CLEAR Parenting Decision Worksheet

Understand one issue and what your child needs

CLEAR helps you separate the decision that needs attention from the conflict surrounding it, consider your child's needs, and identify a workable next step. Use it independently or with professional support.
You do not need an agreement to make progress.

Keep this worksheet private unless you choose to share it. Consider who will receive it and how it may be used.
If you feel unsafe or pressured, seek individual support rather than joint discussion.

Your name and date

Alex - fictional parent example

C Clarify the Conflict

Name the decision. Describe events without assigning motives.

What specific parenting decision needs attention?

What Friday pickup time and location can we reliably use when my work shift changes?

What is happening? What information still needs checking?

Pickup is currently 5:30 p.m. at Jordan's home. I arrived after 6 p.m. on two of the last four Fridays. My shift ends by 5:45 p.m.; the drive takes about 30 minutes.

What needs a parenting decision, and what concern needs separate attention?

The parenting decision is a reliable pickup plan. My frustration about past arguments needs separate attention; it does not settle the pickup question.

L Look at What Matters

Consider your child's needs and the realities of everyday family life.

What does your child need? What have you observed or heard directly, and what are you assuming?

Sam, age 8, needs dinner on time and a predictable handoff. I have observed Sam waiting by the door. I assume the uncertainty is upsetting, but have not confirmed that. I can listen without asking Sam to choose a pickup time or parent.

What concern matters most to you? What can you be flexible about?

I want dependable time with Sam without promising a pickup I cannot make. I can be flexible about the time. Jordan says a definite time would help with evening plans.

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Compare options against everyday life

E Explore the Options

List at least two possibilities. An option is a proposal, not an agreement. Keep your child out of choosing sides or carrying proposals between adults.

Option 1: What could we do?

Use 6:30 p.m. every Friday at Jordan's home. I propose that Jordan give Sam dinner before pickup and that I handle transportation.

Does it address your child's needs? Is it practical? What needs checking?

Child's needs: predictable pickup and dinner first. Practicality: allows travel time, with arrival at my home about 7 p.m. Check: whether dinner and the later handoff work for Jordan and Sam.

Option 2: What could we do?

Choose either 5:30 or 6:30 p.m. each Friday. Confirm directly with each other by Thursday at 6 p.m.

Does it address your child's needs? Is it practical? What needs checking?

Child's needs: earlier pickup when possible, but less consistency. Practicality: adds a weekly decision. Check: an agreed default if no time is confirmed, and whether either parent can reliably confirm each week.

Option 3 (optional): What could we do?

Ask a trusted adult to collect Sam at 5:30 p.m. on late-work Fridays and stay with Sam until I arrive.

Does it address your child's needs? Is it practical? What needs checking?

Child's needs: preserves the earlier pickup but adds a caregiver. Practicality: depends on availability and travel. Check: Sam's comfort and the necessary arrangements. No caregiver has been asked yet.

Reality check
Would this work on an ordinary Tuesday? Consider schedules, transportation, cost, a late pickup, a sick child or a changed work schedule.

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Record progress and plan the next step

A Arrive at Workable Decisions

Identify what can be resolved now and what remains open. Keep your proposal, any confirmed agreement and unresolved questions clearly separate. Agreement is not required to complete this worksheet.

Which option do you propose, and why does it meet your child's needs?

I propose Option 1 for four Fridays. A consistent 6:30 p.m. pickup would reduce weekly uncertainty and let Sam eat before traveling.

What, if anything, have both parents agreed to? If nothing, write "not yet."

In this fictional example, the parents agreed on a four-Friday trial: 6:30 p.m. pickup at Jordan's front door, Jordan providing dinner, and me providing transportation. The start date remains open; the trial has not begun.

What remains open? What is needed before the decision can move forward?

We still need to confirm the start date and agree on delay messages and backup arrangements before the trial begins.

R Roadmap the Way Forward

Record next steps. Label responsibilities, dates and communication plans as proposed unless confirmed.

What happens next, who will act, and by when?

My next step: send the proposed start date and open questions to Jordan by Thursday at 6 p.m. Proposed next step for Jordan: confirm availability. Jordan has not agreed to that task or deadline.

How will details or changes be communicated between adults?

Proposed, not agreed: use our existing text thread; if delayed, I would text an arrival estimate and ask Jordan to acknowledge it. These details still need discussion. Sam will not carry messages for me.

When will you review progress? What would tell you the plan needs another look?

Proposed, not agreed: review on the Monday after the fourth Friday. Look at pickup times, dinner and transitions. Repeated delays, missed meals or difficulty with transitions would be reasons to revisit the plan sooner.

Educational planning tool only. Record formal agreements or decisions through the appropriate process.
Completing this worksheet does not change an existing court order.