

BUYING CEMETERY HEADSTONES

17+ expert tips for purchasing (and maintaining) cemetery headstones, monuments and grave markers that honour your loved one & stand the test of time.

VISIT THE CEMETERY BEFORE ORDERING A HEADSTONE

Visit a cemetery and walk around the grounds, observing what you like and dislike about different headstones, monuments and grave markers. This will help you get a clearer idea of what you're looking for.



DON'T ORDER IMMEDIATELY

Immediately following a funeral, families are usually not in the right frame of mind to make big purchasing decisions. Hold off until you feel as though the initial shock and grief of the loss has subsided before purchasing a headstone.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE FOUNDATION INTERFERING WITH BURIAL

There is room at the head of the grave for the headstones' foundation. The cement will go down four feet below the frost line so there is no need to worry about the foundation interfering with future burial.



MAKE SURE THERE IS A CONCRETE FOUNDATION

Cemeteries require all headstones have a concrete foundation. This helps stabilize the headstone or monument, which is made of heavy material like granite, and prevent it from moving because of changing soil conditions.

KNOW THE RULES

Make sure you know the cemetery by-laws regarding monuments and headstones before purchasing as some cemeteries only allow very minimal monuments, such as a simple flat, bronze marker.



CHECK IF THE CEMETERY ONLY ALLOWS FLAT BRONZE GRAVE MARKERS

Some cemeteries prefer flat bronze grave markers to be installed because it's easier to cut the grass. So you may be disappointed if you had your heart set on an upright headstone or monument for your loved one's grave.

CONSIDER YOUR OPTIONS FOR COLOUR

When it comes to granite headstones for graves, you can have a wide range of colours to choose from. Ask to see the different colours of granite your monument maker has available..



CONSIDER YOUR OPTIONS FOR SHAPE

Serpentine or an oval top are very popular shapes but there are many other shapes of headstones for graves so you will be able to find one that fits your taste and budget.

UNDERSTAND LETTERING RULES

Some families wish to put wording on the sides or on the backs of cemetery headstones or monuments. However, this is not always allowed, whether or not you can do so is dictated by cemetery by-laws.



EXPECT THE LETTERING TO FADE OVER TIME

While granite won't fade over the passing years, you should expect that the lettering on the monument will fade. Damp conditions cause the lettering to fade more rapidly.

CONSIDER A POLISHED HEADSTONE FOR EASY MAINTENANCE

Polishing of a monument gives greater ease to cleansing. Polished monuments only need to be cleaned using just soap and water. Monuments with a rock or steel finish (no polish, become a home for things to grow on such as moss and lichen.



EXPECT A WAIT

There is a lot of labour and detail involved in creating a monument. Because of this, it usually takes approximately 3 to 5 months to complete a memorial.

WINTER MIGHT IMPACT WHEN THE HEADSTONE WILL BE INSTALLED

If the ground is frozen, the cemetery won't be able to pour the concrete foundation that headstones and monuments need for support. The cemetery will have to wait for warmer weather.



EXPECT MOSS TO GROW

Moss can grow anywhere on the headstone or monument depending on weather conditions. Increased levels of dampness, and decreased air circulation, will both increase the likelihood of this happening.

DECIDE IF YOU WANT TO INCLUDE A MAIDEN NAME

Wording on headstones for graves are less dictated by tradition than it was in the past but it can still be helpful to include a person's maiden name for so that visitors can more easily identify the person (if the knew them prior to marriage). It is entirely your choice.



UNDERSTAND THAT THE MATERIAL IMPACTS THE PRICE

Understand that the type of material you choose for your headstone will impact the price. Granite headstones tend to be about half the price of bronze memorials. The average price range for a headstone is \$1,700 to \$4,000.

DON'T PRE-ORDER UNTIL YOU KNOW THE CEMETERY BY-LAWS

A lot of cemeteries allow you to install blank headstones in anticipation that they will be inscribed at a later date. However, some do not. Be sure to check with your specific cemetery to see if they by-laws governing pre-made headstones.



PROPER MAINTENANCE IS KEY

Granite & marble headstones should be washed with soap & water on a regular basis. Avoid using any oils or waxes as they can bleed into the stone and stain it.

Bronze grave markers that have deteriorated can be refurbished. This can be costly, so sometimes you are better off purchasing a new marker.