

Effective Written Communications Between Homes

1. Send only necessary emails, and limit the number per day.
2. Focus on no more than three topics at a time, and fewer if possible. Keep each item brief—generally no more than two sentences.
3. Number the topics for easy reference, so the other parent can address each point in the same format.
4. Start the email with their name, such as “Bill, can you...?”
5. Use polite language, like “please” and “thank you.”
6. Keep the email concise and specific. Elaborate only if requested, and limit any further details to what is necessary.
7. Focus on current or future matters, avoiding past issues.
8. Send emails directly to the person you wish to communicate with—avoid involving friends or relatives.
9. Keep the tone non-judgmental, and refrain from giving instructions on how the other parent should parent or co-parent.
10. Stick to practical matters like appointments, activities, or pick-up/drop-off details.
11. Offer choices and be flexible when possible.
12. Make requests rather than demands.
13. If you receive a critical email, don’t engage emotionally. Respond as you would to a co-worker or business partner, focusing on solutions.
14. Use “I” statements to address concerns. For example, “I feel concerned when I see Bobby’s low grades. I recommend we take him to a tutor. What do you think?”
15. When an email asks for an immediate response, acknowledge it right away, even if you need time to provide an answer.
16. Speak only for yourself. You can say, “The children said...” or “I think they may feel...,” but avoid phrases like “The children feel...”.

Before sending, review this list. Ask yourself: Does this meet the guidelines for effective co-parenting communication? If not, take the time to revise.