

The 14 Keys to reaching your own maintenance agreements

Please read this guide in conjunction with the chapter in the Divorce Manual and supporting video series- [Reaching your maintenance agreements- 5 stages](#)

1. Before you come into mediation please make sure that you feel *comfortable and confident* with your figures and that you have your schedules and evidence with you.
2. Please *do not inflate* your figures in the expectation that your former partner will try to reduce these. This is likely to lead to a deterioration in trust and any collaborative goodwill.
3. If your income is tight perhaps agree with your former partner to start by listing those items which cover *basic needs* about which you have little flexibility, such as utilities, loan payments and so on.
4. Decide whether you are working on a *short-term interim maintenance calculation or for the longer term* since different factors may come into play. For example, if it is for the shorter term it might not be appropriate to take into account items that are unlikely to be incurred for 6 months or so. Also, who is paying for which items may not be that important in the short term, as long as they are being paid and the money you each have left over at the end of the month is not too different (standard of living)
5. *Listen carefully* to the explanation and basis of calculation which you will both have taken time to work out, asking for clarity where required, rather than reacting.
6. *Try not to react defensively* when asked about how you calculated a particular figure. It may be because your former partner is a little surprised, simply has a different view or has not thought about it as carefully as you have. They may simply need a little clarity and reassurance.
7. Take into account your *different personalities and skills*. One of you may be comfortable in the world of detail and very comfortable with spreadsheets, figures and documentary evidence. So, please be open to using your former partners' figures, where they seem more accurate and relevant to you. This is not a competition and this approach might demonstrate a willingness to trust and work in a collaborative way.
8. Remember, one of you may well have had more time to collect evidence so try and *be patient with each other*.
9. Please bear in mind that you will probably have completed your schedules separately so *now is the time to work together*, making the most of each other's strengths with figures and spreadsheets and the time you have each had available to spend on this.

10. Some figures are very *difficult to be precise about*. You may both need to agree a similar amount, where a figure relates to you both, such as food.
11. *Be ready to be flexible* in taking a broad approach, especially when it comes to working out short-term interim maintenance rather than becoming bogged down in the pennies.
12. It may help for to you both to *acknowledge any concessions* or generosity displayed by either of you, in the hope that this will be reciprocated. If it is, you will feel like doing it again. *Someone needs to take the lead in building the reciprocal and collaborative momentum*.
13. Focus on *maintaining a collaborative, outcome focused mindset*, approach and inner voice that says to you; 'let's work through this together' , rather than, 'you focus on your figures and I'll focus on mine' or 'what are you trying to hide?'. Unless you both feel that your views are being listened to and respected the whole process will feel difficult.
14. Work with the mediator to enable them to *manage the process*, ensuring that it is balanced and fair to you both. If you feel that it is not, the mediator will be the first person to want to know about this. So, if you feel that your point of view has not been heard or is being ignored please say so. You may simply wish to say; *'I am feeling frustrated because I do not believe that you understand what I am trying to say/I am being interrupted all the time'*
15. If you have a difference of opinion about any of the figures, *take time to ask each other to explain your thinking* behind the figures and how they have been arrived at. It may well be that more information or evidence is required to reassure you of their accuracy. The mediator will make a list of things you both agree to do with an agreed timeframe and will put this in writing for you after the mediation session and before the next mediation session.

Summary

In summary, the main key is to find ways of working together in a solution and outcome focused way.

If you would like more guidance about how to do this please check out our longer 8 page guide about how to work together to explore options, which you will find as part of the series-[preparing to communicate in mediation](#).

Good luck