

Texas Parenting Plan Worksheet



hello divorce.

Your parenting plan helps you and your ex agree on a process for making sure your kids are taken care of emotionally and financially, and for making sure you have a plan in place to ensure that both you and your ex remain a full part of your children's lives. **The main thing to remember is the one thing in common with your ex for the rest of your life: your love for your kids.**



TIP: The parenting plan you agree on with your ex is a starting point. The plan you finalize at the time of your divorce will likely look very different a few years from now.

What is a parenting plan?

Parenting plans address how issues involving children will be handled after your divorce. Parenting plans include:

- How much time each parent spends with the children
- Who makes decisions about different aspects of the children's lives

How does Texas approach parenting plans?

In Texas, the courts will always consider the "best interests of the child." The court evaluates things like:

- Home environment each parent offers
- Distance between the parents' homes
- Each parent's ability to serve as the child's caretaker
- Whether the parents can work together in raising the child
- Each parent's financial & employment situation
- Child's preference if the child is at least 12 years old

Even though the courts may have discretion when making custody determination, if then you and your ex give a plan to the court that you both agree on, a judge will make it a court order, unless it would be harmful to the child.



TIP: In Texas, it is common to presume that it is in the best interest of the child for the parents to be given joint custody.

How should we use this worksheet?

Completing this worksheet before discussing your parenting plan with your ex, your mediator, or a consulting lawyer can give you the space and time you need to approach co-parenting as thoughtfully as possible. If you and your ex can agree to some things we'll go over in this document, it will be so much easier to complete your divorce forms because you will have already resolved co-parenting issues that are central to your divorce.

Parenting Plan Worksheet

Step 1: Figure out a schedule that works for both of you

In Texas, parents can work together to come up with their own schedule for child custody or visitation, which is in our experience the best way to design a parenting plan. When parents reach agreements about schedules on their own, they are more likely to remain cooperative as their children grow up.

Before answering the questions, here are some tips about custody.

- Each parent must follow the parenting plan even if the other does not.
- If a parent does not follow the parenting plan, the court may find that parent in contempt of court.
- Either parent can have sole custody of the children, or parents can share custody.
- If you cannot agree on a parenting schedule, the judge assigned to your case will make a decision about custody and visitation.
- A parent who has sole custody has the right to make major decisions about the children's health, education and religious upbringing.
- Parents who have joint legal custody have equal rights to make such decisions, unless otherwise specified.
- Joint legal custody does not necessarily mean equal parenting time.

Questions

What type of parenting plan do you want?

We agree on everything (parenting schedule and parenting decisions)

We have a partial agreement

We haven't come to any agreements yet

How many children do you have?

Do you plan to have joint physical custody with your ex or will one of you have sole physical custody?

Where will the children live?

What parenting schedule split is right for you and your spouse?

50/50

60/40

70/30

80/20

Other

What kind of timing do you want your parenting schedule to have?

One day on/ One day off

One week on / One week off

Two days with one spouse, two with the other, then alternate weekends between parents

Shared physical care (child lives with both parents for part of the time)

The children will be in the care of your spouse on the following schedule:

Su:

W:

M:

Th:

Tu:

F:

Sa:

The children will be in my care on the following schedule:

Su:	W:
M:	Th:
Tu:	F:
	Sa:

Have you explained the custody arrangements to your kids?

If you selected “sole physical custody” above, what type of visitation should the parent without physical custody have? (Circle one.)

Scheduled visitation: You will work with your ex to create a detailed visitation plan to outline the dates and times your children will be with each parent. This schedule will also take into account holidays, birthdays, summer and winter breaks, vacation time, and other special occasions.

Reasonable visitation: If you and your ex get along and can maintain strong communication, this option allows parents the most flexibility and freedom in how the children spend their time with each parent. There is no predetermined plan set in place, so parents need to work together closely to make sure the children do not suffer if there are disagreements.

Supervised visitation: This is used when the children’s safety and well-being require that visits with the other parent be supervised by you, another adult, or a professional agency. Supervised visitation is sometimes also used in cases where a child and a parent need time to become more familiar with each other, like if a parent has not seen the child in a long time.

No visitation: If you think your ex will be physically or emotionally harmful to your children, it could be in their best interest to request that visitation not be granted to your ex.

**Want Hello Divorce to take the lead? We got you.
Or just have some questions? We got you. [CLICK HERE](#) to learn how.**

Step 2: Figure out how to share parenting decisions

You and your ex have decided to share legal custody of your children. Congratulations – not every divorcing couple can agree even on this piece. The questions below are meant as a guide to help you navigate the (often) complicated life decisions you and your ex have agreed to face together.

Health decisions

Will you or your ex provide medical, dental, vision and mental health insurance for the children?

We agree on everything (parenting schedule and parenting decisions)

Me

My ex

Both of us

If your child is injured outside of the home, which parent should be called first?

Who will accompany the child to annual and as-needed doctor appointments?

How will you and your ex handle changes to your children's medical and mental health care providers?

Will one parent research and select providers, or do you prefer an agreement be set in place regarding time allotted to each parent to select and come to agreement on a particular provider? If you cannot agree on a provider within the necessary time frame, then what?

**Can both parents administer medical prescriptions to the children?
What about over-the-counter medications?**

How will extra medical, dental, vision, or mental health costs for the children be divided between you and your ex?

Educational and extracurricular decisions

Which parent will be primarily responsible for registering the children for extracurricular activities, and how will the other parent be kept in the loop?

Are there any sports or activities you do not want your child to participate in, at this point?

How should the school keep you up to date about your children? Will one parent be the primary contact, or should the school duplicate parental communications to both of you?

How will you handle meetings like school conferences? Will both you and your ex be present, or do you need to plan to schedule separate conferences?

How will you and your ex share expenses for school and extracurricular activities?

Which parent can sign school permission forms? Should a rule be put in place to require each parent to notify the other if such a form is signed?

How will you and your ex handle illness or unexpected school cancellations?

When decisions need to be made about where your children will attend school, how do you plan to make those decisions with your ex? Do you need to address any conversations about public vs. private school, etc., now?

How will you and your ex continue saving for your children's college education?

How will you and your ex handle discussions with your children about which college to attend or majors?

How will you and your ex divide college expenses? (Make sure to factor in tuition, room and board, books and fees, and travel.)

Arranging vacations & holidays

Since you and your ex will be sharing legal and physical custody of the children, it will be important to lay out arrangements and protocols for spending time with the children – and what happens if last minute scheduling changes need to take place – from the beginning.

Right of first refusal

If one parent suddenly becomes unavailable to use their agreed-upon custody time with the children, does the other parent automatically get first right of refusal when it comes to custody? Or do you and your ex agree that either of you can find an alternate care provider?

If a parent cannot be present for their custodial time, or if they need to change start or end times, how much time should the other parent have to weigh in before the custodial parent can proceed with alternate arrangements?

Do you agree that should either of you require out-of-state or any type of overnight travel with the children, you will mutually inform the other parent of such travel and vacation plans?

Yes

No

Vacations

How many uninterrupted weeks of vacation will each parent get with the children each year?

During the summer months, the child(ren) will be in the care of me according to this schedule:

Su:	W:
M:	Th:
Tu:	F:
	Sa:

During the summer months, the child(ren) will be in the care of my ex. List the days of the weeks and times.

Su:	W:
M:	Th:
Tu:	F:
	Sa:

Should there be any restrictions on either parent as to how vacation time should be spent, or are both parents free to schedule vacation time as they see fit with advance notice in writing?

How will both parents consider the child(ren)'s activity schedules and commitments to friends when it comes to planning vacation time?

How will you determine the exact start and end time of vacation?

Should the children be allowed to go on vacation with your or your ex's friends or significant others?

Yes

No

Holidays

Which major holidays do you prefer you and your ex swap biannually? Or, do you prefer to always have the children on certain holidays and wish to allow the same for your ex? Are there any holidays you can agree to split AM/PM so you can both be with the children on that particular day (like their birthdays)?

By what dates each year will you and your ex agree to have agreed upon holiday schedules? (You might consider dividing holidays in a calendar year in half, so the entire year does not need to be agreed on at once.)

If you can't agree on how to split the holidays in a particular year, what will be your fallback plan? (Many couples write into parenting plans that if there is no agreement, holidays will automatically alternate on even and odd years. Is that the right solution for you?)

Is there anything you want to include in your parenting plan around airplane travel, passports, international travel, or travel a certain number of miles away from the children's primary residence?

Event	Odd Years	Even Years	All Years	Time & Place of Exchange
Spring Break				
Easter				
Mother's Day/Weekend				
Memorial Day/Weekend				
Father's Day/Weekend				
July 4th				
Labor Day/Weekend				
Halloween				
Thanksgiving Day/Break				
Christmas Eve				
Christmas Day				
Week 1 of Winter Break				
Week 2 of Winter Break				
Children's Birthday				
Other (identify)				
Other (identify)				
Other (identify)				

NOTE: If there is a holiday neither you nor your ex celebrate, write "no change" in the "all years" category.

Other major decisions

Telephone access

NOTE: Each parent may have reasonable telephone contact with the children during the children's normal waking hours of child's time zone. Other access and restrictions (video calls, texts, etc.):

Child Tax Exemption

NOTE: Only one parent may claim a deduction for each child on their income tax return for each year.

Who will claim the deduction during even years?

Me

My spouse

Who will claim the deduction during odd years?

Me

My spouse

Other

Identify below any issues or agreements not already identified in this agreement (e.g., screen time, appearance, diet, concert or athletic event attendance).

NOTE: If the parents cannot reach an agreement in the future on any issues involving the child(ren), they agree to enter into mediation parenting coordinator decision-maker at their own cost.

Step 3: Figure out how to manage communication with your ex

We strongly recommend including provisions in your parenting plan that dictate how you and your ex will communicate – at least at the outset of this arrangement. Both you and the co-parenting situation will change as time goes on, but the beginning of this type of arrangement is typically the most sensitive time. Agreeing on how frequently and via what channels to communicate is very important at this point.

- Depending on your relationship with your ex, it might be very important for you to be able to track and timestamp conversations. If that is the case, you might look at apps to help with this.
- If your relationship is more amicable or stable, you might agree to communicate by text and via a shared Google Calendar.

How will the children communicate with the other parent while in custody?

This will not be as important for older children who have their own phones and computers. But determining a schedule and way for younger children to communicate with the other parent – especially during a longer vacation – will likely be something appreciated by you, your ex and your children.

You and your ex may need to set boundaries with regards to communication, if needed. If you are concerned that one of you might overstep these boundaries, it might be wise to set limits on non-emergency communication.

Some final thoughts on developing a parenting plan

Think of the parenting plan you develop and finalize with your divorce as a first draft. Life will change, and so will your parenting plan. As you finalize your first iteration of a parenting plan, it's a good idea to talk with your ex about how frequently you wish to revisit and revise the document. For some, this happens annually; for other co-parents, maybe every two to three years.

Like it or not, the reality is that you and your ex will perhaps never be truly 'separated' – there will be graduations, weddings, births of grandchildren and other life events that will pull you back into each other's orbit. It might be hard. It might be frustrating or even infuriating at times. But remember that the one thing you will always have in common with your ex is your love for your kids. Make that your mantra, and you will navigate these new waters just fine.

Helpful Co-Parenting Resources

Mighty + Bright: Co-Parenting Calendar for Kids

www.mightyandbright.com

What it is: A calendar with magnets representing Mom, Dad, appointments and activities that kids can rearrange based on visitation schedule.

Why we love it: Involving your kids by letting them visualize their own schedule helps them feel informed and in control. When your kids know “the plan” they feel like they’re part of it – and they can help you implement it.

Fayr

www.fayr.com

What it is: An app that encompasses the whole range of co-parenting needs – financial, documentation, geo pinpointing, scheduling, communication – for the entire time you’re co-parenting.

Why we love it: We love the efficiency and ease of the app, and all the tools they provide for constructive communication, argument diffusion and emotional support.