



5 Easy Steps to Parenting Arrangements

By Nicole Berg, Accredited Specialist Family Law



5 Simple steps to organising parenting arrangements with your ex-partner over the Christmas period

Organising parenting arrangements at any time with your former partner can sometimes be difficult.

For most separated parents, the Christmas period holds special challenges.

However, the underlying animosity and trust issues that abound in separations serve to create a high pressure situation at Christmas. Here are some steps to help alleviate stress and anxiety about these issues:

1. Preparation! Preparation! Preparation!

Start early with your negotiations and discussions. Make yourself aware of any schooling or extra-curricular activities, work commitments and planned holidays that might impact upon Christmas holiday negotiations. There are a lot of other issues people are trying to organise at this time – vacations, and presents for example. People are already under pressure and stressed out trying to make ends meet financially. If you take this into account and start discussions off early (October / November) then a lot of these issues will not be as prevalent and both parents can concentrate on successfully organising the parenting arrangements for their children without added burdens. This also gives parents time, if it becomes blatantly obvious that no agreement can be reached, seek legal assistance or to obtain the assistance of a trained dispute resolution practitioner.

3. Focus On Compromising

You can't always get what you want, but if you focus on the children's needs to spend time with each parent (and their respective families) then you can enhance the Christmas period for everyone. Have a clear idea of what your ideal position would be and then make notes on what you would be willing to compromise on.

Whatever your feelings towards your former partner (or their extended families or new partners), your children probably have a very different outlook. Focus on what your children might like to do at this special time. I don't know too many children who would refuse two special 'Christmas days' and double the presents! Two very common Christmas alternatives are:

- One parent has the children from Christmas Eve until around lunchtime Christmas Day and the other parent has the children from lunchtime Christmas Day until Boxing Day. The parents alternate these periods each year, allowing the children to experience both parents as 'Santa Clause' every alternate year.
- One parent has Christmas Eve until Boxing Day morning and the other parent has Boxing Day until the day following Boxing Day. This is alternated each year.

This allows the children to experience these special occasions with each parent and their extended families.

2. Co-Operation, Respect & Spirit Of The Season

The best outcomes for your children for the holiday season will only be obtained if each parent approaches the negotiations and the arrangements with a view to being co-operative with the other parent, respectful of the other parent's role in the lives of the children and to deal with each other in the full spirit of the Christmas season. If you follow this, your children will see you each treating the other parent in an appropriate manner and this will make their Christmas period comfortable and joyful.

4. No Matter What – Focus On The Children Not On Your Interests Or Your Positions

If you find yourself arguing about parenting arrangements over this period, take a step back and ask yourself if the position you are pushing for is really to benefit the children or your own wants and needs. Christmas is a period to be enjoyed by children, not a period when a child should be experiencing arguing, sniping, bickering and upset between their parents.

5. If All Else Fails

Follow your Court Orders to the letter without compromise. If no Court Orders are in place, then seek the assistance of an Accredited Family Law Specialist.

ABN 18 331 401 939
Tel ephone 07 3232 5700
Facsimil e 07 3232 5777
Email info@whd.com.au
www.whd.com.au

Level 12
145 Eagle Street
Brisbane QLD 4000
GPO Box 2471
Brisbane QLD 4001



WALSH HALLIGAN DOUGLAS
LAWYERS

