

# Utah Parent-Time for Children's Age Groups

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The Utah parent-time schedule is a comprehensive arrangement for schedule for parent-time during even and odd years. The various versions of the schedule are customized to accommodate the age-specific needs of children as they grow through each age group from infancy through their late teens. Ideally, for all age groups, the custody schedule should give children as frequent contact with both parents as possible and allow both parents involvement in routine parenting.

## Parenting Plans for Children's Age Groups

Usually, in child custody arrangements, the child lives with each parent for part of the year or lives with one parent and has scheduled visitation with the other parent. The arrangements vary based on children's individual and age-based needs. For example, infants typically live with one parent and have visitation with the other, and should not be away from either parent for more than a few days or so. But, older teens may, in some cases, have busy school, work, and social schedules that cause parent-time to be reduced largely to phone calls and some holidays.

For the comprehensively detailed guidelines for parent plans for each age group, see Utah 30-3-35. Or, here is a look at some of the highlights of the Utah parenting plans for each age group of children (Click on the link below to jump to section):

### Infant Parenting Plan

The infant parenting plan is customized to accommodate the needs of babies between birth and 18 months. Utah custody law is very specific in its mandates for the management of parent-time. It even differentiates specifications between babies 12

months old and those 18 months old for days and hours of visitation, among other legal stipulations.

Some things to consider when working on a parenting plan to submit to the court might include:

- Spelling out information in your plan regarding your baby's breastfeeding schedule, the need to wait until breastfeeding is discontinued before starting overnight visits.
- Including a requirement for a daily communication log so that both parents can track the baby's sleeping, eating, diapering, and any new developments. You and your co-parent can transfer the log along with the baby. This will help establish a parenting plan that maintains consistency and focus.
- Babies may develop a preference between the caregivers and may feel upset or anxious when separated from the parent for very long. The custody schedule may need some adjustment to alleviate stress for the baby.

## **Toddler Parenting Plan**

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Parent-time schedules for toddlers are customized to meet the needs of children ages 18 months to 3 years old. A co-parenting plan for toddlers should allow frequent contact for your toddler with each parent and include abundant opportunities for each parent to provide for routine child care tasks. For example, feeding, playing games with, reading to, bathing the child, and putting your child to bed at night.

Consider the amount of childcare you will need for your toddler and make arrangements in advance. Have a backup plan as well, if possible. Also, think about the distance between your home and your ex-spouse's home as you make your co-parenting plans.

## **Preschooler Parenting Plans**

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A parenting plan for a preschool child is designed to meet the needs of kids 3 to 5 years old. A priority for young children is making them feel secure and comfortable in both parents' homes. It may be best to identify a primary home for them, to help them feel grounded. You can then gradually increase the number and length of visits to the other parent's home over time.

Numerous options can work well for parent-time scheduling to accommodate the routines of curious, energetic preschoolers. Take into consideration the distance between your ex-spouse's home and yours, childcare needs, and both your work schedules.

## **School-Age Child Parenting Plan**

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To create the ideal parenting plan for children 5 to 13 years, take into consideration the nature and degree of each parent's relationship with the child before the divorce. It's also important to keep in mind both parents' work schedules and the distance between the two homes.

The parents' degree of conflict needs to be considered and managed carefully. You'll also need to prioritize your child's social activities and other regular commitments as much as possible.

The parent-time schedule, per Utah 30-3-35, should maintain consistency of the routine for school-aged children. It should also put a limit on the number of transfers between the two parent's homes. Determine whether your child needs a custody schedule that is anchored in a home base, or if your child can do well alternating equally between the two residences.

## **Teenager Parenting Plan**

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Teenager parenting schedules are set up to accommodate kids 13 to 18 years old. Teens often have very busy schedules, including school, work, sports, and social activities. They also need some unstructured time for relaxing from their many activities.

The parent-time schedule for teens should be adapted to work around your teen's schedule. Parents will need to adapt to trying to manage parent-time in ways that support teens' schedules and commitments.

Parents should talk about driving, curfews, dating, etc. to provide consistency for teens. As teens get closer to adulthood, parents may need to substitute in-person visits with scheduled phone calls or video chats to keep in contact if they cannot have as much time with their teenagers.

## **Holiday Parent-Time Schedules**

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Across all phases of your child's growth through the years, be sure to include a holiday schedule that determines where your child will be on each holiday. Include summer school breaks and other important family occasions for celebrations for both parents too. The parents should each have approximately the same amount of holiday parent-time. As teens become more independent, flexibility is required to work with their schedules.

## **Regaining Involvement in Parenting Your Child**

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Consider the level of each parent's involvement with the child before the divorce. If one parent has not been involved in the parenting process but wants to become more engaged, consider starting with a few weekly visits of several hours each. As the parent becomes more comfortable as a caregiver, overnight visits can gradually be added, and the number and length of other visits can be increased.

Prioritize the child's current level of attachment to each parent and the child's temperament when creating a parent-time schedule that is best for him/her.

## **For Custody and Parent-Time Issues in Utah**

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Developing a parenting plan on your own that ideally serves your child's best interests and meets the needs of everyone involved in two households can seem overwhelming. A child custody lawyer can help you make sure the court-ordered parent-time schedule is in your child's best interest.

We also defend your child visitation rights, as needed. Crafting a plan that the court will accept requires language that ensures concrete legal enforceability and zero errors in omitting required information. If you need help with a parent-time issue, call Wall & Wall Attorneys at Law, P.C., Salt Lake City, Utah at (801) 441-2388, or use our contact request form to schedule a free consultation.