

Recommended co-parenting communication practices

Ten practices that lower conflict between separated parents, with an example of each. For parents to keep; for professionals to hand out.

1. KEEP IT ABOUT THE CHILDREN

Every message should be about the children's schedule, health, school, money or care. Comments about the other parent's home, partner or choices are not part of co-parenting communication.

2. ONE TOPIC PER MESSAGE

Two requests in one message get half an answer. Send them separately, ideally on separate days.

3. FACTS AND DATES, NOT ADJECTIVES

"Collected at 6.40; the agreed time is 6" is a fact. "Late again, as usual" is an accusation, and it gets a defence instead of an answer.

4. ASK QUESTIONS THAT HAVE ANSWERS

- Instead of: "Can you try to be on time for once?"
- Send: "Can you do the 5pm drop-off on Friday 12th?"

5. PUT THE DEADLINE IN THE REQUEST

"Could you let me know by Wednesday?" is not pushy. It tells the other parent the request is real and gives them a way to close it.

6. OFFER SOMETHING WITH A SWAP

A swap that comes with an alternative ("I can take the following weekend") turns "will you do this for me" into "does this arrangement work".



7. NEVER REPLY AT ONCE

Draft, leave it an hour, reread, then send. Most regretted messages were sent fast, late and angry.

8. DO NOT ANSWER THE BAIT

Accusations, questions about your private life and remarks about your partner need no reply. Answer only the part about the children, if there is one. Silence on the rest is a boundary, not rudeness.

9. KEEP EVERYTHING IN ONE WRITTEN CHANNEL

Texts plus emails plus voicemails is how "you never told me" happens. One channel with timestamps means the record keeps itself and nobody is keeping a file on anybody.

10. HANDOVERS ARE FOR HELLO AND GOODBYE

Anything that takes longer than a minute belongs in a message sent beforehand. If the other parent wants to talk at the door: "Let's do it by message."

A FORMAT THAT WORKS WHEN THINGS ARE HARD

Brief, Informative, Friendly, Firm. A few sentences, facts only, a neutral tone, and a clear end to the exchange.

Example

"Thanks for letting me know. Sam has his inhaler in the front pocket of his bag, and the school has a spare. Drop-off on Friday is 5pm as usual. Hope you both have a good weekend."

TOOLS THAT HELP

peaceparent.com/tools/tone-checker checks a message before you send it and offers a calmer version. In the PeaceParent app, Tone Guard does this for every message as you write it, and schedule changes are requests with a yes or no.

