

# What You Can Do to Keep the Family Holidays Happy During Divorce

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By Wall Legal Solutions



The holidays present some of life's most meaningful occasions for celebrating, and for creating lifelong memories for you and your children to share. ***The first several holidays with your children, as a single parent, are especially important for establishing a sense of normalcy after divorce and a sense that holidays are still a time to enjoy being together.*** Below, we have provided a basic holiday checklist for divorced parents, to help you and your kids enjoy a smooth and happy season of fun family times.

## Make Clear Arrangements with Your Ex.

Confusion, miscommunications, and messy transfers of children back and forth between homes are incidents that can frustrate your efforts to sustain a celebratory atmosphere for your family during the holidays. Just a little [preparation can help you and your ex](#) set up a clear plan for specific times, locations, and other details involved in transferring your children between the two homes throughout the holidays.

- ***If you think it can help you and your ex to stay on the same page, make two copies of the details of the arrangements;*** send one to your ex, and keep one for yourself.
- In the plan, include a list of clothes, coats, gloves, hats, scarves, sleepwear, grooming items, medications, and other important items that the children should bring with them.
- ***Be sure to include a favorite comfort item, such as a favorite blanket or toy, to help your children cope with holiday stresses caused by changing routines,*** adjusting expectations, transferring between homes, and by the stresses adults are experiencing and may not be aware are affecting children's stress

levels.

- **Make sure that *all* adults involved fully agree to the holiday plan.** Try to settle on the arrangements a couple of months or more before the holidays.
- If possible, make contingency plans with your ex. Make sure that there is **full agreement on plans for alternative actions in case of date changes** because of weather, lateness due to car trouble, traffic jams, or any other common holiday logistics problems.
- **All special requirements or personal preferences that are important to you or your ex-wife/ex-husband regarding your children's care should be addressed.** Doing so in advance helps maintain consistency in kids' routines in both homes, and helps prevent conflicts between parents.

## Reduce Stress for All Adults Involved.

Being careful to minimize stress for all other adults involved comes with the bonus of reducing your own stress in your necessary collaboration with them to manage the holidays well for your children. Alleviating the pressure of scheduling bottlenecks is one option.

After all, the calendar dates on which you celebrate the holidays with your kids doesn't matter to children. So, **consider having your holiday time with them during the week before or after the official holiday dates**, if you think doing so could cut out some stressors (such as making transfers, or having children away) for adults during the hectic period. And, you may find that **such an arrangement allows you less stressful, more quality time with your kids.**

## Make a Thorough To Do List.

Make a list of necessary home preparations for your kid's stay. And, if possible, complete everything you need to do before the busy holiday shopping traffic season begins.

- Carefully inspect your house, inside and outside.
- Install child-safety features, and implement safety practices, as needed.
- Buy some of your kids' favorite foods for meals and snacks. (These can be very, very helpful in helping maintain everyone's happiness.)
- Start early on your To Do list. Do some of your shopping for holiday décor and gifts a little here and there, well before the holiday season.
- **Finish all holiday preparations and shopping, if possible, prior to your children's arrival**. But, of course, wait to do any particular shopping that you *want* to do with your kids, maybe as a new fun seasonal family activity.

## Make Holiday Plans with Your Kids.

- Tell your kids about the spaces you are going to set up for them to sleep, and other accommodations you're planning for them in your new home.
- Of course, although you want your kids to be excited about the holidays and to look forward to having fun with you, it's important to realistically manage children's expectations, in order to let them have some surprises and to avert potential disappointments.
- **Talk to your children about their concerns.** Ask them about any issues they may be experiencing during the transition. Discuss and help resolve those for your kids, to the extent possible, before their holiday stay with you.

- Make as few new house rules as possible. And, keep those as simple as possible. **Discuss rules with your kids prior to the holidays**, or at the earliest good opportunity after they arrive.

## Create Some New Family Traditions.

Adopt a few new holiday ideas to include in your annual celebrations with your children.

- Add a new special **holiday dessert or snack** that you and your kids can eat and/or make together.
- Find a new **board game or outdoor activity** that can become a new family holiday custom.
- Choose a special **holiday movie** to introduce to your kids.

## Take Care of Yourself.

Being on your own during the period after a divorce can be a lonely, even depressing time, and being alone can feel worse during those first holidays.

- **Enjoy spending time** with your children and with friends.
- **Learn to enjoy activities independently**, and really embrace your time alone.
- **Get professional support**, as necessary, to help you through the major life-change.

## Keep in Mind

Typically, **nobody's holidays are perfect**. Some important gift is sure to be forgotten or broken, or some featured food dish will be ruined. Remind yourself that it needs to be enough for you that **you're doing all you can for your family**.

Moving children back and forth between homes during the holidays probably can't be entirely avoided. So, **use the general checklist above to reduce last-minute holiday rushing, excessive stress, oversights, and errors due to holiday task overload**. Planning and preparing in advance is probably the simplest and most effective measure you can take to make the process as easy as possible for the children and adults, and to help ensure the smoothest and happiest holiday season with your family.

## Wall & Wall Attorneys at Law, P.C., Salt Lake City UT

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