

California Divorce Cost-Planning Worksheet

Family Court Ready - CA™

Companion to the Courtroom Ready™ series.

With Jennifer J. Moore, California family law attorney.

Legal education, not legal advice. Every family differs — adapt to your child and your court.

There is no honest one-size-fits-all number — build your own estimate from the six categories in Episode 4, and see which cost drivers are inside your control. Companion to the Courtroom Ready™ series. With Jennifer J. Moore, California family law attorney.

The six categories — which apply to YOUR case?

Mark each category, note whether it applies, and jot your own planning notes. (No dollar amounts are suggested here on purpose — costs vary too much to borrow someone else's number.)

☐ **1. Legal fees:** Consultations, retainer, hourly work — or limited-scope pieces. See the representation section below.

Applies to me? My notes:

☐ **2. Court costs:** Filing fees (table on your county court's website). If paying is a hardship, ask about California's fee waiver process.

Applies to me? My notes:

☐ **3. Other professionals:** Mediator? Custody evaluator? Appraiser? Forensic accountant? Vocational examiner? Circle any that may apply.

Applies to me? My notes:

☐ **4. Information & discovery:** Records, copies, transcripts — and formal discovery if the other party is evasive about finances.

Applies to me? My notes:

☐ **5. Becoming two households:** Two rents, two sets of utilities, duplicates for the kids — the category nobody budgets for.

Applies to me? My notes:

☐ **6. Division of savings & retirement:** A shared nest egg divided in half — or used in an equalization payment — supports two households less easily than one.

Applies to me? My notes:

The cost drivers — an honest self-check

The biggest driver is conflict multiplied by unresolved issues. For each disputed issue, ask: what does the fight cost, what is winning worth, and is the juice worth the squeeze?

Issues we may genuinely be able to resolve ourselves:

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Issues likely to need the court:

An 'it's the principle of the thing' issue I should cost-benefit honestly:

Your representation choice (can change as the case changes)

- ☐ Full representation — complex finances, high-conflict custody, domestic violence, or a well-funded represented opponent
- ☐ Limited scope (unbundled) — hire an attorney for specific pieces: document review, hearing prep/coaching, drafting
- ☐ Self-represented (pro per) — you do the work; treat it like a part-time job, and use free legal education like this channel

Inside your control — the cost-savers

- ☐ Stay organized — attorneys bill by the hour; searching for your documents at professional rates is money burned
- ☐ Answer your attorney or the court promptly
- ☐ Pick battles deliberately — cost-benefit each issue
- ☐ Give mediation a real chance before positions harden
- ☐ Get advice BEFORE hard-to-undo decisions

My Realistic Litigation Budget and Sources of Funds

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