

Your first 30 days after separation

A practical family law
checklist



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Where to start

Separation can be overwhelming. There are decisions to make, conversations to have and practical issues to organise - often at a time when you are already dealing with significant emotional stress.

You do not need to have everything worked out immediately. The first 30 days are about creating some stability, protecting your position and making informed decisions about what comes next. Use this checklist as a starting point. Every family is different, and the steps you need to take will depend on your circumstances.

If safety is a concern:

If there are concerns about family violence, your safety or your children's safety, seek appropriate support and legal advice urgently.

If you or your children are in immediate danger, **call 000**.
If you need to talk to someone about family violence, **call 1800RESPECT** on **1800 737 732**, any time, day or night.

In the first few days	
	Confirm the date of separation and keep a record of it.
	Consider whether you and your former partner are living separately under the same roof or have physically separated.
	Make arrangements for where you and your children will live.
	Consider immediate arrangements for the children's care, including school, childcare, extracurricular activities and changeovers.
	If there are concerns about family violence, your safety or your children's safety, seek appropriate support and legal advice urgently.
	Open a bank account in your own name if you do not already have one.
	Make sure you have access to your own email, banking and important accounts.
	Change passwords for personal accounts and consider enabling two-factor authentication.
	Make copies of important financial and personal documents.
	Avoid making major financial decisions in haste.

Documents to gather

Try to locate copies of:

	Bank and savings account statements
	Home loan and mortgage documents
	Credit card and personal loan statements
	Superannuation statements
	Tax returns and notices of assessment
	Payslips and employment information
	Business records, if applicable
	Property title and valuation information
	Insurance policies
	Vehicle finance and registration documents
	Cryptocurrency or investment records, if applicable
	Children's school and medical information
	Existing parenting or financial orders
	Any relevant family violence or police documentation

You do not need to gather every document before obtaining legal advice. Your lawyer can help you identify what is relevant to your particular circumstances.

Week one: get organised	
	Create a secure folder for your legal and financial documents.
	Start recording your income and regular household expenses.
	Make a list of assets, liabilities and financial resources.
	Make a list of the children's regular expenses.
	Review joint bank accounts and consider how they are being used.
	Check whether you have joint credit cards, loans or other liabilities.
	Review your mortgage and other significant financial commitments.
	Consider whether you need to update your Will.
	Consider your superannuation beneficiary nominations.
	Review insurance policies and emergency contacts.
	Keep a record of significant financial transactions after separation.

If you have children

	Establish a temporary parenting arrangement that provides consistency for the children.
	Keep communication with the other parent focused on the children.
	Agree, where possible, on arrangements for school, childcare, activities and medical appointments.
	Avoid discussing adult issues with or in front of the children.
	Keep the children out of disagreements between parents.
	Keep a written record of important parenting communications where appropriate.

Week two: understand your legal position

This is a good time to obtain preliminary family law advice. Your circumstances may involve questions about:

Children: Where will the children live? How will they spend time with each parent? How will major decisions be made?

Property: What assets, liabilities and financial resources need to be considered? How should the property pool be divided?

Child support: How will the children's financial needs be met?

Spousal maintenance: Is financial support required by either party?

Safety: Are there concerns about family violence, coercive control or the safety of you or your children?

Week two: understand your legal position	
	Obtain legal advice about your individual circumstances.
	Find out whether existing Court Orders or agreements affect your situation.
	Consider whether mediation or another form of dispute resolution may be appropriate.
	If you are unable to reach agreement, discuss your options for formalising arrangements.

Week three: think about the future

Separation is not simply about resolving what happened during the relationship. It is also about creating a workable future. Consider:

	Where you want to live.
	Your immediate and longer-term financial needs.
	Your children's routines and needs.
	Schooling and extracurricular activities.
	How communication with your former partner will work.
	Whether a parenting plan or formal parenting orders may be appropriate.
	Whether your property settlement needs to be formally documented.
	Whether there are time limits that apply to your circumstances.

Week four: make a plan

By the end of the first month, you should ideally have a clearer understanding of:

	Your immediate parenting arrangements.
	Your financial position.
	The major issues that remain unresolved.
	What information or documents are still required.
	Whether negotiations or mediation are appropriate.
	Whether formal legal steps are required.
	What you need to do next.

Most importantly: don't rush

There is often pressure after separation to make immediate decisions about the house, the children and finances. Some decisions are urgent. Others are not.

Taking the time to obtain advice before making significant decisions can help you avoid unnecessary conflict, protect your legal position and give you greater certainty about the road ahead. Separation does not have to mean that everything is decided at once.

Need help understanding what to do next?

ALA Law provides practical, timely and strategic advice so you understand your options and can make decisions about your family's future with confidence.

Book a consultation - call us on 1300 ALA LAW or email reception@alalaw.com.au

This checklist is intended as general information only and does not constitute legal advice. Family law is highly dependent on individual circumstances. If you are concerned about your safety or the safety of your children, seek urgent professional assistance.