and the ultimate mission. A great way to begin answering these questions would be to look at who you want to impact. If you find yourself having difficulty doing this, make up a story about a family heirloom and see what direction it takes you.

In my novel, *The Sapphire Pendant*, this heirloom was passed down in the family to instill a sense of pride and history.

2. Find something of meaning or create it. An heirloom doesn't have to be jewelry as in my story. You could pass down a cookbook of family recipes, a video, a book or a quilt. In my father's case, he created a website that traces his family's roots back to the seventeenth century. This is not only a wonderful historic piece, but other family members can add to it making it interactive and allowing every generation to feel a part of it.

3. Put a story behind it. Create a story that can be repeated over and over again to give the heirloom a sense of resonance. This is where the value and/or significance of the heirloom will make a big impact. Stories keep memories alive and give them a sense of history.

4. Decide how it should be passed down. Do you want the heirloom to go from generation to generation? From mother to daughters? From a father to sons? You can come up with whatever tradition you feel works best. Remember to be flexible in the choice you make. Your daughter may not get married; can she give her heirloom to a cousin? Or you may decide that each individual can decide who they want to pass the heirloom onto – without any restrictions.

5. Put it in a special place. Luckily there are many options available to create a special place for your heirloom. You can rent a safe deposit box for a relatively small fee; buy a home safe to keep it in, or have a special box or chest created just for it. You may decide that it is to be prominently displayed. Discuss with family members how best to do this. Remember that if the heirloom consists of items such as letters or photographs

that can be ruined over time, consult with a framing/art store on ways to preserve the items permanently. Another option may be to put delicate items on a CD/DVD for longevity. If the heirloom is a piece of clothing or treasured quilt, find out information on how to store and keep these items so that they do not get destroyed over time. Whatever option you select remember above all to keep it cherished.

Heirlooms are wonderful ways to connect to the ones you love and future generations. Make your impact now.

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