

EVIDEXI

FREE PLAYBOOK

Documentation 101

If it is not documented, it did not happen.

What to document, how to document it, timestamp everything, build patterns the court can see. The foundation playbook.

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Document. Organize. Prepare for court.

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Who This Playbook Is For

Parents who know they need to document but don't know where to start. This is the foundation everything else builds on.

Why Documentation Wins Cases

In family court, the parent with better documentation usually wins. Not always the parent who is "right," but the parent who can prove they are right.

The Hard Truth

Judges hear conflicting stories all day. "He said, she said" is useless. What matters is what you can prove with timestamps, screenshots, records, and organized evidence.

- Verbal agreements are worth the paper they are not written on
- Memories fade and get distorted. Records do not.
- Patterns only become visible when you track them consistently

PRO TIP

Documentation is not about being paranoid. It is about being prepared. The parent who documents is the parent who gets taken seriously.

What Good Documentation Does

It shows the court patterns of behavior over time. One missed pick-up is forgettable. Fifteen missed pick-ups over six months, each with a timestamped log entry, tells a story no judge can ignore.

What to Document (And What to Skip)

Not everything needs to be documented. Focus on what matters to the court.

Always Document:

- Custody schedule violations (late, missed, or refused exchanges)
- Communication that is threatening, manipulative, or abusive
- Children's concerning statements about the other household
- Financial issues (unpaid support, unexpected expenses)
- Medical, educational, or safety decisions and disagreements
- Any interaction with police, CPS, or other authorities

Skip:

- Minor annoyances that do not affect the children
- Your co-parent's dating life (unless it directly endangers the kids)
- Petty disagreements about parenting style differences
- Things you heard secondhand that you cannot verify

PRO TIP

The test: "Would a judge care about this?" If you are not sure, document it briefly and move on. Better to have it and not need it than to need it and not have it.

Timestamping: The Right Way

A timestamp turns your word into evidence. Without timestamps, documentation is just a story.

Best Practices:

- Record entries as close to real-time as possible
- Include date and time for every entry
- Use a consistent format (e.g., 2024-03-15, 3:45 PM)
- Let technology create the timestamps when possible (texts, emails, app entries)
- If documenting after the fact, note that: "Recording this at 9pm, incident occurred at approximately 3:30pm today"

Why Real-Time Matters

Documentation created in the moment carries more weight than documentation created the night before court. Judges know the difference. A log with entries spread across months looks organic and credible. A log created all at once looks prepared and potentially biased.

PRO TIP

Use the Evidexi app for automatic timestamping. Every entry is logged with the exact time it was created, so no manual timestamps are needed.

Building Patterns the Court Can See

Individual incidents are dots. Patterns connect the dots into a picture the court can understand.

How to Build Patterns:

- Document consistently, not just when something dramatic happens
- Use categories: schedule violations, communication issues, financial concerns, child welfare concerns
- Create simple tallies: "This is the 8th late pick-up since January"
- Note the impact on the children each time

Presenting Patterns:

- A summary page that says "17 schedule violations in 6 months" with a reference to the detailed log
- A calendar view showing missed parenting time
- Communication logs that show the escalation pattern over time

PRO TIP

Patterns are your most powerful tool. A judge may forget one incident, but they will not forget a clear, documented pattern of behavior.

Screenshots, Texts, and Emails as Evidence

Digital communication is often the strongest evidence in custody cases. Here is how to handle it.

Screenshots:

- Capture the full conversation, not just the damaging parts (cherry-picking backfires)
- Include timestamps, contact names, and any context visible on screen
- Save originals, do not crop or edit
- Back up to cloud storage and a separate device

Emails:

- Print full email chains including headers (dates, recipients)
- Keep sent items as well as received to show both sides
- Use email for important communications so there is always a record

Text Messages:

- Use a communication app that logs automatically when possible
- If texting, regularly export and back up your messages
- Do not delete any messages, even ones where you look bad

PRO TIP

Never alter evidence. Never delete unfavorable messages. If the other side can show you edited or selectively presented evidence, your credibility is destroyed.

The Documentation Journal Method

A documentation journal is a daily or as-needed log of relevant events. Think of it as a diary for your case.

How to Keep One:

- Use a dedicated notebook, document, or app (not the back of receipts)
- Write in the moment or as soon as possible after
- Be factual: who, what, when, where. Leave out opinions and emotions.
- Note any witnesses
- Attach or reference any supporting evidence (photos, texts, etc.)

Example Entry:

"March 15, 2024, 6:42 PM. Co-parent was 42 minutes late for pick-up. Children (ages 8 and 5) waited at the school entrance. No advance notice. I called at 6:15 PM (see call log). Co-parent arrived at 6:42 PM, said 'traffic.' No apology. Children were upset. This is the 4th late pick-up this month."

PRO TIP

Notice: no insults, no opinions, no emotions. Just facts. That is what holds up in court.

Common Documentation Mistakes

These mistakes undermine your documentation and can hurt your case.

Mistake 1: Editorializing

"He showed up late AGAIN because he obviously does not care about the children." Strike everything after "again." The judge decides what it means.

Mistake 2: Documenting Inconsistently

Only documenting during bad weeks makes it look like you created the record to build a case. Document consistently, even when things are going fine.

Mistake 3: Not Backing Up

Phones break. Computers crash. Cloud accounts get locked. Keep at least two copies of everything in different locations.

Mistake 4: Over-Documenting Trivial Things

If your log is full of "co-parent let kids have ice cream before dinner," a judge will stop taking you seriously. Focus on what matters.

Mistake 5: Sharing Your Documentation

Do not show your co-parent your evidence before court. Do not post it on social media. Do not share it with mutual friends. Keep it between you and your attorney.

PRO TIP

Your documentation is your strategic asset. Treat it like one.

Organizing Everything for Your Attorney

Even the best documentation is useless if your attorney cannot find what they need.

How to Organize:

- Create a master timeline of significant events
- Categorize evidence: communication, schedule, financial, child welfare
- Label everything with dates
- Create a summary document that highlights key patterns
- Keep originals separate from copies

What Your Attorney Needs:

- Quick access to the strongest evidence
- Context for each piece of evidence
- A chronological timeline they can reference during hearings
- Evidence organized by relevance to specific claims or motions

PRO TIP

If you use Evidexi, your documentation is already organized, searchable, and exportable. It takes the manual organization work off your plate so you can focus on what matters.

Your attorney is your partner in this process. The better organized your evidence is, the more effectively they can advocate for you. Do not hand them a shoebox of papers. Hand them a binder with tabs.

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.

Try Evidexi Free

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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

Free to start. No credit card required.

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