

Guide to

Parent-Child Visitation

For continuing a fruitful parent-and-child exchange



Parent-child visitation is conducted for the benefit of the child's development.

Shift the emotional gears to mother and father of the child from the husband-and-wife relationship, and complement each other and cooperate for the sake of the child. Both of you are equally valuable parents for the child.

Parent-child visitation may not proceed smoothly at first, but even in such cases, it is important to approach the matter with a flexible attitude without being affected by momentary lows and highs, but thinking about the child's happiness instead.

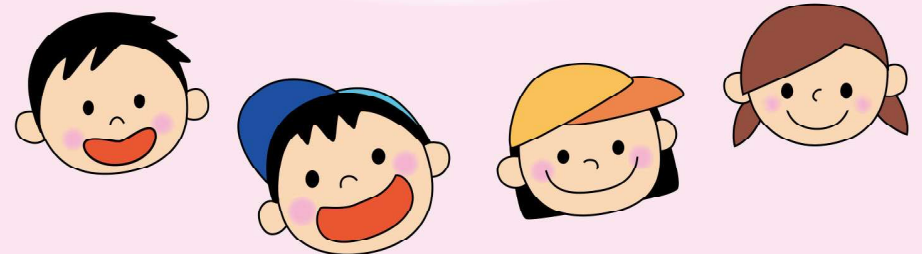
When a married couple separates, the regular and continuous contact maintained with the child by the parent who does not live with the child is referred to as "parent-child visitation."

It is said that when parent-child visitation is conducted in an appropriate manner, children feel loved by both parents, which provides them with a sense of security.

This guide provides tips in an easy-to-understand manner for facilitating effective parent-child visitation.

The law expressly provides that the best interests of the child are to be given the highest priority when determining matters such as parent-child visitation and child support (Civil Code, Article 766).

1. If parents divorce by agreement, the issues that need to be determined in connection with child custody are determined in that agreement. Such issues include who will have custody over the child, parent-child visitation, and the sharing of expenses that custody of the child requires. The child's interests must be given the highest priority in the consideration of these issues in such cases.
2. If the agreement set forth in the preceding paragraph has not been made, or cannot be made, the matters set forth in the preceding paragraph shall be determined by the family court.



Family Court

For a parent living apart from the child



The conditions of parent-child visitation, such as dates, times, and locations, should be arranged to suit the child's physical condition, daily routine, and schedule.

Decide on the date, time, location, and other details of visit upon sufficiently considering the child's age, health condition, schooling, extracurricular activities, lessons, and other schedule so that it is not stressful for the child and makes the child happy.

It is important to fulfill promises made in advance concerning parent-child visitation.

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It is particularly important to avoid changing the time that parent-child visitation ends, the location where custody of the child is transferred, and other such matters without consulting with the other parent.

If you cannot keep a promise due to sudden occurrences, inform the other parent right away.



When seeing your child

Ensure that the child can be at ease with you.

A child can feel stressed when he or she has to hear bad things said about the other parent who he/she is currently living with or is persistently asked about the other parent.

Ask about and listen to what the child is interested in, what's happening at school, recent happy news, and other topics that the child can talk animatedly about.

Do not give expensive gifts or offer excessive services.

Attracting the child's interest with expensive presents and such is undesirable from the perspective of sound development of the child.

If money and things are really necessary, discuss it between the parents.

Do not make promises to the child without consulting the other parent living with the child.

If you make a promise with the child to "go on an overnight trip together" without consulting the other parent living with the child, you can make the child feel guilty or anxious. It can also lead to a new dispute between the parents.

Try to make important decisions through discussion between the parents and avoid burdening the child.



Before seeing your child

For a parent living with the child



Try to communicate how the child is doing to the other parent.

The child's health condition, future school events, what the child is putting efforts into and the results, and other information about the child are highly interesting topics for the parent living apart from the child. Try to communicate as much of this kind of information as possible. Effective communication enables a parent who lives separately from the child to respond better to the child's needs and leads to more effective parent-child visitation.

Do not talk about past disputes between the parents or make negative comments about the other parent.

Take care to maintain the child's positive image about the other parent living apart from the child.

If the child says that he/she does not want to see the other parent, ask the reason in detail.

If a child seems unenthusiastic about visitation or appears to feel burdened by it, each parent should reflect on their attitudes regarding parent-child visitation to date.

In addition, using reasons mentioned by the child as a pretext to unilaterally stop parent-child visitation will cause new conflicts between the parents. In such cases, hold discussions calmly between the parents.



In usual life



Before the child leaves



When a child leaves for parent-child visitation, it is important to send them off with a smile.

Children are sensitive to the parents' feelings and facial expressions. Your slight words, facial expressions, and gestures can make the child feel guilty about seeing the other parent living apart or feel that it is wrong to do so.

It is beneficial to convey to the child that you believe parent-child visitation is a good thing.



When the child comes back, greet him/her warmly with a smile.

Your child may not look as happy out of concern for you. Greet your child warmly with a smile.

Also, avoid asking the child detailed questions about what happened during the visit. By acknowledging that the child has spent a good time with the other parent living apart from the child can allow the child to feel that he/she is being loved by both parents.



When the child comes back