



## Pre-Divorce Checklist

It's hard to think clearly while you're thinking of whether you should actually call your marriage quits, but being prepared is better than being an ostrich with your head in the sand. Use this checklist to be prepared. At the end of the day, would you rather be prepared and not need to move forward or be unprepared and thrown into it?

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### STEPS TO PREPARE FOR DIVORCE

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- Run your credit report**  
This will be the baseline for assessing your current financial situation and how you will move ahead on your own.
- Run your spouse's credit report**  
Unfortunately, it's often only after a divorce that you find out your spouse has debt or accounts you did not even know about.
- Develop a Budget**  
Start putting funds aside for legal fees, divorce costs, and living expenses if things suddenly change. You may need to discuss this with family and friends for additional support.
- Create a safe place to receive information**  
Talk to family or friends to see if you can use their address or open a post office box and a new email account where you can receive information that you might not want your spouse to see.
- Change all of your passwords**  
The complaint of privacy being invaded often comes up during a divorce, preemptively avoid that by changing all of your passwords (even if you do not think your spouse knows them) and removing the password save feature on any shared devices.
- Get copies of financial documents**  
Obtain and make copies of any financial documents you might not have readily available to you later on – like tax returns and your spouse's financial accounts.
- Open an individual bank account & credit card**  
Everyone gets afraid that their spouse is going to wipe out their joint accounts when a divorce is filed. Be sure to open your own accounts!
- Take an Inventory**  
This is incredibly important if you're not likely going to remain in the marital home the entire time. Make a list and take pictures of the more valuable property you have in your home or things you want later.
- Remove items that mean a lot from your home**  
If there is anything in your home that you want to ensure does not go "missing" within the divorce process, it's best to remove them and put them in a safe place out of the house for now. (This does not mean hiding them – it means ensuring their safety).
- Address any medical or dental issues that require paying out of pocket**  
Usually, you will be required to pay your own uninsured medical expenses during and after divorce (with exceptions). Get those procedures that you've been putting off done so you can pay for them out of marital funds.

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### HIRING A DIVORCE ATTORNEY

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- Look for Specific Family Law Experience**  
A lot of people just hire the first lawyer they speak to. Make sure you ask about their experience specifically with divorce and are not just general practitioners
- Look for High-Conflict Experience**  
If you have a spouse who has narcissistic tendencies, you need a firm that understands that dynamic. We have a high-conflict relationship coach on staff.
- Look for a firm that focuses on planning**  
There are a lot of similarities between various cases during the divorce process, but no two cases are exactly the same. Each case requires an individual strategy and plan based on your specific goals.
- Look for a firm that understands**  
There is a lot more to a divorce than just getting a good legal result. Your life is about to change in many ways. You need someone who understands that and can help you in every way, not just one.