

7.3 FELONY MURDER — FIRST DEGREE

§ 782.04(1)(a), Fla. Stat.

In the absence of an express concession that the homicide was not excusable or justified, the trial judge must also read Instruction 7.1, Introduction to Homicide.

To prove the crime of First Degree Felony Murder, the State must prove the following three elements beyond a reasonable doubt:

1. (Victim) **is dead.**

Give as applicable.

2.
 - a. **While engaged in the commission of a[n]** (felony alleged), [(defendant)] [(defendant's) accomplice] **caused the death of** (victim).
 - b. **While engaged in the attempt to commit a[n]** (felony alleged), [(defendant)] [(defendant's) accomplice] **caused the death of** (victim).
 - c. **While escaping from the immediate scene after [committing] [attempting to commit] a[n]** (felony alleged), [(defendant)] [(defendant's) accomplice] **caused the death of** (victim).

Give as applicable.

3.
 - a. (Defendant) **was the person who actually killed** (victim).
 - b. (Victim) **was killed by a person other than** (defendant) **but both** (defendant) **and the person who killed** (victim) **were principals in the commission of** (crime alleged).

To convict the defendant of First Degree Felony Murder, it is not necessary for the State to prove the defendant had a premeditated design or an intent to kill.

1. *Define the felony alleged.*
2. *If applicable, immediately give the attempt instruction (5.1).*
3. *If applicable, immediately give the principal instruction (3.5(a)).*
4. *If the underlying felony is charged as a separate count, read, at an appropriate time, instruction 3.12(d)(Legally Interlocking Counts). Failure to do so may result in an impermissible inconsistent verdict. See, e.g., Brown v. State, 959 So. 2d 218 (Fla. 2007).*

Give if the defendant was a juvenile at the time of the crime alleged.

§ 775.082(1)(b), Fla. Stat. *Williams v. State*, 242 So. 3d 280 (Fla. 2018). *If the jury were to find the defendant guilty of First Degree Premeditated Murder, the question of whether the defendant intended to kill or attempted to kill would inhere in that verdict. Therefore, the finding below should be made only for cases involving First Degree Felony*

Murder where it is alleged in the charging document that the defendant actually killed, intended to kill, or attempted to kill the victim. A general verdict for First Degree Murder without a specific finding of premeditation would require the paragraph below to be given.

If you find (defendant) **guilty of First Degree Felony Murder, you must also determine whether the State proved beyond a reasonable doubt, that [he] [she] [actually killed] [intended to kill] [or] [attempted to kill]** (victim).

Lesser Included Offenses

FIRST DEGREE FELONY MURDER — 782.04(1)(a)			
CATEGORY ONE	CATEGORY TWO	FLA. STAT.	INS. NO.
	Death Caused by the Unlawful Distribution of [Name of Enumerated Controlled Substance(s)]	782.04(1)(a)3.	7.3(a)
	Second degree (depraved mind) murder	782.04(2)	7.4
Manslaughter		782.07	7.7
	Aggravated Manslaughter (Child)	782.07(3)	7.7(a)
	Second degree felony murder	782.04(3)	7.5
	Aggravated Manslaughter (Elderly Person/Disabled Adult)	782.07(2)	7.7(a)
	Aggravated Manslaughter (Officer/Firefighter/EMT/Paramedic)	782.07(4)	7.7(a)
	Death Caused by the Unlawful Distribution by a Person Less than 18 Years of Age of [Name of Enumerated Controlled Substance(s)]	782.04(5)(b)	7.3(b)
	Third degree felony murder*	782.04(4)	7.6
	Non-homicide lessers**		
	Aggravated battery	784.045	8.4
	Felony battery	784.041(1)	8.5
	Aggravated assault	784.021	8.2
	Battery	784.03	8.3
	Assault	784.011	8.1

Comments

See Instruction 7.13 for the § 782.065, Fla. Stat., reclassification when the victim is a law enforcement officer, correctional officer, etc.

*In some cases, Third Degree Felony Murder may be a necessary lesser-included offense of First Degree Felony Murder. For example, Third Degree Felony Murder with Child Abuse as the underlying felony may be a necessarily lesser-included offense of First Degree Felony Murder if Aggravated Child Abuse is the underlying felony.

**Non-homicide lesser-included offenses do not have to be given if the parties agree causation is not in dispute and that the victim is dead. *Carver v. State*, 348 So. 3d 1214 (Fla. 5th DCA 2022).

This instruction was adopted in 1981 and was amended in 1985, 1992 [603 So. 2d 1175], 2011 [53 So. 3d 1017], 2014 [146 So. 3d 1110], 2018 [236 So. 3d 282], 2018 [259 So. 3d 754], 2019 [285 So. 3d 1265], and on September 12, 2025.