

Co-Parenting Nesting Worksheet



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Understanding Nesting

Nesting is a co-parenting structure in which the children remain in the family home while the parents move in and out according to a defined parenting schedule. The parent who is "on duty" lives in the home with the children. The parent who is "off duty" lives elsewhere — in a secondary shared space, with extended family, or in their own separate housing.

A second variation — increasingly common in the early stages of separation — has both parents remaining under the same roof. In this model, each parent has a private bedroom and a designated area of the home. One parent holds parenting authority at any given time based on an agreed schedule; the other is off duty and withdraws to their private space. This arrangement requires more explicit structure than the rotating model, not less. Territory, decision-making authority, and daily conduct all need to be agreed upon in writing before the arrangement begins.

In both models, the underlying logic is the same: children stay put while the adults absorb the disruption of transition. Whether that works in practice depends entirely on whether the adults have agreed on the details in advance.

What Makes Nesting Work — and What Doesn't

Nesting is not a test of goodwill. It is a temporary operating structure, and it functions only when both parents treat it as one. That means clear written agreements, a defined timeline, and a willingness to address problems directly rather than letting them accumulate. Most families nest for several months to a year while longer-term decisions are made. Build the off-ramp before you need it.

What Nesting Can Offer

Continuity for children: Routines, friendships, school, and a stable sense of home are preserved during a period that is already asking a great deal of them.

Time to make sound decisions: Both parents can think clearly about longer-term housing without the pressure of an immediate deadline.

Reduced short-term financial strain: Sharing a secondary space or staggering housing costs can provide breathing room while permanent arrangements are sorted out.

Before You Begin

1. Work through this with your co-parent, not around them. Agreements that one parent fills in and hands to the other are not agreements.
2. Use only what applies. Not every section will be relevant to your family's situation.
3. Be specific. Vague language feels comfortable to write and creates problems to live with.
4. Treat this as a working document. Revisit it as circumstances change and as you learn what is and isn't functioning.
5. If you reach an item you cannot agree on, note it and seek support before moving forward. Unresolved items resurface at the worst possible moment.

A note before you begin:

Both parents have created this document together. These are working agreements, not a permanent arrangement — subject to revision as circumstances require. I am a Certified Divorce Coach with legal training, not your attorney. This document is not legally enforceable. For legal counsel on your separation or parenting plan, please consult a family law attorney.

— Cherie Morris, J.D.

Basic Information

Names of Co-Parents

e.g., Jane Smith and John Smith

Nickname and Address of the Children's Home (the nest):

e.g., The Blue House, 123 Apple Lane

Secondary Home Shared by Parents (if applicable) — Nickname and Address:

e.g., The Apartment, 456 Orange Lane

1. Parenting Schedule and Transitions

The schedule is the foundation of the arrangement. Every other agreement in this document depends on both parents knowing clearly when they are on duty and when they are not. Precision here is not rigidity — it is the thing that makes flexibility possible.

Agreed transition day and time:

e.g., Sundays at 5:00 p.m. — departing parent has left before arriving parent comes in

Weekly schedule — which parent is on duty each night?

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Week 1							
Week 2							

Schedule exceptions — holidays, school breaks, anticipated changes:

Process for requesting and confirming schedule changes:

e.g., Minimum 48 hours' notice by text. Change is not in effect until both parents have confirmed in writing.

2. Home Standards — Children's Home

How the home is left at each transition is one of the most consistent sources of friction in nesting arrangements. It is also one of the easiest to resolve in advance. The items below are a starting point — adjust them to reflect your household.

Kitchen

- ☐ Dishes cleared from sink
- ☐ Dishwasher run if full, emptied if clean
- ☐ Coffee maker cleaned out
- ☐ Counters and stovetop wiped
- ☐ Garbage removed if at capacity

Parent's Bedroom

- ☐ Bedding stripped — next parent is responsible for making the bed
- ☐ Fresh sheets left accessible or on the bed
- ☐ Personal belongings returned to designated storage

Bathroom

- ☐ Personal toiletries stored in designated space, not left on shared surfaces
- ☐ Towels hung or in the hamper
- ☐ Sink, counter, and mirror wiped down

Shared Living Areas

- ☐ Common spaces left tidy — floors, furniture, surfaces
- ☐ Children's belongings returned to their designated areas

Food and Groceries

- ☐ Each parent is responsible for their own food — no assumption that the fridge will be stocked
- ☐ A set of basic household staples is maintained by both parents (bread, milk, basics)
- ☐ Shared grocery purchasing — details in the Joint Responsibilities section

Additional standards or notes for this home:

3. Home Standards — Secondary Home

Skip this section if there is no shared secondary home. If there is one, the same principle applies: write down the expectations in advance. A shared secondary space with no agreed standards tends to become a source of grievance quickly.

Kitchen

- ☐ Dishes cleared from sink
- ☐ Dishwasher run if full, emptied if clean
- ☐ Coffee maker cleaned out
- ☐ Counters and stovetop wiped
- ☐ Garbage removed if at capacity

Bedroom

- ☐ Bedding stripped — next parent is responsible for making the bed
- ☐ Fresh sheets left accessible or on the bed
- ☐ Personal belongings returned to designated storage

Bathroom

- ☐ Personal toiletries stored in designated space, not left on shared surfaces
- ☐ Towels hung or in the hamper
- ☐ Sink, counter, and mirror wiped down

Shared Living Areas

- ☐ Common spaces left tidy
- ☐ Children's belongings returned to their areas if children are using this space

Food and Groceries

- ☐ Each parent is responsible for their own food
- ☐ Basic staples maintained by both parents
- ☐ Shared purchasing arrangement — see Joint Responsibilities section

Additional standards or notes for this home:

4. Individual Responsibilities

Assign recurring tasks to a specific parent. When tasks are "shared" without being assigned, they tend to be owned by no one. Decide who is responsible for what, write it down, and revisit it if circumstances change.

Examples: weekly trash collection, children's laundry, putting bins out on collection day, yard upkeep, coordinating with service providers.

Parent A — Name: **Assigned tasks:**

Parent B — Name: **Assigned tasks:**

5. Joint Responsibilities

Some tasks are genuinely shared — either because they require coordination, alternate on a schedule, or don't lend themselves to individual ownership. Name them explicitly and describe how they will be handled. "We'll figure it out" is not an agreement.

Examples: grocery shopping for children's time using a shared list; rotating deep-cleaning responsibilities; yard and exterior maintenance; keeping household supplies stocked.

Joint tasks and how each will be managed:

6. Personal Items and Storage

Each parent needs clearly designated storage in the shared spaces. Belongings left in ambiguous locations become a recurring source of friction. Decide in advance what stays where — and what travels with each parent.

Storage area — Parent A:	<i>e.g., Hall closet and master wardrobe left side</i>
Storage area — Parent B:	<i>e.g., Spare room closet and bathroom cabinet under sink</i>

Items either parent may leave in the secondary home:

Items that must travel with each parent at every transition:

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7. Communication Between Co-Parents

Co-parenting communication that works is functional, contained, and consistent. Deciding on the mechanics now — channel, tone, response time, and scope — removes a significant amount of day-to-day friction.

Preferred channel for routine household matters:

<i>e.g., Text for logistics; email when a record is needed</i>
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How urgent issues will be handled — repairs, safety concerns, emergencies:

<i>e.g., Either parent may act immediately on any safety issue and notify the other within 24 hours. Any non-urgent repair over \$[amount] requires agreement from both parents before work is authorized.</i>

Process for requesting a formal change to this agreement:

<i>e.g., Written request by email; response expected within five business days; changes require written confirmation from both parents</i>

8. Financial Responsibilities

Financial ambiguity is one of the primary reasons nesting arrangements break down. The question to answer first is straightforward: which expenses are shared, which are individual, and how will each category be tracked and settled? Write it down before the first bill arrives.

Children's Home — Ongoing Costs

Decide how the following will be handled and by whom:

- ☐ Mortgage or rent
- ☐ Property taxes and insurance
- ☐ Utilities — gas, electric, water
- ☐ Internet and shared subscriptions
- ☐ Routine maintenance and repairs under an agreed threshold
- ☐ Major repairs above an agreed threshold — requires mutual authorization

Details of your arrangement for the children's home costs:

e.g., Mortgage and utilities split equally; each parent responsible for their own subscriptions; repairs under \$150 handled by the on-duty parent; anything above requires agreement

Secondary Home — Costs (if applicable)

Details of your arrangement for secondary home costs:

e.g., Rent split equally; utilities split equally; each parent stocks their own food

Children's Expenses

Agree on how child-related costs outside the home will be handled:

- ☐ School tuition, fees, and supplies
- ☐ Extracurricular activities and lessons
- ☐ Medical, dental, and therapy costs
- ☐ Clothing and personal care

Details of your arrangement for children's expenses:

e.g., Split equally; Parent A carries primary responsibility for school costs; Parent B for activities

Tracking and Reconciliation

Method for tracking shared expenses:

e.g., Shared spreadsheet; app such as Splitwise; joint account for agreed household costs only

Reconciliation schedule — how often will you settle up?*e.g., First of each month; within 7 days of a shared expense being incurred***9. New Partners**

This is one of the topics people most often avoid putting in writing — and one of the most important to address explicitly. A decision made in advance is far less disruptive than one made reactively. Choose the option that reflects your agreement.

☐	New partners are permitted in the secondary home.
☐	New partners are not permitted in the secondary home.
☐	New partners are not permitted in the secondary home currently. We agree to revisit this on: _____

10. Ending the Arrangement

Nesting is a transitional structure, not a permanent one. The families I work with who navigate it most successfully are the ones who agreed on the exit before they needed it. Either parent has the right to end this arrangement. What follows defines how that happens.

Required notice period:	<i>e.g., 60 days written notice to the other parent</i>
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Written notice from either parent is sufficient to initiate the end of the arrangement. Neither parent requires the other's agreement to give notice — only to modify the terms.

Upon notice being given, either parent may request a co-parenting coaching session to build a structured transition plan. This is optional, not required.

Anticipated end date, if one is already known:

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Circumstances that would trigger an earlier review — relocation, a new relationship, children's needs, financial changes:

<i>e.g., If either parent wishes to relocate; if a parent begins a new relationship and the parties disagree on the new partners agreement; if one or more children request a change to the arrangement</i>

Additional terms for ending or transitioning out of this arrangement:

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Acknowledgment

By signing below, both parents confirm that this document was completed jointly and reflects their genuine agreements as of this date. Both parents understand that this is a working document — not a legal contract — and that it will be revisited as circumstances require.

Parent A

Signature

Printed Name

Date

Parent B

Signature

Printed Name

Date

If a section of this worksheet raised an issue you and your co-parent couldn't resolve, that is worth paying attention to. Unresolved items rarely sort themselves out — they tend to surface at a harder moment. Reach out directly.

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