



Holidays and Divorce: How To Make It Easier For Your Child

Let us spare your child the pain and agony we have seen other children go through. In fact, here is a story we would like to share with you. As divorce professionals, we have seen all types of plans and compromises get put into place for holiday planning. We have also seen the opposite, which is no communication and no planning. In fact, we have seen children attend the same holiday performance two nights in a row and never tell either parent that they had already seen the holiday show. They pretended they hadn't seen it, and just saw it again while trying to act appreciatively.

The reality is that holidays require communication and planning. You should discuss special events. Who will bring your child to the special holiday show? What day? What gifts will you each purchase for your child? Will any of them be joint? Are any off limits (e.g., phone)? Will your child be having two dinners on a holiday or dinner in one home and dessert in the other? Please think of your child as you make these decisions.

We have provided a holiday planning guide to better help you (and your children) get through the holidays. We hope it makes things a little easier for you.

PLANNING FOR THE HOLIDAYS

What special events are you planning on bringing your child to?

- When? (Add to your shared calendar and alert the other parent).

How can you involve your ex in participating in this shared event?

- For example, can your ex attend?
- Can your ex buy something special for the event?
- Can you share pictures at the time of the event?

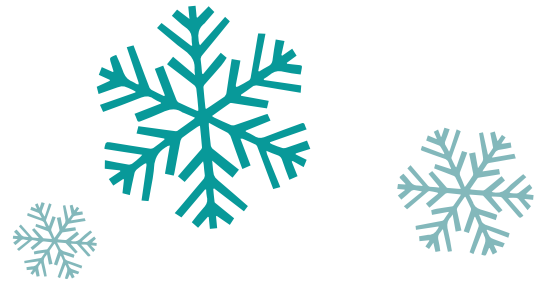
Are there any special scheduling requests that need to be discussed with your ex (e.g., extended family in town on a certain day)?

- Give as much advance notice as you can so that your ex can try to accommodate.



What has your child expressed to you that s/he wants for the holidays?

- Is this something that will only be in one home?
- Is this something that will move across homes?
- Is this something that your child should have two of (one in each home)?
- Will it be an individual or joint gift to your child?
- How much does it cost? Who will pay for it?



Are there any gifts that are “off limits” in either household?

- For example, you both agree that your child is too young for a phone.

Do any gifts require discussion around rules/limits that will be connected to the gift?

- For example, if a child gets a video game system: When can the child play video games? What will the rules be?

Is an extended family member purchasing a “wanted” gift? If yes, what?

- If someone in your family is buying your child a large gift, discuss this with your ex as well.

Will the children be getting gifts for the parents?

- Will the children be making gifts at home, making gifts at school, and/or purchasing gifts?
- Will you both agree to give your children a certain amount of money to pick out a gift for each parent? How much?

Will the children be able to bring holiday gifts between houses?

- Are the gifts permitted to go back/forth between homes during the holiday break? Or can the gifts go back/forth anytime, even after the holidays are over?

HELPFUL TIPS FOR HOLIDAY PLANNING

- Start your discussion early with your ex. A month ahead of time is probably a good start.
- Start discussion around special holiday-related events, school events, gifts, and upcoming holiday breaks.
- Place all events on a shared calendar. This includes holiday events at school as well.
- Be fair and reasonable when it comes to sharing special events with your child. If you were able to bring your child to a special holiday show last year, let your ex have the opportunity this year.
- Don't over-schedule the children. If the kids are having a special night with your ex, don't plan for a full day the next day or vice versa.
- Think about holiday meals. Although you may each want to have a holiday meal with your child, it may be that one of you gets to have dinner and the other gets to have dessert with your children. Don't make your child have two meals if they don't want to. And don't ruin your ex's holiday with the children by planning an early holiday dinner that then spoils your children's experience with your ex.
- When you start discussion around gifts, share what you know with your ex. You are both probably hearing from your children what they want. So share that information so that it can be a successful holiday for your children.
- Use the Gift Giving/Buying Chart to coordinate gifts, costs, etc.
- Plan and communicate extra activities so neither parent's plans are spoiled. During the holidays, many movies come out, there are local season events, etc. Try to share those so the children have a good break, and an equal opportunity to do extra fun activities with each parent.

