

## Some Options for Child Custody Parenting Plans (for Children of School Age)

The following child custody and parenting plan timesharing options are derived from materials by and are presented with the assistance (and permission) of, internationally renowned divorce and child custody researcher, clinical psychologist, family mediator and parenting educator, Joan B. Kelly, Ph.D.



Dr. Kelly is the author of several seminal books — including (with Judith S. Wallerstein) the groundbreaking *Surviving the Breakup: How Children and Parents Cope with Divorce*, a classic revelation of the findings of the landmark study, *Children of Divorce Project*.

These options reflect Dr. Kelly's view of what the latest in divorce and clinical research tells us about some common approaches to divorced or separated parents sharing parenting time with their school age children.

### How to Use and Consider These Options

Dr. Kelly reminds parents and divorce professionals that these are **not** intended as suggested **guidelines**. They are instead a menu of scheduling **options** (addressing different developmental and divorce research findings and issues). In determining the appropriateness of these options, parents should consider carefully their family's particular background, circumstances, needs and preferences.

Mediation is all about discussing and finding the right approach for your family's approach to a child custody plan and timesharing — as you and your spouse or co-parent consider many factors together to arrive at a mutual future vision of your parenting time.

## Eight Child Custody / Parenting Plan Timesharing Options (for Children of School Age)

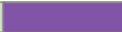
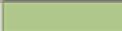
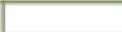
### Parenting Plans' Legend and Explanation

“First parent” (colored **purple**, the darker color) means the parent with whom the children presently spend the greater number of overnights. “Second parent” (colored **green**, the lighter color) means the parent with whom the children presently spend the lesser number of overnights.



Each graphic represents a two week period of timesharing. The fraction shown represents the second parent's proportion of overnights in a four week period, with that particular option.

With plans providing for **equal time**, parents are identified as “Parent A” and “Parent B” and colored **purple** and **green** respectively.

First Parent (greater overnights)	
Second Parent (lesser overnights)	
Midweek school day time	

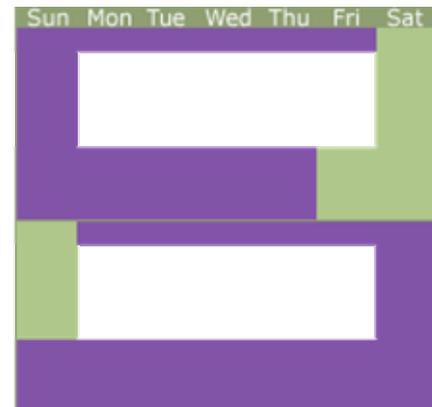
### Eight Child Custody / Parenting Plan Timesharing Options

#### 1. **Every Other Weekend**

(Friday 6:00 p.m. to Sunday 6:00 p.m.)

4/28 overnights

This option establishes 12 days separation from the second parent. Divorce research indicates that this is often too long for many children, and may diminish the second parent's importance to the children — with fewer opportunities for involvement in their day-to-day, school and homework activities. In addition, this option provides little relief to the first parent from children responsibilities. This option may be preferred, however, given the parents' history of involvement, available time for parenting, present parenting resources or, as a transitional approach to timesharing.

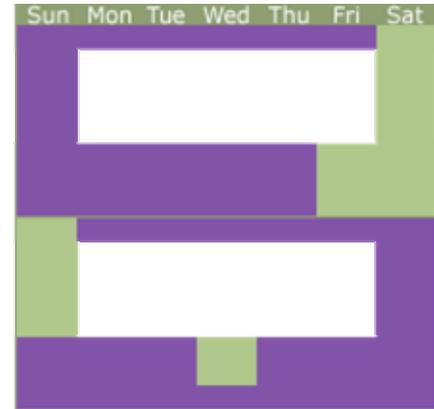


**2. Every Other Weekend plus Midweek Visit**

*(Friday 6:00 p.m. to Sunday 6:00 p.m.,  
with every Wednesday 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.)*

4/28 overnights

This option limits separation from the second parent to seven days. Adding the midweek transition could allow for more conflict on the transition back to the first parent's home. Some second parents describe the evening only visit as too rushed with less time to adequately supervise homework and to "settle in." This option may be one of a few workable ones with second parents having difficult work schedules, especially those with very early hours.



**3. Every Other Extended Weekend**

*(Friday 6:00 p.m. to Monday 8:00 a.m.)*

6/28 overnights

This option, with its more expansive weekend for the second parent, reduces the opportunity for parental conflict and with one less transition, minimizes stress for the children. This option generally is not workable if the second parent resides far from the child's school.



**4. Every Other Weekend plus Midweek Overnight**

*(Friday 6:00 p.m. to Sunday 6:00 p.m., with Wednesday 5:00 p.m. to Thursday 8:00 a.m.)*

8/28 overnights

This option limits separation from the second parent to six days. It also allows for a broader opportunity for the second parent to supervise homework, and to participate in bedtime and waking rituals. The option's transition at school after the midweek overnight avoids parental conflict. The midweek overnight also affords the first parent a regularly scheduled break in caretaking responsibilities.

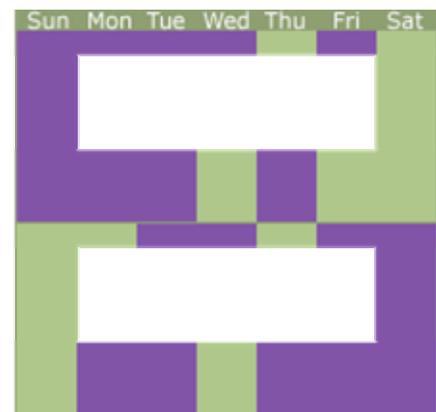


**5. Every Other Extended Weekend Plus Midweek Overnight**

*(Friday 6:00 p.m. to Monday 8:00 p.m., with Wednesday 5:00 p.m. to Thursday 8:00 a.m.)*

10/28 overnights

This option mirrors Option 4, but with a longer weekend, confers more schoolwork and activity responsibility on the second parent. Again, the school or daycare pick ups and drop offs limit the opportunity for face-to-face parental conflict.



**6. Every Other Extended Weekend with Split Midweeks**

*(Friday 6:00 p.m. to Monday 8:00 a.m., alternating; plus with Parent A, every Monday after school to Wednesday 8:00 a.m.; with Parent B, every Wednesday after school to Friday 8:00 a.m.)*

14/28 overnights

This option presents a two day / two day / five day / five day approach to timesharing, and limits separation from the other parent to five days (generally tolerated by children ages five or older). All transitions can take place at school or daycare to eliminate the opportunity for parental conflict. By establishing a consistent midweek residence routine, both parents get both midweek and weekend time allowing full involvement in their children's work and play, and permitting relief from parenting on a predictable basis.



With this option (and with options 6, 7 and 8), it is important and desirable for the children to have clothing at both homes, and the materials and equipment that make their lives work well. Despite the number of transitions, many school age children (especially those six or seven years of age or older) find this option satisfying, but it may be inappropriate with children with difficult temperament or learning disabilities.

**7. Every Weekend Split (alternating) and Every Midweek Split (assigned)**

*(Friday 6:00 p.m. to Saturday 6:00 p.m. (shown) or to Sunday 8:00 a.m., week one; Saturday 6:00 p.m. or Sunday 8:00 a.m. to Monday 8:00 a.m., week two;*

**plus** *with Parent A, every Monday after school to Wednesday 8:00 a.m.; with Parent B, with every Wednesday after school to Friday 8:00 a.m.)*

14/28 overnights

This option limits separation from the other parent to three days, but imposes more transitions. It may be more appropriate for preschool children than Option 6, and is sometimes found particularly workable as an interim schedule until children are 5 or 6 years of age.

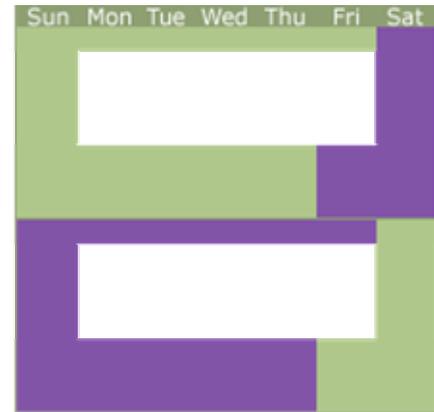


### **8. Every Other Week**

*(Friday 6:00 p.m. to following Friday 8:00 a.m.)*

14/28 overnights

This option imposes seven days separation from the other parent, often quite difficult for children younger than 6 or 7 years of age. It eliminates the opportunity for face-to-face parental conflict by minimizing transitions, and allows both parents and mature children to “settle” into a routine. The children’s cyclical residence can, of course, complicate management of scheduled lessons, activity commitments and daycare arrangements. Some adolescents may even prefer a schedule with two week blocks at each household.



Note: changing households on *Friday* after school often works better than on the traditional Monday after school approach (allowing for a “winding-down” at the time of transition, rather than requiring “gearing-up” at that time).



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Colorado Center for Divorce Mediation™’s divorce and family mediators Lawrence King, J.D. & Christopher Griffith, J.D., M.S., gratefully acknowledge Dr. Kelly’s sharing these child custody and parenting plan timesharing options with our Colorado mediation clients, and website visitors at [www.ColoradoDivorceMediation.com](http://www.ColoradoDivorceMediation.com)! These materials may be reproduced in their entirety and only as presented on these pages with their attributions, graphics, images, logos, headers and footers — for educational and informational purposes. All other uses require the written permission of Dr. Kelly and Divorce Resolutions®, LLC.