

When to Respond vs. When to Ignore

A decision guide for co-parent communication

STILL DAD

Not everything requires a response. Not everything that feels urgent actually is. Use this framework before you reply.

THE RESPONSE FRAMEWORK

RESPOND IMMEDIATELY

Within 1 hour

A child is injured or ill. A medical emergency is in progress or possible. There is an immediate safety concern. The children's location is unknown. A legal deadline is today.

RESPOND WITHIN 24 HOURS

Next day is fine

Schedule changes and logistics. Upcoming appointment information. School or activity coordination. Questions about the kids that require an actual answer. Anything with a practical consequence if ignored.

RESPOND BRIEFLY, WHEN READY

2-3 days is reasonable

Non-urgent information sharing. Requests that are annoying but legitimate. Follow-ups to ongoing logistics. Anything that needs a response but does not need to be escalated.

DO NOT RESPOND

No response required

Personal attacks or insults. Attempts to relitigate the divorce or past arguments. Messages with no logistical content: only blame, guilt, or anger. Repeat messages on something you've already addressed. Anything you can tell is designed to provoke a reaction.

COOLING OFF CHECKLIST: BEFORE RESPONDING TO ANYTHING HEATED

If a message made you feel angry, defensive, or anxious, run through this first.

- Wait at least 20 minutes before writing anything
- Identify: is there actual logistical content in this message?
- If yes, what is the bare-minimum factual response to that content only?
- Write the response, then read it back as if you're a neutral observer
- Remove any emotional language, sarcasm, or self-justification
- Ask: would I be comfortable if this message were shown in court?
- If the answer is yes, send it. If no, revise until it is.
- If there is no logistical content, do not respond. Screenshot and move on.

Every message you send in conflict is a potential exhibit. Every message you don't send because you chose not to engage: that silence can be a strength, not a weakness.

