

Parenting Plan

Fill in every blank. Delete the options you do not choose. Vague terms are unenforceable - use dates, times, and named places.

1. Parties and Children

This Parenting Plan is made between _____ ("Parent A") and _____ ("Parent B"), the parents of the following child or children:

Name: _____ Date of birth: _____

Name: _____ Date of birth: _____

Name: _____ Date of birth: _____

Case number, if one exists: _____ Court and county: _____

Drafting note: Use each child's full legal name. If a case is already open, the case number must match the court file exactly or the clerk may reject the filing.

2. Legal Decision-Making

Decisions about the child's education, non-emergency health care, and religious upbringing shall be made:

☐ jointly by both parents; ☐ by Parent A alone; ☐ by Parent B alone; ☐ divided as follows:

Either parent may make emergency medical decisions when the child is in that parent's care, and shall notify the other parent as soon as practicable and no later than _____ hours afterward.

Day-to-day decisions are made by the parent who has the child at the time, and neither parent may use a day-to-day decision to change a term of this plan.

Drafting note: Joint decision-making without a tie-breaker is the most common cause of a return trip to court. If you choose joint, name what happens at an impasse - the dispute resolution clause in section 10, or one parent's final say by subject.

3. Residential Schedule

The child shall reside with the parents on the following repeating schedule:

Week 1: _____

Week 2: _____

The schedule repeats every _____ weeks, beginning _____ (date).

Each exchange occurs at _____ (time) on the days listed above.

Drafting note: Write the schedule as a repeating cycle with a start date, not as a description. "Alternating weeks" is ambiguous the first time a week is skipped; "a 2-week cycle beginning Friday, March 6" is not.

4. Holidays and School Breaks

Holiday time takes priority over the regular residential schedule.

Odd-numbered years, Parent _____ has: _____

Even-numbered years, Parent _____ has: _____

Each holiday period begins at _____ on _____ and ends at _____ on _____.

The child spends Mother's Day with the mother and Father's Day with the father, regardless of the regular schedule: ☐ yes ☐ no

Drafting note: Define the start and end of each holiday by clock time, not by the word "holiday." Thanksgiving that begins at school dismissal Wednesday and ends Sunday at 6:00 PM cannot be argued about.

5. Exchanges and Transportation

Exchanges take place at _____ (specific address or location).

The parent ☐ beginning ☐ ending their parenting time provides transportation.

A parent who will be more than _____ minutes late shall notify the other parent by _____ (method) as soon as they know.

If a parent is more than _____ minutes late without notice, _____.

Only the parents, or an adult named here, may collect the child: _____

Drafting note: Name a physical location, not "a mutually agreed place." A neutral public location with cameras - a library, a police station lobby - is standard where exchanges have been tense.

6. Communication

Parent-to-parent communication shall be by _____ (method), and shall be limited to matters concerning the child.

Each parent shall respond to a non-urgent message within _____ hours.

The child may contact either parent at any reasonable time, and neither parent shall monitor, record, restrict, or listen in on those contacts.

The parent who does not have the child may contact them by _____ on _____ (days) at _____ (time), for up to _____ minutes.

Neither parent shall discuss this case, the other parent's conduct, or court proceedings with or within hearing of the child.

Drafting note: Naming one channel makes the record clean. If either parent has a history of message volume as pressure, a monitored co-parenting app both documents and limits it.

7. Travel and Relocation

A parent travelling with the child overnight shall give the other parent an itinerary with dates, destinations, and a contact number at least _____ days beforehand.

Out-of-state travel: ☐ no notice beyond the itinerary ☐ requires _____ days' written notice ☐ requires the other parent's written consent.

International travel requires the other parent's written consent and _____ regarding the child's passport.

A parent intending to move their residence more than _____ miles shall give the other parent written notice at least _____ days before the move.

Drafting note: Relocation notice periods are set by statute in most states and the statute overrides whatever you write here. Look up your state's period and match it rather than inventing one.

8. Right of First Refusal

If a parent will be unavailable to care for the child for more than _____ consecutive hours during their parenting time, that parent shall first offer the time to the other parent before arranging other care.

The offer shall be made by _____ at least _____ hours in advance where the absence is known in advance.

The other parent shall respond within _____ hours; no response is a decline.

[] This section does not apply.

Drafting note: Set the trigger in hours and make it long enough to be workable. A four-hour threshold turns an evening out into a negotiation; overnight or 24 hours is the common setting.

9. Records, School, and Activities

Both parents have equal access to the child's school, medical, dental, and counselling records, and each may communicate directly with those providers.

Both parents may attend the child's school events, medical appointments, and activities, whether or not it is their parenting time.

Each parent shall give the other any school, medical, or activity information they receive within _____ hours.

The cost of agreed extracurricular activities is shared: Parent A _____%, Parent B _____%. Neither parent shall enrol the child in an activity that overlaps the other parent's time without written agreement.

Drafting note: The enrolment sentence prevents the most common quiet conflict, where one parent signs the child up for a Saturday activity that consumes the other parent's weekend.

10. Dispute Resolution

Before either parent files a motion about this plan, other than in an emergency or where a protective order is in effect, they shall attempt to resolve the dispute by:

[] direct discussion; [] mediation with _____; [] a parenting coordinator; [] arbitration.

The cost of that process is shared: Parent A _____%, Parent B _____%.

Each parent shall use the designated process before court action, and the existing plan remains in effect until it is changed in writing or by court order.

Drafting note: Some states require a dispute resolution process in the plan. Washington is the clearest example - its statute directs that a process other than court action shall be provided unless a safety exception applies.

11. Modification and Review

This plan may be changed by written agreement signed by both parents, or by court order.

The parents shall review this plan on _____ (date) or when the child _____ (starts school, changes schools, turns _____).

A change agreed informally does not alter this plan unless it is put in writing and signed.

Drafting note: The last sentence protects both parents. Months of informal swaps can otherwise be argued as the schedule that actually governs.

12. Signatures

Each parent has read this plan, agrees to follow it, and believes it is in the child's best interest.

Parent A: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent B: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Note: signing does not by itself make this plan enforceable. It becomes a court order only when a judge signs it.

Drafting note: Notarising the signatures costs little and removes any later argument about whether a parent actually signed it.

