



Co-Parenting Tips

Core Mindset (What Judges Look For)

Judges consistently favor parents who demonstrate a calm, cooperative, and child-focused approach. Communication should reflect reasonableness, stability, and a willingness to support the child's relationship with both parents. Family courts broadly evaluate cooperation, reliability, and the ability to reduce conflict.

Bill Eddy–Inspired Approach (BIFF Method)

Use BIFF: Brief, Informative, Friendly, Firm.

Keep messages short and focused. Provide only necessary facts, not opinions or emotional reactions. Maintain a neutral or polite tone, even when the other parent is not. Be clear and decisive without over-explaining.

Example:

“I’ll pick up Jordan at 5pm Friday as scheduled. Let me know if anything changes.”

JADE Principle (Avoid Escalation)

Do not JADE: Justify, Argue, Defend, Explain.

Over-explaining or defending yourself invites more conflict and prolongs arguments. You do not need to convince the other parent. State your position once and disengage.

Form of Communication (Choose Intentionally)

Different tools serve different purposes. Choosing the right one helps reduce conflict and improve clarity.

Email is often best for most communication. It allows time to think, creates a clear record, and supports more structured, BIFF-style responses.

Text messaging should be limited to urgent, time-sensitive logistics (e.g., “Running 10 minutes late”). It can easily lead to reactive exchanges and misunderstandings.

Co-parenting apps (such as OurFamilyWizard or TalkingParents) are frequently recommended in high-conflict situations. They create an organized, court-admissible record and encourage more disciplined communication.

When in doubt, choose the format that promotes **clarity, documentation, and emotional distance**.

Emotional Regulation Before Responding

Do not respond immediately if you are dysregulated.

If a message triggers anger, anxiety, or defensiveness, pause. Give yourself time to settle before replying. This may mean waiting hours or even a full day, unless the issue is urgent for the child.

Responding while calm leads to clearer, shorter, and more effective communication. Reacting in the moment often leads to long, emotional messages that escalate conflict and may reflect poorly if reviewed later.

A simple rule:

If your heart rate is up or you feel the need to “prove a point,” wait.

Effective Communication Habits

Strong co-parenting communication is simple and consistent. Focus on logistics such as schedules, school, and health. Use neutral language and avoid assumptions or accusations. Brief acknowledgments help maintain a cooperative tone.

Pausing before responding—especially in emotionally charged situations—improves outcomes and reduces escalation.

What to Avoid

Conflict escalates when communication becomes emotional, excessive, or unfocused. Avoid sarcasm, blame, or revisiting past issues unrelated to the current topic. Lengthy explanations and defensive messaging tend to increase conflict rather than resolve it.

Repeated argument cycles should be minimized.

Handling High-Conflict Situations

Limit engagement to necessary, child-related issues. Do not respond to inflammatory remarks unless required for the child’s welfare. If needed, repeat your position calmly and consistently without adding new arguments.

Structured, brief responses reduce opportunities for misinterpretation (High Conflict Institute).

Boundaries and Structure

Treat communication like a professional exchange. Keep it focused, predictable, and documented.

Establish clear expectations around schedules, exchanges, and updates. Written communication provides accountability. Courts and professionals often recommend structured tools in high-conflict cases.

“Court-Ready” Communication Test

Before sending any message, consider:

Would this appear reasonable and child-focused to a judge?

Does it reduce conflict or contribute to it?

Would I be comfortable having this read in court?

Simple Response Templates

Neutral acknowledgment:

“Got it, thanks.”

Setting a boundary:

“I’ll follow the current schedule.”

Declining to engage:

“I’m focusing on what’s best for the kids and won’t engage further on this topic.”

Bottom Line

Effective co-parenting communication is calm, brief, and intentional. Using BIFF while avoiding JADE helps reduce conflict and demonstrates the cooperative, child-focused behavior courts expect. Choosing structured communication methods and waiting to respond until you are regulated further supports clarity and credibility. When communication becomes difficult or stuck, parents can return to co-parenting counseling or mediation to reset patterns, improve coordination, and keep the focus on the child’s well-being.