



# What Missouri Executors Actually Get Paid: A Straightforward Guide to Compensation

When you're named as an executor in Missouri, one of the first questions that comes up is: "What do I get paid for this?" It's a fair question - serving as an executor is A LOT of work, and Missouri law recognizes that by providing specific compensation guidelines.

Let me break this down in simple terms, because probate shouldn't be more complicated than it already is.

## Missouri Calls You a "Personal Representative"

First, let's get the terminology straight. In Missouri, you're not technically called an "executor" - you're a "personal representative." Same job, different title. Don't let the legal jargon throw you off.

## How Missouri Calculates Your Compensation

Missouri law provides minimum compensation based on the value of estate assets at the time of distribution. Here's the breakdown:

- **5.0% on the first \$5,000**
- **4.0% on the next \$20,000**
- **3.0% on the next \$75,000**
- **2.75% on the next \$300,000**
- **2.5% on the next \$600,000**
- **2.0% on anything above \$1,000,000**

## Real-World Examples

Let's put this in perspective with actual numbers:

- **\$50,000 estate** = minimum \$1,800 in executor fees
- **\$500,000 estate** = minimum \$14,000 in executor fees

These percentages apply to the estate's value at distribution time, plus any real estate sold under court order. Important note: funds that pass directly to beneficiaries (like life insurance or 401Ks) don't count toward these calculations.



## **These Are MINIMUM Fees**

Here's what many people don't realize - these are baseline amounts. Missouri law allows for additional "reasonable" compensation if the situation requires it. You don't need to prove "extraordinary" services to justify fair payment for your time and effort.

## **Multiple Executors? Here's What Changes**

If there are two or more personal representatives, the total compensation can't exceed twice the schedule above, or 5% of the estate value - whichever is less. There are exceptions for extraordinary services or when the court requires property management without sale.

## **What Counts as "Extraordinary Services"**

Missouri recognizes certain tasks as going beyond standard executor duties:

- Running a business
- Handling litigation
- Preparing tax returns yourself
- Managing tax audits
- Complex property management

However, if you're a professional accountant, you can't charge for accounting services unless the will, court, or heirs specifically allow it.

## **You Can Choose Different Compensation**

Even if the will specifies your compensation, you have options. Before being assigned as executor, you can renounce those provisions and choose reasonable compensation under Missouri law instead.

## **When Do You Actually Get Paid?**

Generally, executor compensation is paid during the final stages of estate distribution - one of the last things you do. Be careful if there isn't enough to pay yourself and all other debts, as this could create legal issues. In most states, executor compensation has precedence over almost all other debts.

## **Important Considerations**



## **Talk to the Family Early**

I always recommend discussing your compensation with other heirs early in the process. Nobody likes surprises, especially when it affects their inheritance. Keep the door open to adjusting your planned compensation as you learn how much work will actually be required.

## **You Don't Have to Take It**

Collecting executor fees is optional. Many executors choose to forego compensation, especially family members. That said, there's a reason state laws support this compensation - it's genuinely demanding work.

## **Tax Implications Matter**

Executor compensation is taxable income, while inheritances generally aren't. If you're inheriting a large portion of the estate anyway, you might come out ahead financially by skipping the executor fee and simply inheriting more.

## **Don't Forget About Expense Reimbursement**

Beyond compensation for your services, you're entitled to reimbursement for legitimate estate administration costs:

- Death certificate copies
- Document notarization
- Travel costs related to estate management
- Professional services

Keep detailed records of these expenses. You can often pay directly from the estate account, but documentation is crucial if you need to justify expenditures later.

## **The Bottom Line**

Missouri provides clear guidelines for executor compensation because the state recognizes the significant responsibility you're taking on. You deserve fair compensation for your time, effort, and expertise.

If you're facing probate in the St. Louis area, you don't have to navigate this alone. The laws are there to protect you, and understanding your rights - including fair compensation - is part of making the process as manageable as possible during an already difficult time.



Remember: you're not just handling paperwork. You're protecting your family's interests while honoring your loved one's legacy. That work has value, and Missouri law recognizes it.

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*This information is provided for educational purposes and should not be considered legal advice. Always consult with a qualified Missouri probate attorney for your specific situation.*



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