

Summary and Tips on what to include in a **Parenting Plan**



If you're wondering what should be included in a Parenting Plan, here's some pointers:

- Who the child will live with.
- How the parents will share day to day parental responsibilities and make decisions for and about the child.
- How much time the child will spend with each parent.
- A parenting time schedule that shows when each parent has the child.
- How the child will communicate with a parent they do not live with.
- How the parents will communicate about the child.
- What time the child will spend with other people (grandparents, siblings, other relatives).
- How the child will keep in touch with other people when the child is with each parent.
- Arrangements for holidays, birthdays, school breaks, and other special occasions such as Mother's Day or Father's Day.
- What activities each parent will do with the child and who will attend the child's important events.
- A process for making changes to the plan as the child's needs change.
- A method for resolving disputes or a way to solve problems that arise.
- Financial arrangements for the child which can only be included in a parenting plan not a consent order.
- Special provisions and stipulations about how the parents will provide and care for the child.
- Any other aspect of the care, welfare, or development of the child.

When making a parenting plan you should consider the following from the *Family Law Act* (section 63C);

- A parenting plan is all about children arrangements, it doesn't include information about how you and you ex will divide up your assets (this is called a Property Settlement).
- As circumstances change, you may need to revise your plan to meet the needs of your child.
- Your parenting plan should be **in writing, signed and dated by both parents**. It should also be made free from any threat, pressure, or coercion.

- A parenting plan is not legally enforceable, but if both parents agree on the arrangements you can submit your plan to the Family Court and the details of your plan will then be put into a parenting order (which is legally binding and enforceable).
- You can change your plan at any time by writing out a new plan with your ex, make sure both of you sign it.
- You can change your parenting order by writing out a new parenting plan and submitting it to the court.
- The law presumes that it is in the best interest of the child for both parents to have equal shared parental responsibility (as previously mentioned this does not mean that the child spends equal time with both parents).

Your parenting plan should be unique to your situation and focus on what is best for your children. If age appropriate, you can consider finding out some of your child's living preferences and putting them in the plan if you think it is appropriate.

Keep your plan practical, simple, and as concrete as possible so that you and your ex fully understand it. Remember **the higher the conflict, the more specific you should be in your parenting plan.**

Here's what The Family Court states:

What do you need to consider when making parenting arrangements for your child/ren?

Every family is different, so the arrangements that work for your family may be different from other families. Try to make arrangements that will work the best for your child/ren.

When making arrangements for your child/ren, you will need to consider:

- *the age of the child/ren which is very important in deciding what arrangements will work;*
- *establishing a regular routine so the child/ren know the routine and what to expect when, but also be flexible when required;*
- *giving plenty of notice if you wish to change the routine, for example, for special family occasions;*
- *whether it is reasonably practical for the child/ren to spend equal time or substantial and significant time with each parent (substantial and significant time includes weekends, school holidays and days other than those);*
- *how their time will be spent with other significant persons in their lives, such as grandparents and other relatives;*
- *who will look after them after school and where will they spend holidays;*
- *any other things such as choice of school, health care, sport, or religious matters, and;*
- *how to ensure that the child/ren continue to enjoy their culture.*