

Words to help you start difficult conversations with your separated parents

You have a right to be heard. Sometimes it's hard to start a conversation with your parents or others but, they can't read your mind, so you might have to be the one to start a conversation. **Here's how you might begin;**

What to say when...

I don't want to be the messenger

When you ask me to pass on messages, even about small everyday stuff, to Mum/Dad. I feel uncomfortable and like I'm stuck in the middle. Could you message each other directly instead?"

I want help with all my thoughts and feelings

"I really appreciate all your support but I am really struggling. Do you know anyone else I can talk to? Like a counsellor or people who have experienced this"

My parent is very emotional and shares too many of their problems

"I know you've been hurt but I get overwhelmed when you tell me everything that you're feeling and everything that's going on. Do you need to tell me everything?"

Money problems are affecting you

"I know that the separation has made the finances between you and Mum/Dad much harder but I'm missing out because you two can't agree. Can you sort out who is paying for the extra things I need?"

Parent's bad mouth each other

"When I hear you saying bad things about my mum/dad it hurts me. It makes me feel bad because I am half of each of you. Please don't do that when I'm around.

I want a say in the arrangements

"I know the decisions around the separation are for you and Mum/Dad to agree but what happens also affects me. Can we talk about the arrangements as well? Can we use child inclusive mediation."

Someone asks you to lie

I think that it's unfair and wrong that you ask me to lie. Please don't do that.

I don't want to talk about my time with my Mum/Dad

"When you ask questions about what I did, it's hard for me and makes me feel stuck in the middle. Can we talk about something else?"

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I want to see them more

"I'm sad that I don't get to see Mum/Dad as much, can I see them more often?"

I don't want to travel this time

"Moving back and forth all the time is exhausting. I want to see you but would it be ok for me to stay here this time?"

I want to take something to the other parents house

"I know you are uncomfortable with me taking things to Mum/Dad's house but I feel better when I have the things I need with me. I'll make a real effort to bring it back with me when I come"

I want something different to my sister/brother

"My brother/sister and I are different people and we react to things differently. I need it to be fine for us to want different things. Is that okay?"

I want to see my extended family

"I know the separation has made it feel awkward but I still really want to see my grandparents/aunt/uncle/cousins. They are important parts of my family, is that okay?"

I want to see them less often

There are so many things going on at the moment that I don't feel comfortable in coming over at the moment. Can we leave it for a while?"

I would prefer to see my Mum/Dad alone next time

"You have often got your new partner there with their child. I'm fine seeing them but can I see you by myself next time or once in a while?"

I keep forgetting my stuff at the other house

I know it's my stuff, but I really need some help planning what I need in which house can you help me?"

Or

"Would it be possible to have two sets of [x] so I don't have to remember to bring it with me every time I switch homes?"

Remember: Your parents can't read your mind. Make sure you speak up!



Top tips for a **good** conversation

PLAN AHEAD

Think about what you want to say before you begin.

START WELL

"Can we talk? I have something important I want to say"

ONE ISSUE AT A TIME

Deal with one thing at a time and don't get sidetracked

STAY SAFE

Leave the room if you need to

DON'T GIVE UP

If your first conversation doesn't go well, try again