

The playbook drafting pack

Blank tools for building a **parenting playbook** — a parenting plan written as an operating manual: standing rules, defaults, and review dates for the interactions that keep breaking. Designed for use in mediation, and equally usable by two parents directly.

- 1 **Map the surfaces** (Worksheet 2). List where conflict actually recurs. Most families find six or seven surfaces, not sixty. Identify the keystone — the fight the other fights lean on.
- 2 **Draft one rule** (Worksheet 3). One surface at a time, keystone first. A rule that holds answers five questions: channel, clock, format, default, exception path.
- 3 **Send it back and forth** (Worksheet 4). One rule per sheet. The proposal travels to the other parent — directly or through the mediator — and comes back accepted, adjusted, or countered, in writing, with dates.
- 4 **Assemble the playbook** (Worksheet 5). Agreed rules get copied onto one page. One page that gets used beats forty pages that get cited.
- 5 **Schedule the review** (Worksheet 6). Every rule gets a trial window and a review date, set now. A playbook without a review cycle is not a system — it is a snapshot.

Worked examples included. A completed copy follows each of Worksheets 3 and 4, showing one family's swap-request rule drafted and agreed in two rounds. Blank sheets have empty lines; examples are filled in.

Three tests for every draft rule. It costs both parents the same. It never mentions the past. And a stranger could tell, from the words alone, what is supposed to happen — and whether it did.

Safety first. Where family violence, coercive control, or fear is present, these worksheets are not the starting point — professional support, screening, and a safety plan come first. This pack is not legal advice; parenting arrangements should be reviewed by a qualified family-law professional in your jurisdiction.

Conflict surface audit

List every **recurring** interaction between the two households — not the worst incidents, the repeating contact points. Prompts: exchanges · communication · decisions · schedule · money · change.

RECURRING INTERACTION	HOW OFTEN	RATE IT (CIRCLE ONE)	CHILDREN WITNESS IT?
		calm tense explosive unpredictable	
		calm tense explosive unpredictable	
		calm tense explosive unpredictable	
		calm tense explosive unpredictable	
		calm tense explosive unpredictable	
		calm tense explosive unpredictable	
		calm tense explosive unpredictable	
		calm tense explosive unpredictable	

Conflict load: _____ (count of surfaces rated tense or worse)

Date: _____

The keystone question — of the tense-or-worse surfaces: if this one were fixed tomorrow, which other fights would die with it?
Name the keystone.

The *loudest* conflict is not automatically the keystone. The keystone is the load-bearing one — usually boring, usually logistical.

Standing rule — drafting sheet

Conflict surface this rule addresses

Drafted by / date

A rule exists to remove the live negotiation from a recurring moment. Five parts — miss one, and the negotiation crawls back in through the gap.

1 • Channel — *where does this interaction happen? One place.*

2 • Clock — *lead times and response windows.*

3 • Format — *what does a valid request look like? One request per message.*

4 • Default — *what happens automatically if no response arrives? The load-bearing clause.*

5 • Exception path — *how can both parents agree, in writing, to do something different?*

The rule, written in full — *plain words, no history, no reasons required.*

- ☐ Costs both parents the same — no trap to find.
- ☐ Mentions no past incidents — about Fridays, not fault.
- ☐ Passes the stranger test — a stranger could tell what should happen, and whether it did.

Trial window: _____ weeks

Review date: _____

Standing rule — a completed sheet

Conflict surface this rule addresses

Schedule swap requests — renegotiated by text at all hours; tense most weeks.

Drafted by / date

Maya · March 3

A rule exists to remove the live negotiation from a recurring moment. Five parts — miss one, and the negotiation crawls back in through the gap.

1 • Channel — *where does this interaction happen? One place.*

By message, in our usual thread. Never at handoff, never through the kids.

2 • Clock — *lead times and response windows.*

Request 7 days before the affected date; answer within 48 hours.

3 • Format — *what does a valid request look like? One request per message.*

One request per message: the date, the proposed change. No reasons needed.

4 • Default — *what happens automatically if no response arrives? The load-bearing clause.*

No response within 48 hours = the existing schedule stands.

5 • Exception path — *how can both parents agree, in writing, to do something different?*

We can do something different when we both agree in writing.

The rule, written in full — *plain words, no history, no reasons required.*

Swap requests go by message, one request at a time, 7 days before the affected date. The other parent answers accept or decline within 48 hours — no reasons required. No response in 48 hours means the existing schedule stands. We can vary this if we both agree in writing.

- ☒ Costs both parents the same — no trap to find.
- ☒ Mentions no past incidents — about Fridays, not fault.
- ☒ Passes the stranger test — a stranger could tell what should happen, and whether it did.

Trial window: — 6 — weeks

Review date: — April 14 —

Proposal & response

One rule per sheet. The sheet travels — directly or through the mediator — until the wording is agreed or the rounds run out. Even a proposal that dies here leaves a dated record for the next rung of the ladder.

Rule being proposed (from Worksheet 3)

ROUND 1

Proposed by: _____ **Date sent:** _____ **Response due:** _____

Proposal (or revision)

Response: ☐ Accept as written ☐ Accept with one change ☐ Counter-proposal

Response notes / date returned

ROUND 2

Proposed by: _____ **Date sent:** _____ **Response due:** _____

Proposal (or revision)

Response: ☐ Accept as written ☐ Accept with one change ☐ Counter-proposal

Response notes / date returned

AGREED WORDING

Trial window (weeks): _____ **Review date:** _____ **Initials:** _____ / _____

Proposal & response — a completed sheet

One rule per sheet. The sheet travels — directly or through the mediator — until the wording is agreed or the rounds run out. Even a proposal that dies here leaves a dated record for the next rung of the ladder.

Rule being proposed (from Worksheet 3)

Swap requests (drafted on Worksheet 3, March 3).

ROUND 1

Proposed by: Maya **Date sent:** Mar 3 **Response due:** Mar 10

Proposal (or revision)

Swap requests by message, one at a time, 7 days before the affected date.

Accept or decline within 48 hours, no reasons required. No response in

48 hours = existing schedule stands. Variations by written agreement.

Response: ☐ Accept as written ☒ Accept with one change ☐ Counter-proposal

Response notes / date returned

Fine with all of it — add "where possible" to the 7-day lead; school notices can arrive later. — D, Mar 8

ROUND 2

Proposed by: Maya **Date sent:** Mar 9 **Response due:** Mar 16

Proposal (or revision)

Same wording, with the lead time now reading "7 days ahead where possible."

Everything else unchanged.

Response: ☒ Accept as written ☐ Accept with one change ☐ Counter-proposal

Response notes / date returned

Agreed. — D, Mar 11

AGREED WORDING

Swap requests by message, one at a time, 7 days ahead where possible.

Accept or decline in 48 hours, no reasons. No response = schedule stands.

Trial window (weeks): 6 **Review date:** April 26 **Initials:** M / D

The playbook — one page

_____ **Family Playbook**, v_____

Reviewed _____ · next review _____

Schedule — *weekly pattern, holidays, summer; fixed rotations beat annual renegotiation.*

Exchanges — *where, when, by whom; school-day default; no-school fallback.*

Gear — *what travels with the child, how bulky items move, missing-item window.*

Delays — *the threshold, the message, and what closes the matter.*

Schedule changes — *channel, lead time, response window, and the default on silence.*

School & communication — *who answers what, who is copied, what stays out of text.*

Expenses — *how a cost becomes a shared obligation: notice, receipts, deadlines.*

Review — *two dates a year, twenty minutes, agenda on Worksheet 6.*

Cover the surfaces this family actually has — nothing speculative. Rules regulate *interactions*, not people. Build in tolerances: a system should absorb normal human variance, not turn it into evidence.

Review agenda — twenty minutes

Use at every scheduled review, in mediation or at home. The agenda keeps the review from becoming a complaint fair.

Review date / attended by

Playbook version reviewed

What is working — *transitions, communication, activities, school flow. Name it so it survives the next edit.*

What is not working — *repeat failures, unclear deadlines, expense friction. Failures are data, not verdicts.*

What has changed since last review — *age and stage, school, work schedules, distance, family composition. Surfaces age.*

Conflict load today: _____

At last review: _____

Surfaces retired: _____

The question that matters most — *what one change would reduce the most friction?*

Rule to draft or revise before next review — *take it to Worksheet 3, then Worksheet 4.*

Next review date: _____

In both calendars? ☐
