

Email and Text Message Guidelines

1. Use an email address that is solely for child-related communication with the other parent. This ensures that you only access these communications when prepared to do so, and it will not interrupt the other aspects of your daily life. Make a new email address for this purpose, like:
mom2jack&jill@gmail.com or dad2jack&jill@hotmail.com
2. All communications on parenting should be via email. Text messaging should when something is urgent or there is an emergency. For example, you might text this (when your car is stopped): "Got stuck in traffic behind an accident, will be 30 minutes late for start of access. Sorry". If you receive a text message, you should respond via email for anything other than a simple reply. For example, "Thanks for telling me. No problem."
3. Parenting emails should be about parenting. You should remember that any email you send could be read by a Family Court judge, and heard by anyone in a courtroom. If you do not want your email read out loud to a room full of strangers at Court, then do not send it. Keep the content of your email neutral and only discuss parenting matters.
4. Try to put no more than one topic in an email.
5. Emails should be brief and to the point. Generally, three page emails are not helpful. A long email could sound like a rant or a stream of consciousness to another reader. Be business-like. If you have lots of information to provide for something like a school event, extra-curricular activity or a medical appointment, then attach the note from the school, the activity coordinator, or the note from the doctor. Do not try to summarise this information yourself.
6. Set out facts and give any evidence you have to support those facts. For example, don't simply send a email that says you earned \$50,000.00 in 2012, attach a copy of your tax return that shows that fact is true.
7. Avoid putting your opinion in an email. It is almost always unhelpful. If you decide to state an opinion, do so clearly. Use a phrase like "In my opinion...". Try to limit your opinion to potential solution to a particular situation or problem. Do not comment on someone else's conduct or behaviour. For example, if the school was suggesting your child be tested for the gifted program, but this would mean moving the child to a different school if they were to attend that program, you should explain the situation

and then tell the other parent what you think is best for your child. You might say, "In my opinion, I believe we should complete the testing, and then if the result supports the teacher's findings, then decide whether the benefits of the gifted program outweigh the disruption to our child from the change of school. What are your thoughts?"

8. Do not tell other people what to do. Instead, tell them what you want. For example:
 - a. The Court Order requires you to ;
 - b. This is what you agreed to do/were ordered to do (pick one); or
 - c. I ask you to follow our Court Order.
9. Emotional words and phrases should be removed from your emails. Stick to the facts.
10. Send emails at a reasonable hour. Professionals (and judges) look at the time stamp. Emails sent between 10:30 pm and 8:30 am suggest someone who is not managing themselves appropriately.
11. It is perfectly reasonable to take time to respond to an email. Very few matters require an immediate response. In fact, taking time to respond is often a good idea. Don't react emotionally to an email by firing back a response immediately. Wait until at least the next day.
12. If the other parent gives you information that you do not agree with, do not enter into a debate. Clearly state what you do not agree with in a responding email. That is all that is required to have a record that you did not agree. For example:

In your email dated September 1, 2009, you stated "*We agreed our children would play rep hockey.*" I do not agree with this statement.
13. Never use swear words or bad language in an email. Remember, a judge could be reading what you wrote. It is like swearing directly at a judge, which is an offence punishable with jail time. You should always consider your audience to be a judge, and not simply the other parent.
14. Never use sarcasm to make your point.
15. Do not ask a rhetorical question.

16. Do not answer a rhetorical question.
17. There is no reason to "have the last word".
18. All email programs have a draft feature. Use it. Try to wait 24 hours before sending emails. Re-read your draft before you send it, just to make sure that all of these guidelines have been followed.
19. Having someone else review your emails can help to ensure that these guidelines have been followed. If you maintain this practice until you have two months with no edits from your support person, you will probably have learned good email habits.