



Top 10 Tips for Keeping your Legal Costs Down after Separation

Navigating your way through a [**separation or divorce**](#) can be an emotional time, and with the divisions of assets, there can be a lot of tension around the topic of money.

When working with our team, we do our best to achieve a resolution in the most cost-effective way possible. However, sometimes legal matters can get drawn-out, which results in the legal fees being higher than what you, or your lawyer, had expected.

There are many different reasons for this, some of which are beyond our control. However, many factors are within your control.

We have put together the following list of things that you can do to save your lawyer's time and, therefore, help keep your legal costs down. This list is based on our experience in [**Family Law matters**](#), but these rules will apply to other areas of the law.

1. Be upfront and honest with your lawyer

The instructions you give to your lawyer are subject to confidentiality and lawyer-client privilege, so we encourage you to be as upfront and honest as possible.

When accurate information is given, your lawyer can provide you with accurate advice and how best to deal with your case.

If you don't provide all the relevant information, your lawyer may spend time arguing a point bound to fail or investigating issues that ultimately lead nowhere. Then, when your instructions change, your lawyer will need to spend additional time revisiting their advice and rectifying the matter with the other side and the Court.

Being upfront from the outset will often save on costs in the long run.

2. Listen to your lawyer's advice

Seeking a lawyer's advice and assistance isn't a cheap exercise, so it's important to take the time to look over it carefully, and strongly consider taking the advice on board.

If you don't consider their advice and decide to do something else entirely, the matter may be prolonged even further and affect the end result.

At the end of the day, you are the one making the decisions, but the role of your lawyer is to steer your matter toward a swift and painless resolution. Not following the advice of your lawyer can turn out to be expensive.

3. Don't get stuck on irrelevant or insignificant issues

It can be hard to let the little things go, especially when there is emotion attached to that issue.

Your lawyer will help by using their expertise to sift through the important and not-so-important parts of your case.

It is usually beneficial and will save time and money to let go of the things that will not have much of an impact on the 'big picture.'

4. Provide your lawyer with only the relevant documents

Disclosure of relevant documentation is an integral part of any legal matter, and certainly with Family Law. We find that clients sometimes fall into the trap of thinking that the more they provide to their lawyer, the better off they will be.

However, not all documents will be useful, and if you don't look through the documents to weed out irrelevant documents first, then your lawyer will need to.

Providing your lawyer with the right and relevant documents will help keep your legal costs down. If you are not sure if a document is useful, ask your lawyer.

5. Organise your documents

When you provide documents to your lawyer, provide them as a bundle and not piece by piece. It will be quicker for your lawyer and their staff to process and review the documents at once.

Further, try to provide your lawyer with complete copies of documents so that they do not need to follow up with you about the missing information, saving them time spent going back and forth.

6. Use emails efficiently

Efficient communications with your lawyer can save time and money. For example, consolidate multiple emails to your lawyer into one email.

Before firing off an email, take some time to think about the issue and what you want to say before you hit 'send'. This will help the lawyer to answer your questions and provide you with the right information efficiently.

Also, an email from your lawyer may contain more than one question for you to answer. When you read all emails carefully and respond to all of the questions at once, your lawyer will spend less time following up with you.

7. Be realistic about the value of your assets

The first step of the property settlement process is establishing the pool of assets, where the parties will need to agree about each asset's value.

The less time parties spend arguing over the value of items, the less money they waste on legal fees.

When your lawyer asks you what an item is worth, keep in mind that it is the current *market* value of your items that is relevant, i.e. what the item would sell for on the market 'as is'.

Something may have significant sentimental value to you but have a negligible market value, and that is okay.

8. Do your own research

When an item's value is not agreed upon, we often need to look elsewhere for evidence about what it is worth. You can assist your lawyer by doing some research yourself and giving it to your lawyer.

For example, obtain a valuation of your motor vehicle from Redbook.com. Or, if you own real estate and live in the home, speak to a real estate agent (or a couple of them) and obtain a free appraisal.

9. Do not breach Court Orders

If your matter is in Court and Orders are made, you must follow them. If you are unsure about the meaning of an Order, ask your lawyer to make sure you are doing what is required.

There are serious consequences for breaching Orders, and this is likely to mean more legal fees.

10. Be willing to compromise where appropriate

Family Law matters inevitably involve some compromise for both parties. Unless your matter goes to trial (very few applications do), eventually, one party will have to accept a proposal made by the other person. This can be hard where former partners do not get along.

Being open to negotiating about parenting or property can lead to an earlier resolution of the matter, and you might avoid going to Court altogether, which will save legal fees.

If you're going through a [separation or divorce](#), [contact our Family Law team](#) and we will work with you to resolve your property or parenting dispute as efficiently as possible.

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