



HOW TO: **PREPARE FOR YOUR FIRST LAWYER MEETING**

Your questions answered by
Sarah Gillen - Partner at Stowe Family Law



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Divorce can be overwhelming and often stressful so it is important you have a solid support network around you, including an expert family lawyer, who understands what is important to you and will help you to navigate the legal processes and manage any obstacles.

Being prepared for your first meeting means you can make the most of your time with your lawyer, saving financial and emotional strain.

It is important that you trust and like your lawyer. You may need to have initial consultations with several lawyers before you find one you will work well with.

You may be meeting with a lawyer about your divorce, the breakdown of a cohabiting relationship, or other family law reasons. In this guide, we will explain preparing for your meeting with a divorce and separation lawyer.

HOW CAN I PRACTICALLY PREPARE FOR MY MEETING?

You can choose to meet your lawyer in person or virtually. Your lawyer will likely give you a choice of times and dates for your first meeting. Find a time that works for you, when you are not going to be overwhelmed or stressed. Usually, these meetings last around 45 minutes, but it will vary. You need to make sure you allow sufficient time for a distraction-free discussion.

If you are meeting virtually, ensure you are in private. Set up a few minutes before to check any technical issues.

If you are meeting your lawyer in person, make sure you know your route to the location and how long it will take you including factoring in time for parking and delayed public transport. Try to arrive 5 to 10 minutes before your allocated time, so you have leeway and time to mentally prepare.

Think about what you might need to do to attend your meeting so you are not distracted by your other responsibilities. You may need to take time off work, or make child care arrangements.

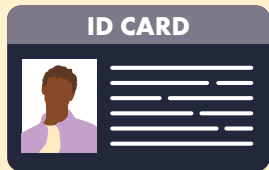
If you are unsure about the date, time or location of your meeting, confirm all the relevant details well in advance.

You may need to bring someone with you for support. Make sure you plan this well in advance and let your lawyer know if anyone else will be attending with you or if you have any specific requirements or accessibility needs. It is fine to bring someone with you, but ensure they are someone you are happy to share private and potentially sensitive information in front of.



WHAT INFORMATION DO I NEED FOR THE MEETING?

Your lawyer will want to know the circumstances of your family life, including personal details about you and your ex such as your:



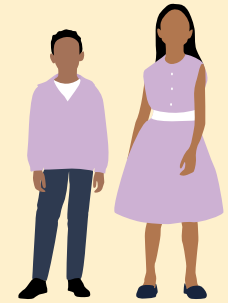
FULL NAMES



DATES OF BIRTH



ADDRESS



CHILDREN'S DETAILS
(If you have children)

If you are married, your lawyer will need to know whether you lived together before you married, and if so, how long for. If you are not married and own one or more properties jointly, your lawyer will need to know how the properties are legally owned and what discussions you had with your ex regarding the ownership and the management of your finances generally.

Your lawyer will explain what they need from you ahead of the meeting to ensure you can have a tailored and focused discussion. It is helpful to provide the requested information or confirm if you are unable to, prior to the meeting. You may find it useful to think about what you want to achieve and create a list of questions or specific areas you would like to discuss, including any interim or long term concerns you may have.



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For example, you may wish to discuss your ideal outcomes, such as whether you would like to remain in the family home or sell it and how much time you would like with your children.

You should consider whether you and your ex are able to agree arrangements for your child together or whether this is very difficult. Your lawyer can then explain whether court intervention would be appropriate as well as fully discussing your other options.

If you have already discussed child arrangements with your ex, it's helpful to come to the meeting with your proposed plan, including the reasons for your proposals. If you do not have an agreement in place already then it would be helpful to think of the outcome you believe would be best for your child.

In terms of finances, you may also wish to discuss your rights and what you might be entitled to.

You can use our online **Divorce Calculator** to find out what you may be entitled to in your divorce settlement.



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It is helpful to have information and documents about your personal financial situation and your joint assets. A good place to start is with paperwork, like:



**BANK
STATEMENTS**



**PROPERTY
VALUATIONS**



**MORTGAGE
INFORMATION**



**TAX
RETURNS**



**LETTERS FROM
ACCOUNTANTS**

It is unlikely that your lawyer will need these documents at your first meeting, but they will need to know if you have access to these documents as well as any gaps you may have in your knowledge of the family finances.

It is important that you do not take any of your ex's information unless it is made freely available to you.

If you have a nuptial agreement, for example a prenup, it is a good idea to provide this to your lawyer in advance of your meeting. This will provide clarification on what expectations there are between you and your ex. Your lawyer will be able to tell you whether the prenup is likely to be upheld if it was sought to be relied upon.

If you have a new partner, you will need to disclose this, and their financial situation may be taken into account if you are living with them.

WHAT QUESTIONS SHOULD I ASK MY LAWYER?

Your lawyer is there to provide you with guidance, advice and explanations of the legal process and work on your behalf.

You can decide how much input your lawyer has, for example whether you wish them to manage all the communications between you and your ex. You may also use your lawyer for occasional advice, for example with help filling in your Form E.

It is helpful to ask your lawyer some of the following questions in your first meeting:

1 Who will do the work on my case?

2 How many times will we need to meet?

3 Who will represent me in court, if I need to go to court?

4 Do you think court proceedings are likely?

5 What is your approach in similar cases?

6 Do you have experience with my specific circumstances?

7 What are my next steps?

8 How will we normally communicate e.g. by phone, email etc and how often?

9 Will more than one lawyer work on my case?

10 Who do I speak to/how is my case managed when my lawyer is not at the office/on holiday?

11 Are you able to give me an indication on my likely costs?

You may have additional or more specific questions of your own.



WHAT CAN I EXPECT MY LAWYER TO TELL ME?

By giving your lawyer as much information as is requested by them at this stage, they can give you an idea of what might happen in your case, and what they understand the areas of focus to be.

Your lawyer will inform you about the legal process but this meeting will not be an in-depth account of what to expect as they will not wish to overload you.

They will discuss options for out-of-court dispute resolution, but you do not have to make any decisions at this time.

Your lawyer is there to answer your questions realistically. However, they may not be able to give detailed specifics before the case has started and will manage your expectations based on the information you have provided.

THE NEXT STEPS

Your next steps will depend on your specific circumstances. After the meeting, you can take time to think over the discussions you have had or instruct your lawyer to act on your behalf at this point. For example, you might ask them to request financial disclosure from your ex and begin the negotiations process.



USEFUL LINKS

Form A, Form C and Form G

[CLICK HERE](#)

Form E

[CLICK HERE](#)

