



Australian Government
Attorney-General's Department

Changes to family law from May 2024

Information for parents



Easy Read version

How to use this guide



The Australian Government Attorney-General's Department (AGD) wrote this guide.

When you see the word 'we', it means AGD.



We wrote this guide in an easy to read way.

We use pictures to explain some ideas.

Bold
Not bold

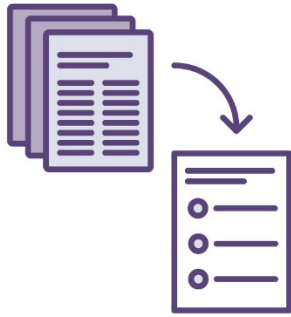
We wrote some important words in **bold**.

This means the letters are thicker and darker.



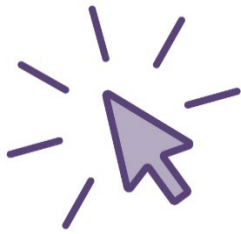
We explain what these words mean.

There is a list of these words on page 19.



This is an Easy Read summary of another guide.

This means it only includes the most important ideas.



You can find the other guide on our website.

[http://www.ag.gov.au/families-and-marriage/
publications/family-law-amendment-act-2023-
factsheet-parents.](http://www.ag.gov.au/families-and-marriage/publications/family-law-amendment-act-2023-factsheet-parents)



You can ask for help to read this guide.

A friend, family member or support person
might be able to help you.

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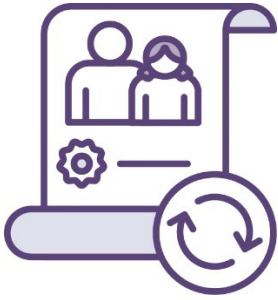
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About this guide



From **6 May 2024**, some laws about family and children have changed.

This might affect you if:



- you and your child's other parent can't agree on who will care for your child



- you have gone to court to decide who will care for your child.



This might also affect you if you are deciding the right plan to take care of your child after your **relationship** with their other parent ends.

Your relationship with someone is how you are connected to them.

For example, if you:



- are married
- have a boyfriend or girlfriend.



The new laws explain what a court must think about when they decide what is best for a child.



The new laws also focus on how parents who end their relationship make decisions about their child.



This includes decisions about things that can affect their child for a long time.



This document will help you understand how these new laws will work.



This information is not legal advice about what you should do.

What happens when parents end their relationship

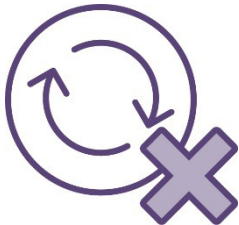


Most parents make their own plans for how they will care for their child when their relationship ends.

But parents can ask for help from the court when they:



- can't agree on a plan to care for their child



- want to make sure their plan will not change in the future.

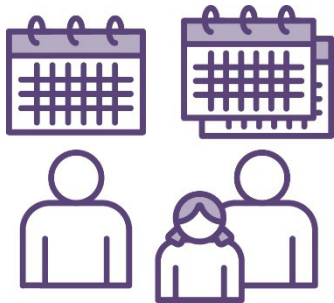


They can ask the court for a **parenting order**.

Parenting orders are legal documents that explain:



- who makes decisions about things that can affect their child for a long time



- how much time a child will spend with each parent.



The court must always make parenting orders that best support what the child needs.



If you ask the court to decide on a parenting order, you must explain why your order is the best for your child.

How the court will make decisions



There are 6 main things the court will think about when they decide how parents will care for their child.



1. How safe the child and people who care for them are

This includes checking if they have experienced **family and domestic violence**.

Family and domestic violence is when someone close to you hurts you, such as:



- your partner
- a member of your family
- someone who takes care of you
- someone you live with.



2. What the child wants

3. What the child needs to develop



This includes what the child needs to:

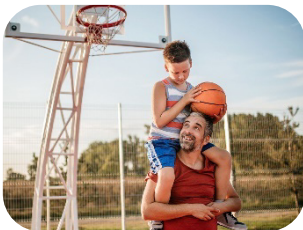
- learn
- be happy
- be healthy.

4. How well each parent can look after the child



This includes their skills to support how a child develops.

5. The value of the child having a relationship with their parents and family



This includes relationships with other people who are important to the child, like their:

- grandparents
- siblings.





6. Anything else that is important to the child's situation



The court will think about these same 6 things for First Nations children.



But the court will also think about how to support a First Nations child to:

- connect with their family
- be part of their **culture**.

Your culture might be:



- your way of life
- how you think or act now because of how you grew up
- your beliefs
- what is important to you.

How parents should make decisions with a parenting order



The court will make parenting orders about how parents decide things that can affect their child for a long time.



This includes how parents make decisions about:

- healthcare
- education
- culture and beliefs.

You can ask the court for a parenting order that says you can make some or all decisions:



- with your child's other parent



- on your own.

If your parenting order says both parents can make long-term decisions, you will need to:



- work with your child's other parent to make decisions



- make decisions that you and your child's other parent agree on.

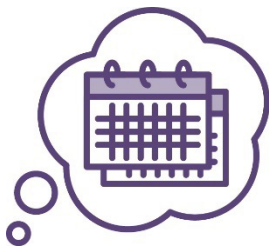
How parents should make decisions without a parenting order



You can also agree to make decisions with your child's other parent without getting a parenting order.

You don't have to have the court help you to do this.

The new laws ask parents who don't have parenting orders to think about:



- working with each other to make long-term decisions about their child



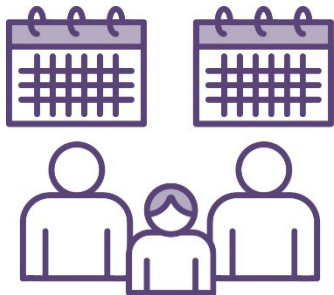
- making decisions that best support what their child needs.



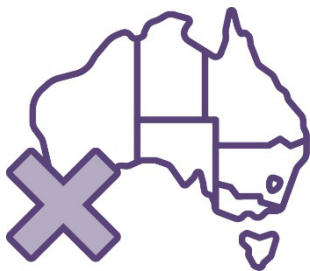
But the new laws won't ask a parent to do this unless it is safe for them to do so.

Questions about the new laws

What do the new laws say about spending time with children?



Some people believe that all parents should spend the same amount of time with their child.



But this is not what the laws in Australia say.



The law says that decisions about how much time a child spends with each parent must look at what is best for the child.

How can you change your parenting order?

Parenting orders can't change unless:



- both parents agree to it

or



- the court agrees to it.

The court will not change a parenting order unless it:



- has thought about what things in your child's life have changed

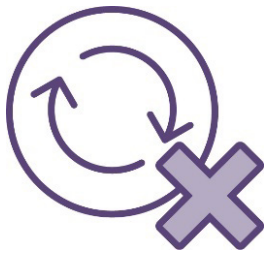


- believes that changing the parenting order again is best for your child.



If the court doesn't agree that this is true, they will not change your parenting order.

Will the new laws change the parenting order you have now?



Current parenting orders will not change with the new laws.



You should keep following the rules of the parenting order you have now.

More information



For more information about the new laws, you can visit our website.

www.ag.gov.au/families-and-marriage/publications/family-law-amendment-act-2023-factsheet-parents



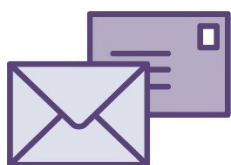
If you need legal advice, you can find more information on our website.

www.ag.gov.au/families-and-marriage/publications/family-law-services-and-support-fact-sheet



You can send us an email using this form.

www.ag.gov.au/about-us/connect-us/contact-us



You can write to us.

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Word list

This list explains what the **bold** words in this guide mean.

Culture

Your culture might be:



- your way of life
- how you think or act now because of how you grew up
- your beliefs
- what is important to you.

Family and domestic violence

Family and domestic violence is when someone close to you hurts you, such as:



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Parenting order



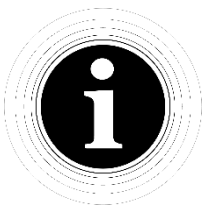
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Relationship

Your relationship with someone is how you are connected to them.



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