

How to Prepare in Advance for your Mediation Session

- Take care of practical matters like arrangements for child care so you won't be worrying about the children or arranging someone to cover you at work
- Think in advance about what you want, then refine that by thinking about what you *need*
- Think about what you can "live with" – what is the most important thing for you?
- Think about **options** – there are usually a number of ways to do something – ex. you know you owe child support but you have some unexpected expenses right now – consider making a proposal for a payment plan
- Spend some time putting yourself into the place of the opposing party – think about what you would want "if you were in their shoes" This may not be "fun" for you but it will help you see more middle ground and therefore more options for settlement
- Think about proposals you can make to resolve issues, and be ready to deal with proposals from the other party
- Understand that some issues may be more emotional for you and be prepared to ask for a break if you need to

Tips for taking part in your Mediation Session

- Try to avoid the use of the word "you", as in "you never did such and such or you always do such and such" and focus on "I" statements. Example – I need to know you are going to make your child support payments on time
- Guard your emotions – ask for a break, count to 10, take a drink of water – vent to friends and family before you come so you are ready and focused on resolving things
- Watch your body language and facial expressions – to resolve your issues well you will want to be open minded and hear the other party well – people will react to facial expressions and stop hearing words
- Ask clarifying questions – ask for more details about proposals, or ask questions about why something is so important to the other party