



CHOOSING THE RIGHT LAWYER: Avoiding the Pitfalls & Finding the Right Fit

Divorce lawyers love to sell one thing: THE FIGHT.

"We'll fight tooth and nail to protect your rights!"

"Call us before your spouse does!"

"We will fight for you!"

And let's not forget the classic black-and-white glamour shot of a lawyer in boxing gloves.

These aren't just clichés—they're real marketing tactics used by divorce attorneys to lure you into the litigation machine. But here's the problem: divorce isn't about winning or losing. It's about finding a resolution that actually works for you and your family.

Some lawyers know this. Others don't—or worse, they don't care.

I'm not here to bash lawyers—I am one, I'm married to one, and I know plenty of good, honest ones. But like any profession, there are those who want to help you move forward—and those who profit from keeping you stuck in the fight.

The key is knowing how to spot the difference.

HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT LAWYER: BE AN EDUCATED CONSUMER

Before you meet with a lawyer, remember this: YOU are hiring THEM. They are not interviewing you. You are the decision-maker here.

Here's how to make sure you find the right match.

Don't Fall for the Marketing Hype

Would you pick a doctor based on a flashy ad or a dramatic tagline? Of course not. Your lawyer should be no different.

Some attorneys have rebranded themselves as "guides" and "partners" to make their approach seem more collaborative. But if litigation is all they know, court is where they'll take you. And that means higher conflict, higher costs, and less control for you.

Do Your Research

Before you even schedule a consultation:

- Check their website. Is the messaging all about fighting and winning, or do they talk about settlement and resolution?
- Ask around. Friends, family, and even people who were on the other side of a case can give



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you valuable insight.

- Look at their affiliations. Are they members of organizations like the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers (AAML); International Academy of Collaborative Professionals (IACP); Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC)? These groups promote settlement-focused divorce practices.
- Check for disciplinary actions. Call your state bar association to see if they've been disciplined or have pending complaints.
- Read the reviews. Google and Yelp can be useful, but for more reliable ratings, check Martindale-Hubbell and Avvo.

Know What You Want Before You Walk In

Before your consultation, take time to ask yourself the big questions:

- What do I want? (Not what the law says, but what do YOU actually want.)
- What do I need? (Financially, emotionally, logistically.)
- What are my goals? (For my future and my family.)

Write these answers down. This is your roadmap. If the lawyer doesn't ask about these things—or worse, doesn't care—move on.

Use the Initial Consultation to Interview the Lawyer

I get it—law offices can feel intimidating. But you are the one making the hire, so take charge of the conversation.

- Come prepared with a list of questions (see below for a solid starting point).
- Don't treat the consultation as a therapy session. Stick to the facts and what you need to know.
- Take notes. If you're worried about missing something, ask if you can record the conversation.
- Don't sign a fee agreement on the spot. If there's no immediate urgency, review it at home and ask follow-up questions before committing.

RED FLAG: If a lawyer won't take time to answer your billing or contract questions upfront, they won't have time for you later, either.

Key Questions to Ask Before Hiring a Lawyer

- *How long have you been practicing family law?*
Younger attorneys often litigate more because they lack settlement experience or are trying to build a reputation as a “fighter.”
- *Do you practice family law exclusively?*
You don't want someone juggling multiple practice areas without deep family law expertise.
- *How many cases do you handle at a time?*
Overloaded lawyers = rushed cases, missed settlement opportunities, and last-minute trial preparation.



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- *Who else will be working on my case?*

You'll likely interact with junior lawyers, paralegals, and legal assistants—know who they are and what they charge.

- *How do you bill?*

- Flat Fee – One set price (rare for litigation).

- Hourly – Billed in six-minute increments (.10 per hour).

- Pre-Set Hourly Tasks – Minimum billing for specific actions (e.g., every email = .30 hours).

- Contingency Fee – Rarely allowed in family law; generally not a great option.

- *Who else on your team will bill time to my case?*

And how much? You don't want to be double-billed for team discussions.

- *How will I receive invoices?*

Paper, email, online portal? Make sure they include detailed descriptions.

- *Do you allow clients to dispute questionable billing entries?*

A lawyer who won't discuss billing concerns = **RED FLAG**

- *What is the best way to reach you?*

Most lawyers prefer email—just remember, every email costs money!

- *Will I be charged for emails and phone calls?*

If so, be strategic—one email with multiple questions costs less than five separate emails!

- *Can I see examples of pleadings you've filed?*

Are they neutral and to the point, or full of unnecessary drama? Drama = higher costs and more conflict.

- *Can you summarize my wants, needs, and goals back to me?*

Good lawyers listen to learn, not just listen to respond—make sure they actually heard you!

The Bottom Line: Hire Wisely

Finding the right lawyer **isn't just about skill — it's about mindset**. You want someone who:

Understands your goals and isn't just pushing you into litigation.

Values resolution over conflict and won't escalate fights unnecessarily.

Is transparent about fees and doesn't create work just to bill you.

Listens to you and helps you stay in the driver's seat.

The right lawyer will empower you to move forward—not keep you stuck in the fight.
Choose wisely.