

Boundary Setting Prompts

Know what you'll do before the situation arrives

STILL DAD

DEFINING YOUR LIMITS: REFLECTION PROMPTS

Fill in these before something happens, not in the middle of it.

What topics am I willing to discuss with my co-parent, and what is off limits?

What communication methods do I want to use, and when will I respond?

What will I do if I receive a message that feels threatening or abusive?

What behaviors will I no longer tolerate without a formal response?

What will I not negotiate on, even under pressure?

SCRIPTS FOR HOLDING A BOUNDARY

WHEN ASKED TO DISCUSS THINGS OUTSIDE YOUR ORDER

That's not covered by our arrangement. I'm focused on following the order as written. If you'd like to formally change it, we can go through the process for that.

WHEN SOMEONE PUSHES AFTER YOU'VE SAID NO

I've said what I have to say on this. My answer isn't going to change. I'm happy to talk about [the kids' schedule / logistics / specific issue], but I'm not continuing this conversation in its current direction.

WHEN A CALL TURNS HOSTILE

I'm going to end this call. If there's something specific about the kids you need to communicate, please send it in a text or email.

WHEN SOMEONE DEMANDS AN IMMEDIATE ANSWER

I'll get back to you by [time/date]. I don't make decisions under pressure.

COMMON VIOLATIONS: SUGGESTED RESPONSES

THE VIOLATION

Calling or texting at all hours

YOUR RESPONSE

Set a response window (e.g., 8am–8pm) and state it once. Then follow it consistently without explanation.

THE VIOLATION

Showing up unannounced

YOUR RESPONSE

Don't answer the door. Send one text: "This isn't an exchange time. Please communicate in writing." Document the visit.

THE VIOLATION

Involving the kids in adult issues

YOUR RESPONSE

Don't engage or counter in the moment. Document what was said. Address it through your attorney if it becomes a pattern.

THE VIOLATION

Sending messages designed to provoke

YOUR RESPONSE

Do not respond to the emotional content. Respond only to any logistical information, in one sentence. Or don't respond at all.

Boundaries are not walls: they are rules for what you will and won't engage with. You don't need the other person to agree with them. You just need to hold them.