BECKY TAYLOR FAMILY MEDIATION

FREE GUIDE · FIRST SESSION

Preparing for Your First Mediation Session

What to expect, how to prepare practically and emotionally, and how to stay calm if things get tough.

INSIDE THIS GUIDE

- What happens in your first session
- Practical preparation — what to bring
- Emotional preparation and managing anxiety
- Staying calm in difficult moments
- What if we can't agree?

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Your First Session: What to Expect

Your first joint mediation session can feel daunting — especially if communication has been difficult. Knowing what will happen takes away much of the uncertainty.

Your first joint mediation session typically lasts around 90 minutes. The mediator will explain the process, establish ground rules, and help you create an agenda of issues to discuss.

> "You won't solve everything in one session. The goal is to start the conversation, identify priorities, and agree what information you need before the next session."

The typical structure

- **Introductions and ground rules** — how the session will run and how you'll treat each other
- **Setting the agenda** — what needs to be discussed
- **Identifying priorities** — and any early areas of agreement
- **Planning next steps** — and information gathering
- **Scheduling follow-up sessions** — keeping momentum going

Preparing Practically

A little preparation goes a long way. You don't need full financial disclosure for a first session, but arriving organised helps you get the most from your time.

Documents and information to bring

- Any **relevant paperwork** about the issues you want to resolve (e.g., existing arrangements, correspondence)
- A **rough outline of your finances** if money will be discussed — property value, savings, debts, income
- Your **diary** — so you can agree dates for follow-up sessions
- A **list of questions** you want to ask the mediator

Think about your priorities beforehand

- What are the **two or three things** that matter most to you?
- Where could you be **flexible** — and where is your firm line?
- What would a **good outcome** look like for your children or your future?
- What information do you **not yet have** that you'd need before agreeing anything?

> **Logistics**
>
> Confirm the time, location or video link in advance. If sessions are online, test your camera and microphone, and find a private, quiet space where you won't be interrupted or overheard — especially by children.

Preparing Emotionally

It's normal to feel anxious before your first session. You might be worried about seeing your ex-partner, concerned about conflict, or unsure if mediation will work.

Remember: the mediator's job is to keep the conversation calm, balanced, and focused. They'll intervene if things become heated or one-sided. You're not alone in the room.

Managing anxiety before the session

- **Write down your key points** — it's easier to stay focused when your thoughts are on paper
- **Plan something calming for afterwards** — a walk, a call with a friend, some quiet time
- **Get a good night's sleep** and avoid difficult conversations with your ex beforehand
- **Remind yourself why you're there** — to find a way forward, not to re-fight the past

Setting realistic expectations

- Mediation is a **process, not a single event** — most couples need two to four sessions
- You don't have to **agree on everything** — partial agreement is still progress
- Feeling uncomfortable at times is **normal** — difficult conversations are difficult
- The mediator is **impartial** — they won't take sides or judge either of you

Staying Calm When It Gets Tough

Even well-prepared people can find emotions surfacing in the room. These strategies help you stay grounded.

In the moment

- **Pause before responding.** A few seconds of silence is fine — it beats saying something you'll regret
- **Focus on the issue, not the person.** "How do we solve this?" not "You always..."
- **Ask for a break.** Mediators expect this — stepping out for five minutes can reset a difficult moment
- **Let the mediator do their job.** If things get heated, they will step in and rebalance the conversation

Helpful phrases to keep handy

When you need a moment

"I need a few minutes to think about that before I respond."

When the conversation drifts into conflict

"I don't think going over the past is helping. Can we focus on what we do from here?"

When you're not ready to agree

"I'm not able to agree to that today, but I'm willing to think about it before our next session."

What If We Can't Agree?

Not every session ends in agreement — and that's okay. Progress in mediation is rarely a straight line.

If you agree some things but not others

Partial agreements are valuable. Anything you do resolve narrows the issues, saves time and money, and often builds enough trust to keep going. Your mediator will record what's been agreed and what remains open.

If mediation doesn't work

You are never locked in. If mediation stalls or breaks down, your mediator will explain the alternatives — solicitor negotiation, collaborative law, arbitration, or court — and can signpost you to the right next step. Reaching that point still isn't failure: you'll have a clearer picture of the issues than when you started.

> "The couples who get the most from mediation aren't the ones who agree on everything — they're the ones who keep showing up."

Ready to start mediation?

Professional mediation provides the structure and support you need to have difficult conversations productively. Book a free, no-obligation call to take the first step.

BOOK A FREE 30-MINUTE CALL

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