

Freethinker Funeral Guide

Planning A Non-Religious Funeral In Singapore

A freethinker funeral gives your family the freedom to shape a farewell around who your loved one actually was, rather than a fixed religious liturgy. That freedom is a gift, but it also means there is no single script to follow — which is exactly why this guide exists. It walks through every decision a freethinker family in Singapore typically faces, from the first phone call through to the day itself, so you can build a service that feels personal and unhurried.

1. Contact Your Funeral Director First

The first call worth making, alongside registering the death, is to your funeral director. Because a freethinker funeral has no fixed religious body guiding the proceedings, your director's role becomes even more central — we help your family design the entire service from scratch, coordinating every moving part on your behalf so you are not the one chasing venues, celebrants, and vendors during an already exhausting time.

All we need from you at this stage is a little information — your loved one's full name, age, and a sense of how personal or simple your family would like the service to be. We take it from there.

2. Choosing A Venue For The Wake

- **HDB void deck** — A common and affordable choice. Your funeral director applies for the tentage permit, sets up chairs, a photo altar and signage, and tears down after the wake.
- **Funeral parlour** — A private, air-conditioned hall, well suited to longer wakes, larger gatherings, or families who prefer more control over noise and privacy.
- **Community or function hall** — Some families choose a neutral hall for a shorter, memorial-style gathering rather than a traditional multi-day wake.
- **At home** — Possible for landed properties, though less common today given space and logistics.

3. What Your Funeral Director Coordinates For A Freethinker Service

With no church, temple, or fixed clergy involved, your funeral director takes on the role of coordinating the people and details that would otherwise be handled by a religious body. On your behalf, we will:

- Recommend a celebrant or emcee experienced in secular and freethinker services, if your family wants one
- Set up sound, microphones, and a screen for photo or video tributes at the wake venue
- Coordinate timing with the crematorium, since freethinker services often run on a tighter, single-day schedule than religious ones
- Advise on which traditional customs, if any, your family may wish to keep — some freethinker families still choose incense, joss paper, or a wake of a traditional length out of habit or respect for elders, even without religious belief behind it
- Liaise with musicians, florists, or printers your family engages for the service

4. Planning The Wake, Day By Day

Freethinker wakes in Singapore vary more in length than religious ones, ranging from a single evening to the traditional three or five days. A typical structure looks like this:

- **Setup day** — The wake venue is prepared: casket placed, a photo altar arranged, and any floral tributes set up.
- **Visitation** — Family receives visitors, often with a simple photo or video tribute playing quietly in the background.
- **Tribute evening** — Many families set aside one evening, or a portion of the final day, for eulogies and shared stories, whether led by an emcee or simply passed from person to person.
- **Funeral day** — A short service is held at the wake venue or crematorium hall before the cremation or burial itself.

5. Understanding Freethinker Funerals In Singapore

"Freethinker" is a term commonly used in Singapore to describe someone without a specific organised religious affiliation, or a family who does not wish to follow a fixed set of religious rites. In practice this covers a wide range of families: some prefer an entirely secular service built around music, readings, and personal tribute; others still keep certain Chinese customs — white or dark clothing, joss sticks, a wake of an odd number of days — as a matter of family tradition or respect for older relatives, without those customs carrying religious meaning for them. There is no single correct version of a freethinker funeral. Your funeral director's job is to help your family decide what feels right, rather than default to a template.

6. Choosing A Celebrant Or Emcee

Many freethinker families choose to have a celebrant or emcee guide the service, rather than leaving family members to manage the running order while grieving. A celebrant can open the service, introduce speakers, read a life story your family has prepared, and keep the proceedings moving smoothly. Some families prefer to skip this role entirely and keep things informal, with a family member simply welcoming guests. Either approach is common — your funeral director can recommend a celebrant if your family would like one.

7. Building The Order Of Service

Without a fixed liturgy, your family chooses the shape of the service. A simple structure many freethinker families use:

#	Segment
1	Welcome and opening words from the celebrant or a family member
2	A short life story or biography, read aloud
3	Music, a poem, or a moment of quiet reflection
4	Eulogies from family and close friends
5	A slideshow or video tribute of photos
6	Closing words and an invitation to view the casket, if the family wishes
7	Procession to the hearse

8. Choosing Music And Readings

- **Music** — Without denominational restrictions, families choose freely: a favourite song, an instrumental piece, or music your loved one listened to often. Live musicians or a simple playlist both work well.
- **Readings** — Poems, favourite quotes, or passages your loved one admired are common choices. Some families still include a scripture reading if it held personal meaning, even without a religious service around it.

9. Writing And Delivering A Eulogy

Because a freethinker service has more open space than a religious one, eulogies often form the emotional centre of the day. A simple structure to work from:

- Open with how you knew your loved one, and one memory that captures who they were
- Share a few specific stories or qualities, rather than a list of achievements
- It's fine to include some humour if it reflects who they were — freethinker services often have more room for this than religious ones
- Close with what you hope people will remember, or a final message to your loved one

10. Preparing A Printed Order Of Service Booklet

- A photo of your loved one, with their full name and the years of birth and passing
- The running order of the service, including any songs or readings
- A short life story or timeline, if your family would like to include one
- A note of thanks to those attending, and any acknowledgements your family wishes to include

11. Displaying Memories: Photos And Video Tributes

A photo display or slideshow tends to carry more weight at a freethinker service, since it often stands in for the structure a religious liturgy would otherwise provide. Most funeral parlours and void deck setups can accommodate a television or projector for a looping photo or video tribute — ask your funeral director whether this is included in your package.

12. Flowers And Tributes

Wreaths and standing floral sprays are a common way for relatives, friends, and colleagues to send their condolences. Your funeral director can arrange these directly, or friends and colleagues may order their own through a florist — either way, it helps to share the wake address and visiting hours so deliveries arrive in good time.

13. Burial Or Cremation

Most freethinker families in Singapore choose cremation, typically at Mandai Crematorium, followed by a decision on where the ashes will rest: a columbarium niche, scattering at the Garden of Peace at Choa Chu Kang, or keeping the urn at home. Burial remains an option at Choa Chu Kang Cemetery, though plots are leased for a fixed term (currently 15 years), after which exhumation and cremation follows — for this reason

many families choose cremation from the outset. There is no religious requirement guiding this decision, so it comes down entirely to what feels right for your family.

14. The Funeral Day Itself

- A short service is held, following the order your family has planned
- The casket is carried to the hearse in a short procession, often with family walking behind
- The procession travels to the crematorium or cemetery for the final farewell
- If cremated, ashes are typically ready for collection within a few hours to a couple of days

15. Common Questions Freethinker Families Ask

Do we need a celebrant, or can family run the service ourselves?

Either works. A celebrant helps keep things structured while family members grieve, but many families prefer a simpler, informal gathering led by a relative. Your funeral director can advise based on your family's preference.

Is it disrespectful to include humour or non-traditional music?

Not at all. Without a fixed religious liturgy to follow, a freethinker service is meant to reflect your loved one as they actually were. Many families find that a lighter moment, a favourite song, or an informal photo brings more comfort than a rigid, formal structure would.

Can we still include some traditional customs?

Yes. Many freethinker families keep certain customs — incense, a wake of a traditional length, particular colours of dress — out of respect for older relatives, without those customs needing to carry religious meaning. Your funeral director can help blend whichever elements your family wants to keep.

16. A Simple Checklist To Guide You

- Contact your funeral director — they will help design the service from scratch on your behalf
- Choose a wake venue and confirm dates with your funeral director
- Decide whether your family would like a celebrant or emcee
- Choose the running order, music, and any readings for the service
- Decide who will deliver eulogies, and begin writing them
- Confirm burial or cremation, and where the ashes or remains will rest
- Arrange transport for the funeral day procession
- Discuss with your funeral director which traditional customs, if any, your family wishes to keep

One director will walk alongside your family from the very first call through to the final farewell, helping you build a service that feels true to your loved one rather than borrowed from a template.

Call us any time: [+65 9169 1859](tel:+6591691859)