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FREE PLAYBOOK

Co-Parent Communication Guide

Business partners, not sparring partners.

Parallel parenting setup, communication boundaries, app recommendations, and templates for every common scenario.

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Document. Organize. Prepare for court.

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Who This Playbook Is For

Parents who need a structured communication system. Whether your co-parent is difficult or you just need clearer boundaries, this is the framework.

Co-Parenting vs Parallel Parenting: Which Do You Need?

Not all co-parenting situations are the same. Understanding which model fits your situation determines your entire communication strategy.

Co-Parenting (Cooperative):

- Both parents communicate regularly and respectfully
- Joint decision-making works most of the time
- Flexibility with the schedule is mutual
- Children move between homes without stress
- This works when both parents prioritize the children over the conflict

Parallel Parenting (Independent):

- Communication is minimal and business-like
- Each parent makes day-to-day decisions independently
- The schedule is followed exactly as written
- A detailed parenting plan eliminates the need for negotiation
- This works when one or both parents cannot communicate without conflict

PRO TIP

Be honest with yourself about which model you need. Trying to co-parent cooperatively with someone who weaponizes every interaction only creates more damage. Parallel parenting is not failure. It is wisdom.

How to Transition

If cooperative co-parenting is not working, you can propose parallel parenting through your attorney or mediator. Frame it as "reducing the children's exposure to conflict," because that is exactly what it does.

Setting Communication Boundaries That Stick

Boundaries are not requests. They are limits you enforce through your own behavior.

Essential Boundaries:

- Communication happens through one channel only (email, app, or text, pick one)
- Response time: you will respond to non-emergency messages within 24 hours
- Topics: you will only discuss matters directly related to the children
- Tone: you will not respond to messages that contain insults or threats
- Schedule: communication happens during reasonable hours only

How to Set Them:

"Going forward, I will be communicating about the children through [channel]. I will respond to messages about scheduling, health, and education within 24 hours. I will not engage with messages about our personal history or relationship."

How to Enforce Them:

- When a boundary is crossed, do not explain or negotiate. Just do not respond to the boundary-crossing content.
- Respond only to the parts that are about the children
- If they switch channels (call when you said email), do not answer. Respond via your chosen channel.

PRO TIP

A boundary you do not enforce is just a suggestion. Enforcement means consistent follow-through, not punishment.

Choosing the Right Communication App

A dedicated co-parenting communication app creates accountability and records for both parents.

Popular Options:

- OurFamilyWizard: the most commonly court-ordered app. Messaging, shared calendar, expense tracking.
- TalkingParents: records all communication with uneditable timestamps. Free basic tier.
- AppClose: simple interface, shared calendar, messaging.

Why Use an App:

- Everything is automatically documented and timestamped
- Messages cannot be deleted or edited after sending
- Courts can order access to the records
- Reduces informal, emotional texting
- Some courts actively prefer or require them

Making the Switch:

"Per [mediator/attorney/our agreement], I am moving our communication to [app]. I have set up an account and sent you an invitation. Going forward, all scheduling and child-related communication should go through the app."

PRO TIP

If your co-parent refuses to use the app, document the refusal. Continue using it yourself. It shows the court you tried to create a structured communication system.

Templates for Schedule Changes

Schedule change requests are one of the most common sources of conflict. Templates eliminate the emotion.

Requesting a Change:

"Hi [Name], I am requesting a schedule change for [specific date]. I would like to [specific proposal, e.g., swap weekends, adjust pick-up time]. I am flexible on [alternative dates if applicable]. Please let me know your thoughts by [reasonable deadline]. Thank you."

Approving a Change:

"Hi [Name], that schedule change works for me. To confirm: [restate the agreed-upon change with dates and times]. Thank you for the advance notice."

Declining a Change:

"Hi [Name], I am unable to accommodate that schedule change. I will follow the existing schedule as written. If you would like to discuss alternatives, I am open to hearing them."

When They Make Last-Minute Changes:

"Hi [Name], I received your message about changing today's schedule. As discussed before, I need [X days] advance notice for schedule changes. I will follow the current schedule as planned. For future changes, please provide advance notice so we can try to accommodate them."

PRO TIP

Always put schedule changes in writing, even if they were discussed verbally. "Per our conversation today, confirming that [change details]." This protects both of you.

Templates for Medical and School Decisions

Major decisions about health and education often require both parents' input. Here is how to handle them without conflict.

Medical Decision Notification:

"Hi [Name], [Child] has been seen by Dr. [Name] for [reason]. The doctor recommends [treatment/follow-up]. The next appointment is [date/time] at [location]. I will take them unless you prefer to. Please let me know if you have any questions."

School Enrollment/Change:

"Hi [Name], I have been researching school options for [Child] for next year. I am considering [school names] because [brief reason]. I would like to discuss this with you. Can we schedule a time to talk, or would you prefer to share your thoughts by email?"

Disagreements on Decisions:

"Hi [Name], I understand we disagree about [specific issue]. I believe [your position] because [brief factual reason]. I am open to discussing a compromise. If we cannot agree, we may need to involve [mediator/attorney/court] per our parenting plan."

PRO TIP

Always communicate major decisions in writing. "I told them at pick-up" is not documentation. An email or app message is.

Handling Holidays and Special Occasions

Holidays are emotional flashpoints. A clear plan prevents annual meltdowns.

Best Practices:

- Follow the holiday schedule in your parenting plan exactly
- Discuss any changes at least 30 days in advance (in writing)
- Do not assume flexibility, ask for it formally
- Confirm logistics 1 week before: "Confirming [Child] will be with me from [date/time] to [date/time] per our holiday schedule."

Birthdays:

- Unless your plan specifies, both parents can celebrate on different days
- Do not compete on gifts or party size
- Coordinate if necessary: "I am planning a small party on [date]. You are welcome to celebrate on your time as well."

When It Does Not Go to Plan:

- Document any deviations from the holiday schedule
- Do not let holiday disputes ruin the day for your children
- Address violations calmly after the holiday: "I would like to document that the holiday schedule was not followed on [date]. [Brief factual description.] I expect the schedule to be followed going forward."

PRO TIP

Your children will remember how the holidays felt, not who had them on which day. Protect the feeling, even when the logistics are a mess.

When Your Co-Parent Will Not Communicate at All

Some co-parents go silent as a control tactic. Here is how to handle radio silence.

Continue Communicating in Writing:

- Send necessary information even if they do not respond
- Every unanswered message is documentation of their non-cooperation
- "I sent the following information about [Child's] school enrollment on [dates]. No response was received."

Do Not:

- Send multiple follow-up messages (one follow-up after a reasonable time is enough)
- Use the children as messengers
- Escalate to try to force a response
- Assume silence means agreement (or disagreement)

Document the Pattern:

- Keep a log of sent messages and response times
- Note any decisions you had to make unilaterally due to non-communication
- Present this pattern to your attorney or the court

PRO TIP

Silence from a co-parent is frustrating but it is also evidence. A parent who refuses to communicate about their children's welfare is not a parent who is prioritizing the children.

Documenting Communication Failures

When communication breaks down, document it. Communication failure is a pattern courts take seriously.

What to Document:

- Messages sent that received no response (include the message and the date)
- Messages that received hostile or inappropriate responses
- Attempts to communicate that were blocked or ignored
- Decisions you had to make alone due to non-communication
- Impact on the children from communication failures

How to Present It:

"Over the past [timeframe], I have sent [number] messages regarding the children's scheduling, education, and medical needs. [Number] received a response. Of those responses, [number] were about the children and [number] were personal attacks. I have made [number] decisions unilaterally because I could not get a response."

PRO TIP

This kind of clear, quantified documentation makes an impact in court. It turns subjective complaints into objective evidence.

Building a Business-Like Co-Parenting Relationship

The most successful co-parenting relationships treat the arrangement like a business partnership. You do not need to like your business partner. You just need to work together on the shared project: your children.

The Business Model:

- Communication is professional, not personal
- Meetings (exchanges) are brief and transactional
- Decisions are made based on data, not emotions
- The "product" (your children's wellbeing) is the only focus
- Disagreements are resolved through established processes, not arguments

Practical Steps:

- Use a shared calendar for scheduling
- Keep a shared document for the children's medical info, school contacts, etc.
- Communicate only during "business hours" unless there is an emergency
- Review and update the "business plan" (parenting plan) annually through proper channels

PRO TIP

You would not send your business partner a 2am text about how they ruined your life. Apply the same standard to your co-parent.

This mindset shift takes time. It does not mean your feelings are not valid. It means you have a separate space for feelings (therapy, friends, journal) and a separate space for co-parenting (professional, documented, strategic).

EVIDEXI

This playbook teaches the framework.

The app helps you do it daily.

Evidexi helps you document, organize, and prepare for court, all in one place.

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- Log incidents with timestamps and details
- Organize evidence by category and date
- Track custody schedule and violations
- Generate court-ready reports
- Keep everything secure and private

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