



Divorce Checklist for Parent

The following checklist can be used by all parents who are considering a divorce. Whether you and your spouse each plan to follow a traditional court based approach, use a collaborative divorce process, or you are planning to work with a mediator, these are questions you and your spouse will need to address, and it typically will be most beneficial to do so sooner rather than later:

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- Which Type of Custody Arrangement Will You Use?**
Parents have a number of options when it comes to child custody arrangements. While more traditional custody and visitation schedules are still an option, parents are choosing alternatives such as equal parenting time and even co-parenting with increasing frequency. Parents often attend events like games, recitals and graduations, but children may feel awkward, uncomfortable if their parents come, sit and leave separately. Parents should have a plan for this as well, and other custody nuances.
- How Will You Structure Your Parenting Time Schedule?**
You need to come up with a parenting time schedule that works for both of you. This schedule should be detailed, but not so much so that it eliminates flexibility. The more you and your spouse can do to provide stability and structure, the easier the transition will be.
- How Will You Handle Birthdays, Holidays and Vacations?**
It is important to think about how you and your spouse will handle birthdays, holidays vacations, etc. Unless you are co-parenting, you're likely be celebrating and traveling with your children separately, and you will need to make special provisions to account for this in your parenting plan. For example, on Thanksgiving, will your children spend half of the day with each of you, will your child spend Thursday with you and Friday with your former spouse, or will you alternate years?
- How Will You Handle Transportation Between Homes and Activities?**
In order to make sure that each parent knows their respective transportation responsibilities (and so that children know they will always get picked up or dropped off on time), parents should address this in their post-divorce parenting plan.
- What Rules Will You Both Enforce After Your Divorce?**
An important aspect of stability during childhood is rule enforcement. Generally speaking, both parents should enforce the same rules equally so that their children do not develop favoritism. Parents should decide what rules they will enforce, and how, and they should also address the inevitable need to adopt new rules in the future.
- How Will You Make Decisions about Things Like Extracurricular Activities and Healthcare?**
If you and your former spouse reach a disagreement during your post-divorce life, how will you resolve it? Avoiding conflict post-divorce is important, particularly when the decisions you and your former spouse need to make impact your children with important topics like healthcare.
- Will Both Parents Contribute to Your Child's College Savings?**
College savings is not covered under the umbrella of child support. Child support is intended to meet children's basic needs until they reach adulthood, or into early adulthood in certain limited circumstances. Parents must address college savings as a discrete issue during their divorce, and they must agree on a plan that they can both enforce.
- Where Will Your Children's Belongings "Live"?**
From clothes to skateboards, parents need to decide where their children's belongings are going to "live." A child's life can feel too transitory if he/she is packing and unpacking on a weekly or daily basis. While parents can double up on certain items, in most cases children's belongings will be divided between the parents' households in some fashion.