



First-Consultation Question List

A first consultation can feel stressful, especially when family matters are urgent. This question list helps you make the most of your meeting and understand your options, step by step.

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Before you meet: quick prep that helps a lot

Gather the basics so you can speak clearly. Write down your names, the state where the case would be filed, and the date you separated (if that applies).

If you have documents, bring copies (paper or digital): any court papers, a marriage certificate, and any custody or child support-related paperwork. For immigration-related concerns, bring relevant documents too.

If you want, you can use Next Page Family's resources to get grounded first: explore Tools or read practical steps in Guides.

Your first questions about the process (what happens next)

Start with simple questions. Ask how the process usually works in your state, what steps come first, and what timeline is realistic.

Questions to ask:

- “What is the first step after we file (or respond)?”
- “What usually happens in the first few weeks?”
- “Will there be a hearing soon, and what is it for?”
- “What decisions or documents will we need before the case moves forward?”

If English is not your first language, ask how the attorney plans to communicate. For example: “Can we get an interpreter if needed?”



Your questions about custody, parenting time, and child support

If children are involved, you can ask about the goals of the case and the common factors courts consider in your state.

Questions to ask:

- “How does your state handle custody or parenting time?” • “What parenting schedule options are usually discussed at first?” • “What information matters most for safety and stability?” • “How is child support generally calculated in this state?” • “What documents should I bring to support my situation?”

Also ask about communication and enforcement. For example: “If the other parent does not follow the agreement, what can we do?”

Your questions about divorce property and debt (what you may keep or share)

Money questions can be hard, but they are important. Ask how assets and debts are handled in your state and how the attorney would organize your facts.

Questions to ask:

- “How does my state treat property and debt during divorce?” • “What assets should we list right away (bank accounts, retirement, vehicles)?” • “Do we need to track recent purchases, transfers, or changes in spending?” • “How do we handle joint accounts or shared bills?” • “What records would help prove income, expenses, or assets?”

If you own a home or have a business, ask: “Do we need an appraisal or additional documentation early, or later?”



Your questions about safety, protection orders, and urgent steps

If you are worried about safety, ask directly. You can ask about urgent motions or protective orders, and what conditions might be covered.

Questions to ask:

- “If I’m worried about safety, what options are available right now?” • “What evidence is most helpful if there has been abuse or threats?” • “Can we request temporary orders for custody, parenting time, or support?” • “How does the process work for a protective order in this state?”

If there are medical, school, or police records, ask whether bringing them will help. You can also ask: “What should I do immediately if a situation escalates?”

Your questions about your plan, costs, and communication

You deserve clarity. Ask how the attorney will work with you and what “good communication” looks like.

Questions to ask:

- “How often should we expect updates?” • “What is the best way to contact you or the office?” • “What should I send you between meetings?” • “What are the next milestones after this first consultation?”

If fees come up, keep it practical. You can ask: “What are the payment expectations for case work?” and “What costs might be added for filing or other steps?”

To learn about the next step to find help, you can visit [Get matched](#) to connect with a qualified family-law attorney.

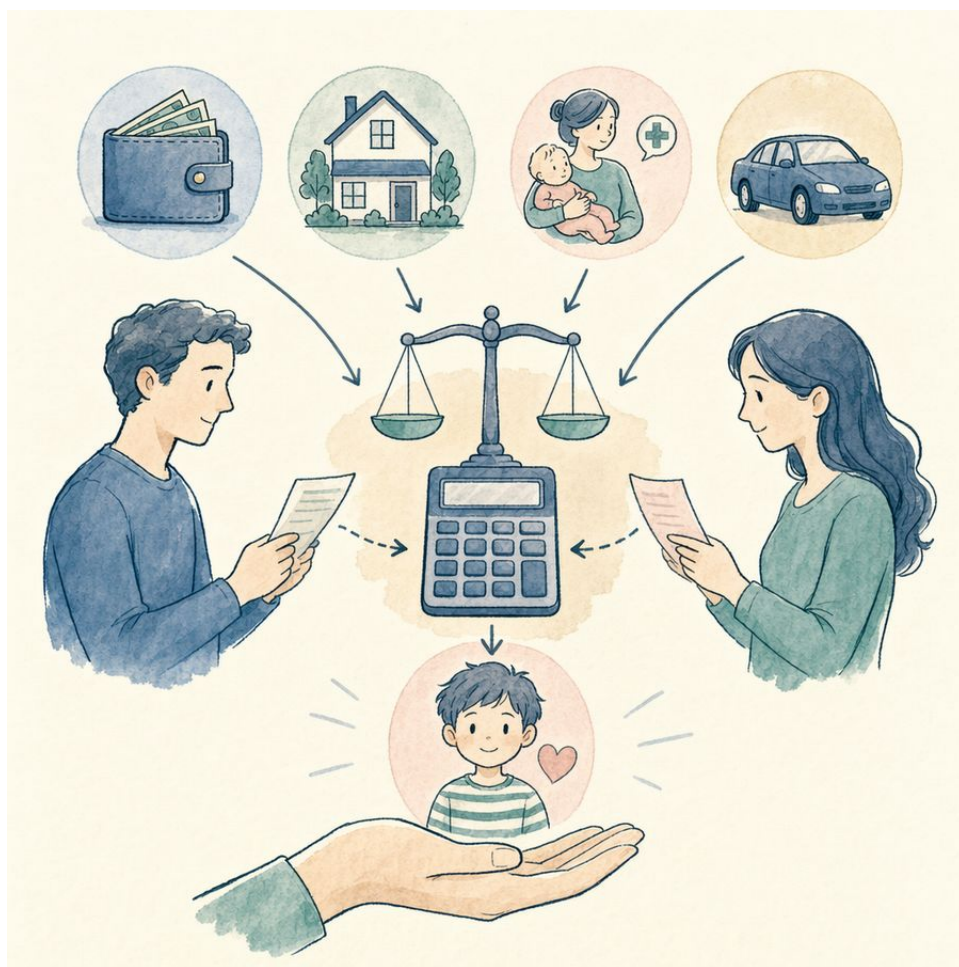


A short checklist you can copy into your notes

Use this mini list during your meeting.

- What is the next step in my state? • What should I bring (documents and information)?
- If we have children: how custody/parenting time works here? • How does child support work here?
- How does my state handle property and debt?
- Do we need urgent safety steps or temporary orders?
- What will happen after today, and how will you update me? • How can I contact you, and what should I send you?

If anything feels unclear, ask for plain-language explanations. “Can you repeat that in simpler terms?” is a totally fair question.



In plain English: Use this checklist to ask clear, practical questions in your first family-law consultation so you understand the process and your next steps.

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