



6 Steps to manage negotiating parenting arrangements with your ex

Author: [Mona Emera](#)

Email: mona@emerafamilylaw.com.au

Date: Friday April 28, 2023

Going through a separation or divorce can be a difficult process. One of the most important and challenging aspects of this process is negotiating [parenting arrangements for your children](#). When a relationship breaks down, it can be tempting to let emotions drive the conversation, but it's crucial to approach this process with a clear head and a focus on what's best for your children.

In this article, we provide you with some tips and practical advice on how to navigate this process as smoothly and effectively as possible. We also acknowledge that not all separated couples can negotiate directly with each other. There may be issues around safety, communication, and cultural issues. If this applies to you, we recommend that you seek legal advice early to find out where you stand.

[Get help from an experienced family lawyer: 03 9006 8907](#)

1. Start with a plan for parenting after separation and set realistic expectations

One of the most important steps in negotiating parenting arrangements is to have a clear plan and set realistic expectations. This means taking the time to reflect on what you want to achieve and what is non-negotiable for you. When you go into negotiations with a clear plan and realistic expectations, you are more likely to stay focused and avoid getting side-tracked by unproductive discussions.

Before you start negotiations, consider what kind of arrangements will work best for your children and what your priorities are for their care. Write down your goals and be mindful of what is most important to you.

Additionally, it's essential to have a realistic understanding of what is achievable through negotiations. While it's important to have clear goals and a vision for what you want, it's also essential to be open to compromise and to understand that negotiations may involve making concessions.

2. Listen carefully and be respectful

Effective communication is key to successful negotiations, and this is particularly true when it comes to negotiating parenting arrangements. The key points are to avoid using inflammatory language, be respectful and to listen actively to what the other person is saying.

When communicating with your ex, try to avoid blaming or accusing them of wrongdoing. This can be counterproductive and make it harder for you to reach a resolution. Instead, focus on finding common ground and discussing your concerns in a calm and respectful manner.

It can also be helpful to consider using alternative forms of communication, such as email, text message or a [co-parenting app](#), to avoid misunderstandings and to keep a record of your discussions. If you find that face-to-face conversations are too difficult or contentious, consider using a mediator or a family law professional to facilitate discussions.

3. Consider dispute resolution avenues for parenting arrangements

Dispute resolution methods, such as mediation, can be an effective way to resolve disagreements and negotiate parenting arrangements. These methods can provide a less formal and less adversarial environment for discussions, making it easier for you and your ex to reach an agreement.

Mediation, for example, involves a neutral third party who facilitates discussions between the two parties and helps them to find common ground. This can be particularly helpful when negotiating parenting arrangements, as it provides a safe and supportive environment for discussions and can help to keep the focus on the best interests of the children.

It is important to note that mediation is not suitable for everyone, especially in cases involving [family violence and safety concerns](#). Your family law expert can provide you with guidance on the best approach for your specific circumstances.

If you're unsure about the best approach for your circumstances, seek advice from a family law expert. You can also read more about mediation in our article, ["How does mediation work in family law?"](#)

[Get help to start the mediation process: 03 9006 8907](#)

4. Consider the best interests of your children

It's important to remember that your children's best interests should always be at the forefront of your mind when negotiating parenting arrangements and that the arrangements you reach should be in their best interests.

When negotiating parenting arrangements, consider the impact that the arrangements will have on your children's lives. This includes factors such as their age, relationships with each parent (or other significant people in the life, for example, [grandparents' rights](#)), their schooling, and any specific needs or concerns the children may have.

It's also important to be mindful of the impact that the negotiating process itself can have on your children. Try to avoid involving your children in discussions or exposing them to conflict or tension between you and your ex. Instead, focus on finding a resolution that is in their best interests and that minimises any impact on their well-being.

5. Be prepared to compromise

Negotiating parenting arrangements often requires compromise from both parties. This can be difficult, especially if you have strong feelings about the arrangements and your time with the children (for example, on special occasions). However, it's important to remember that the goal is to reach a resolution that works for everyone and that allows your children to have a positive relationship with both parents wherever possible.

When negotiating parenting arrangements, be prepared to consider alternative arrangements and to make compromises. This may involve making compromises on issues such as the location of pick-ups and drop-offs and the timing of special events and holidays.

6. Seek legal advice from a lawyer experienced in parenting matters

Finally, it's important to seek legal advice as soon as possible, as this will help to ensure that you are fully informed about the process and appropriate outcomes.

A family law expert can provide you with guidance on your responsibilities under the law and can help you understand the implications of different parenting arrangements. They can also provide you with advice on the best approach to take when negotiating with your ex and can help you understand what a court would consider when making a decision about parenting arrangements.

In addition, if you're unable to reach a resolution through negotiation, your lawyer can advise you on your options.

Get help from an experienced family lawyer

At Emera Family Law, we understand that negotiating parenting arrangements can be a complex and emotional process. That's why we're here to help. Our team of experienced family law experts is dedicated to providing you with the guidance and support you need to navigate this process and reach a resolution.

This blog is of a general nature and should not be relied upon as legal advice. If you require further information, advice or assistance for your specific circumstances, please contact us.