

# It's Just A Bundle of Sticks...

A Cornucopia of Information  
To Help You Read  
& Understand Deeds



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The easiest way to understand what is happening in a deed or other document conveying title is to think of property rights as a “Bundle of Sticks”.



It's Just A Bundle of Sticks...



# “Livery of Seisen”

- The act of the seller actually handing a bundle of sticks tied in a bow to the buyer of real estate.
- Was a valid way to convey property in England until 1925.



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Each stick in the bundle represents a  
distinct property right.



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# There Are Three Basic Ways That Two Or More People Can Jointly Own Real Estate

Tenants By  
The Entirety

100%/100%

Joint Tenants  
with Right of  
Survivorship

50%/50%

Tenants In  
Common

50%/50%



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# Life Estate Deeds

- Life Tenant has the right to occupy now;
- Remainderman has the right to the property in the future;
- Life Tenant can have additional powers.



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# Trusts

- Trusts can be revocable or irrevocable;
- The Settlor creates the trust;
- The Trustee manages the trust;
- The Beneficiary derives the benefit from the trust;



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# Trusts

Trusts are like a cup of coffee

Res

Trustee

Trust



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# Nominee Trusts

- Nominee Trusts are not true trusts;
- The Trustee can be a Beneficiary;
- The Trustee lacks power to act except as directed by the Beneficiaries.



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# What is “Registered Land”?

- In 1898 the General Court created the “Court of Land Registration;
- Totally separate system recording system;
  - Once land is “registered” the Commonwealth of Massachusetts guarantees the title.



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# What is “Registered Land”?

- Once land is registered no one can claim adverse possession against it;
- All documents subsequently affecting title must be reviewed by the Land Court;
  - There is a Land Court Office in each Registry of Deeds.



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Let's look at some examples  
of deeds.



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