

CHILDREN'S DIVORCE RULES

Dear Mom and Dad, I'm your child, so please . . .

- 1. Don't talk badly about my other parent.**
(This makes me feel torn apart! AND makes me feel bad about myself!)
- 2. Don't talk badly about my other parent's friends & relatives.**
(Let me care for someone, even if you don't.)
- 3. Don't talk about the divorce process or other grown-up stuff.**
(This makes me feel sick. Please be the adult, and leave me out of it!)
- 4. Don't talk about child support.**
(This makes me feel like a possession, instead of your kid. It makes me feel guilty.)
- 5. Don't make me feel bad when I enjoy my other parent.**
(This makes me afraid to tell you things, including sharing my joy.)
- 6. Don't block my visits or prevent me from speaking to my other parent on the phone.**
(This makes me not trust you to avoid using me as a weapon.)
- 7. Don't interrupt my time with my other parent by calling too much, or planning activities during my time with that parent.** *(This makes me feel torn and controlled.)*
- 8. Don't argue in front of me on the phone when I can hear you!** *(This turns my stomach inside out. I can't trust you to care enough to protect me from your distress.)*
- 9. Don't use me to spy for you when I'm at my other parent's house.** *(This makes me feel disloyal and dishonest. You are alienating me from my other parent. I need you both.)*
- 10. Don't ask me to keep secrets from my other parent.** *(Secrets make me anxious. When you ask me to hold your secrets, you are making me too responsible for your well-being. YOU are the adult/parent.)*
- 11. Don't ask me questions about my other parent's life or our time together.** *(This is another kind of spying. I feel disloyal. Just let me tell you.)*
- 12. Don't give me verbal messages to deliver to my other parent.** *(You are putting me in the middle. I get anxious wondering how s/he'll react to ME. Leave a message or email.)*
- 13. Don't send written messages with me or place them in my bag.** *(Again, you are putting me in the middle. My other parent will react to ME instead of to you.)*
- 14. Don't blame my other parent for the divorce or things that go wrong in your life.** *(This also puts me in the middle, and feels terrible! I feel sorry for you and want to protect you against my other parent. OR, I want to defend my other parent, because I love him/her too.)*
- 15. Don't treat me like an adult! Please find an adult friend or therapist to talk to.** *(I can't carry your adult distress about the divorce on top of my own!)*
- 16. Don't ignore my other parent or sit on opposite sides of the room during my school or sports activities.** *(I feel sad, anxious, tense and embarrassed. Please act friendly, and like parents, even if it's just for me.)*
- 17. DO let me take items to my other home, as long as I can carry them back and forth.** *(Otherwise, I end up feeling your distrust and your not wanting to share WITH ME. You end up treating me as a possession.)*
- 18. Don't use guilt to pressure me to love you more, and don't ask me where I want to live.** *(This makes ME choose between my two parents.)*
- 19. DO realize I have two homes, not just one. I'd also really appreciate it if you let my other parent come into our home now and then, because it's my home, too!** *(It doesn't matter how much time I spend there. I need to see common courtesy – not hostility.)*
- 20. DO let me love you both and see each of you as much as possible! Especially when it benefits me, be flexible even when it's not part of our regular schedule.**

THANKS!! Your loving child, xoxoxo

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