

# GETTING STARTED CHECKLIST

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While you are waiting for your petition to be filed, take some time to consider the following items. This will help you narrow your focus as you begin the mediation process and help you prepare questions and thoughts for your Preliminary Planning Session. Use this as a guide for you to determine where you may already have some agreements, and which issues may be more uncertain.

- Will either of you stay in the marital home? If so, have you discussed who?
  
- If one of you leave the home temporarily before deciding who will stay in the home long-term, who will pay the mortgage (and other regular expenses such as gas, electricity, and home repairs) while you're apart? Will you continue to pay equally? If so, how will the party leaving the marital home afford their residence?
  
- Will you continue to share money until the divorce is final? If not, what timeline feels appropriate for you to live financially separate?
  
- How will you share assets such as stocks and bonds? How about the pension(s) and other retirement accounts? Will they be shared 50/50? Is there a separate property interest that needs to be calculated? Will one or both of you waive your interest in the other's retirement account?
  
- Who keeps the car/boat/washing machine, etc.? How will you split big ticket items?
  
- How will you split the personal property (furniture, dishes, pots and pans)? If one party will keep most of it, how do you want to value those items? Add a little bit of body text



What about the joint credit cards? Will you continue to use joint cards? If you've never had credit in your own name, consider applying for your own credit card before the joint cards are canceled.

How will you handle your current debts?

Who will be responsible for the debts either of you incur while you're separated?

Will you continue to file joint income-tax returns? Are there taxes due, or other problems pertaining to joint tax returns that will surface after the divorce that will have to be addressed in the division of property and liabilities?

Do you expect one of you will pay spousal support to the other? Do you have an idea how much it will need to be? Will it be in the form of a lump-sum or periodic payments? When will the payments begin and end?

Do you expect one of you will be paying child support to the other? Do you have an idea how much it will need to be? When will the payments begin? When will they end (e.g., when the child turns 18, or leaves home, or completes college, etc.)? Will this answer vary depending on whether the child stays at home to attend community college?

Will one or both of you be contributing to a college fund for your kids? How will the payments be made? Will they be made to one joint account (i.e., 529), or will you each save separately?



- How will you share responsibility for the care and raising of your children: joint, sole, or shared custody?
  
- When will the children be staying with each of you?
  
- Have you considered how you will manage the time with your children if you work a lot, or travel for work?
  
- How flexible do you want your timeshare plan to be?
  
- Do you anticipate any problems if you agree to a more flexible time share arrangement, as opposed to a very formal schedule?

It is not necessary to know the answers to all the above at the outset of the process. These are to help get you thinking of the various issues that may need to be addressed and to help you brainstorm questions that may be relevant for you to ask in your initial 1:1 meeting with your mediator.

