

# Discussion guide

A step-by-step guide to planning your child maintenance conversation.

## **Step 1: What do you want to talk about?**

Write a list of everything you want to talk about in terms of arrangements for the children.

Looking at your list, decide which things are most important to sort out.

Think about what your ideal result would be for each thing on your list.

You might find there are some things that you can easily agree on. Start with those, to get some common ground.

Then think about which things you are prepared to compromise on.

If you want to, you can write down your ideas here:

# Discussion guide

Think about what worked well in the past, and why. Was there a place that made you both feel relaxed and able to talk calmly to each other?

## Step 2 - When and where do you want to talk?

Some people prefer to talk somewhere private, like their home. If you feel uncomfortable going to the other parent's home or them being in your home, then think about asking a friend or relative to let you use their home instead.

You may prefer to meet the other parent somewhere more public and "neutral". This could be somewhere like a cafe or a park.

Try to find a convenient time when you are both able to concentrate on the conversation.

Leave yourself plenty of time so you're not under pressure. For example don't arrange to talk if you have to be at work in an hour's time.

Children's pick-up and drop-off times are usually not the best time to have your conversation. In fact, try to have the conversation when the children are not around.

Finally, avoid late night conversations, when you are both more likely to be tired.

If you want to, you can write down your ideas here:

# Discussion guide

## Planning your child maintenance conversation

Think about what worked well in the past, and why. Is there a friend or relative that has helped you through a tough time before?

### **Step 3 - Would you like someone else to be there?**

If you think it would be helpful, you could ask a friend or relative to be there during your conversation to act as “mediator”.

Some people say this is very helpful, if it is a person that both parents trust and they can stay calm and neutral.

You could also ask a professional family mediator to help you. For more information, see our guides “Child Maintenance Decisions: Helping someone you know” and “Managing conflict with your child’s other parent.”

If you want to do this, make sure you tell the other parent so they know what to expect.

If you want to, you can write down your ideas here:

# Discussion guide

## Planning your child maintenance conversation

Visit [www.cmoptions.org](http://www.cmoptions.org) for more guidance on talking to the other parent about money.

### Step 4 - Putting your ideas forward

Think about the best way to explain your ideas. You could write them down, or just talk about them.

Start with the ones that you think will be easiest to agree on, even if they're not your top priority.

Hopefully these four steps will have helped you prepare for your conversation.

If you're still worried about talking to your child's other parent, then give the team at Child Maintenance Options a call on 0800 988 0988.

If you're happy with your plan, then take a look at the other tips and guidance on how to handle the conversation at [www.cmoptions.org](http://www.cmoptions.org)

If you want to, you can write down your ideas here: