

How to Tell Your Children That You Are Separating

Getting through a divorce or separation is hard at the best of times but is often even harder when there are **children** involved in the relationship. Depending on the age of the child, there will be different levels of understanding of the situation.

Whether the child is old enough to understand or not, they will realise something is happening and something is **different**, so it is always best to try and explain the separation at some level.

Children of school-age will have a greater level of understanding. It is likely that they have friends who have been through or live with a similar situation. They will be **scared** about what is going to happen, they will have lots of questions to ask mum and dad, so be prepared with some answers.

Most importantly, whatever the age of the child, reassure them that they will always be **cared for** and **loved** by both parents, no matter what.

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When to tell them

Wait until both partners have agreed that the separation is going to happen. If the separation or divorce is only a consideration, then keep it to yourselves for now. It may seem like a good idea to be totally honest with your children about the situation, but the uncertainty will only add confusion.

There will never be a good time to tell the child about the separation, but waiting until you have time to deal with their questions is for the best. After hearing the news, the children will need reassurance and no doubt, plenty of hugs so avoid school days, busy evenings, or just before bed.



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How to tell them.

Even if the relationship has had a **breakdown** and neither partner agrees on anything, the children will understand better if it comes from both parties together. Try to have a plan in place, for example, who will be moving out and when the children will next see them. Allowing your children to know **key details** will comfort them, knowing they will still get to see both mum and dad.

When it is time to tell them, try to keep everything as **simple** as possible. Don't go in to great detail as to why the relationship has broken down, just explain that mum and dad have been thinking and it has led to a separation. **Reinforce** to the children that there is a plan in place and that both parents will still be part of their lives. Maybe if they have friends in this situation you could use them as an example, e.g. 'just like Jane sees her mum/dad every weekend'.

If the children have seen you arguing, then explain that you are doing what is **best for the family**. Try and explain that it is better to have two happy parents living apart than two grumpy and upset parents living together. They will understand that if that is what has been happening.

Dos & Don'ts...

Do...

Ensure the children know that it is not their fault. Children who are a little older may **blame** themselves for the break up, suggesting that they will behave better if the separation doesn't happen. Let them know that the **decision** is between the adults and isn't a reflection on their behaviour or them at all.

Don't...

Start the blame game. However **angry** either partner may be, don't blame each other in front of the children. If your children hear you calling their mum or dad a liar or worse, then they will start to believe that themselves.

Don't...

Discuss the divorce in front of them, even on the phone, and keep the **divorce papers** away from prying eyes.

Do...

Spare the children the **details**, they don't need to know about an affair or other issues. Avoid Facebook, particularly if you have older children with their own accounts as they may be **exposed** to details they don't need to know and friends of the family may mention things to the children which may add to any upset.

Furthermore, keep them away from the proceedings where possible, unless they are **old enough** to be able to decide for themselves who they want to live with and are therefore actively involved in the process.

Do...

Make sure the children **understand** the situation and what is going to happen. Why not plan what each parent will do with the children the next time they **spend time** with them. If you are in the Sheffield area, below are a few suggestions for low cost days out with the kids.

[Quasar Sheffield](#)

Quasar Sheffield offers a terrific little laser tag arena, with glow in the dark features and other awesome visual and sound effects to make it really immersive! The main course is for over 7s but they also run a Zap Zone especially designed to give under 7s a similar gaming experience but with sized down equipment and of course a lower age range throughout.

[Millennium Gallery Sheffield](#)

They are very welcoming of families and on weekends and school holidays there are activity boxes available with materials designed to help under 4s appreciate the Metalwork Collection! The content itself varies between the major exhibitions, which regularly change but seem almost always to be related to sources of interest close them, such as local history and portraits of industry.

[The Winter Garden](#)

The Winter Garden is a great place to stop for a peaceful time out in the heart of Sheffield and it's right beside the Millennium Gallery too so perfect for a dual visit! A pleasing chance to get back to nature in a very modern setting and for kids to stretch their legs.

[Highfield Adventure Playground](#)

Highfield Adventure Playground is a fantastic afternoon out for all the family, suitable for kids aged from 0 to 13. There are bits and pieces around to play with like tyres and reels, a water pump for wet and muddy play and plenty of sand to dig in. Toddlers will love the small play area and the mezzanine floor inside with boxes of toys, a mini library and a reading armchair. Older kids will enjoy table football, pool and table tennis as well as using the multi games area next door.