

The Oratto Parenting Plan

A questionnaire to help divorcing and separating parents think about the arrangements for children



Parent A: _____

Parent B: _____

Children's names: _____

Agreeing the arrangements for children following separation or divorce can be extremely difficult. Oratto's parenting plan questionnaire can be used to form the basis of your discussions and negotiations for a formal parenting agreement.

Each parent should consider the form individually, make notes as you wish, then once the responses of each parent have been mutually agreed the form can be filled out, printed and signed as a record of the agreed arrangements.

1 – Main Living Arrangements

Day-to-day Arrangement

During the week: on which days and nights will the children be with each parent?

Does this include getting them to and from school or will you make other arrangements for this? What are the regular school run arrangements?

Who will be responsible for taking children to and from after-school activities – will it be the parent the children are spending that night with?

Will you schedule telephone/video calls between the children and their other parent when they are with you?

Travel and Handovers

How will the children get from one parent to the other - can you agree that this can be shared and flexible and agreed at the time or is it necessary to set down arrangements in advance?

If you wish to detail these arrangements here, what are they and how will they be achieved?

Are you able to agree to keep handovers focused on the children and to refrain from discussing contentious issues in front of them?

2 – Routines

Can you agree to keep children to their pre-existing routine – bedtime, after school, before school, etc – as far as is practically possible?

Are you able to accept that each of you may have different parenting styles and to respect these differences?

Can you agree to mutually encourage your children to be respectful of any ground-rules that each of you may have in your respective homes?

3 – Weekends

When does a weekend start and end? Does it start when school ends on Friday or Saturday morning? Does it end on Sunday evening or Monday morning? It is important to define this early to prevent misunderstandings later on.

Will the children share the weekend days between Mum and Dad or will they be able to enjoy alternate weekends with each parent individually?

What about Bank Holiday Weekends? Can you agree to share these over the year, so that the children are able to enjoy Bank Holiday weekends with both parents?

4 – Holidays and Special Arrangements

School Holidays

Half-Terms: How will you share this time with the other parent? For example, half the week each, with a handover during the week or some other arrangement?

Easter Holidays: How will this be shared – will the children split this holiday between both parents on an annual rotation, will they spend Easter Sunday with one and Easter Monday with the other in one year, will you alternate annually or have some other arrangement?

Summer Holidays: How will the summer holidays be arranged? Will you have the children for equal numbers of weeks and if so which weeks will they be with each of you?

If not sharing the holiday weeks equally, what will the arrangements be for these holidays?

Will you incorporate your previously agreed weekends into your holiday arrangements?

Will the children spend any time with grandparents or other extended family during the summer and if so how and when will this be achieved?

What about holidays outside of the UK? Do you agree that each parent can take the children out of the country for a certain period of days ? What information would each parent be required to give the other about the holiday?

5 – Christmas Holidays

Christmas and the New Year can be a very difficult time, but with careful advance planning, stress and uncertainty can be greatly alleviated for both parents and children.

How will you agree to share the Christmas holidays?

Some suggestions:

- To alternate the two week Christmas holiday period on an annual basis: with the children spending the first week with one parent (to include Christmas Day), and the second week with the other parent (to include New Year).
- To share the weeks as you might do the half-term holidays, and to make specific arrangements for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, working on an alternating basis each year.
- To spend the holiday as agreed in Main Living Arrangements section, with specific arrangements for Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day worked out on an individual basis before the holiday commences.

How will you accommodate traditional family gatherings into your arrangements?

6 – Other Days for Consideration

Mother's Day/Father's Day: Will the children spend these days with the appropriate parent, regardless of which parent they would usually be scheduled to be with at the time? Will you agree to ensure that the children always have a small gift and card to give to their other parent for these days?

Children's Birthdays: How will you ensure that your children are able to enjoy birthday celebrations with each of you? Will you organise a party or other celebration together – and both attend – or will you each arrange a separate celebration for the child during your own pre-agreed parenting time? Will you communicate regarding gifts and treat outings?

Other Religious Festivals: What arrangements can you agree on ?

Special Family Events/Gatherings: Which special family events are important to each of you each year? Can you accommodate these events within your agreed arrangements? Can you agree to make sure that the other parent has plenty of notice about such events in case the existing pre-agreed arrangements need to be altered?

Inset Days: Who will be responsible for organising childcare or taking time off work? Can you agree to share this equally with each other so that you both are able to enjoy inset days with the children?

7 – Practical Arrangements

Financial Arrangements

Child Maintenance: Is there any to be paid? If so, from who to whom, what amount and how often?

Will the agreed amount cover larger less regular expenses such as school uniforms, musical instruments, sportswear, tuition or activity fees, school trips, spectacles, etc? If not, can you detail them here?

Who will do the routine clothes and shoe shopping for the children (including school uniforms and other associated items)?

Communication

How will you share information? Will you exchange regular emails or perhaps use a shared online calendar? The latter option allows you to update school events, activities, parents' evenings, social events, parties and more.

Can you agree to discuss all major school decisions?

Who will be responsible for medical, dental or other health decisions?

Can you agree not to place unreasonable restrictions on what your children can and cannot do during their time with each parent?

Where will you go for help if communications are breaking down, or if there is a particular issue that you can't agree on?

New Partners

It is very likely that at some point you will each embark on new relationships with other people. The professional advice is to wait until the children have adjusted to the changes of separation and are settled before introducing any new partners. It is also advised that children should be introduced to new partners with some sensitivity, both to the feelings of the children and of the other parent.

Having carefully thought-out agreements in place regarding how and when to introduce new partners – even in advance of these future relationships – can save problems later on.

Can you agree to respect each other’s private lives?

Can you agree to wait until you are sure that the relationship is serious before introducing your children to a new partner?

Although a timeframe isn’t necessary, it can help some parents to plan when and how to introduce children to a new partner. Do you think a timeframe is a good idea, and if so, what would that be?

Moving Away

What if one parent wishes to move away, either because of work or because of more personal reasons? How would you discuss this, and would you seek agreement from the other parent before making any decisions? Would you agree to a new parenting plan being drawn up?

Other Issues

Personal Belongings: Should the children be free to move their clothes, toys, personal belongings, etc. between the two homes or does what each of you buy remain in your respective home? Some experts believe that preventing free movement of personal belongings can reinforce ideas of division and contribute to feelings of child instability.

Important Documents: Where will any documents relating to the children be kept? For example, passports, birth certificates, official school papers, school reports, and medical records. Ideally, they should be kept safe in one place, with both parents able to freely access them when required. Perhaps the parent who is not holding the documents could have copies.

Doctors and Dentists Appointments: Who will take children to healthcare appointments? Will you decide when the appointments are scheduled or will it be whoever has care of the child at the time of the appointment. Or will you share responsibilities at the time?

Emergency contacts for school and extra-curricular groups and activities: Can you agree that you are both listed as your children's main emergency contacts? Is there a trusted friend or family member who could also be on the emergency list?

Children’s Input

As these arrangements are about your children, you may wish to ask your children for their thoughts regarding the plan. This could take many possible forms – for example, a drawing of what your child thinks having two homes will be like. You may wish to ask if there is anything special they would like to have in both homes; or, for older children, if they would like to be able to invite their friends around or to be able to enjoy certain freedoms or responsibilities that come with adolescence.

Other Arrangements

Are there any other arrangements you wish to include in this parenting plan?

Name:

Signed:

Dated:

Name:

Signed:

Dated: