

# UNIFIED<sup>®</sup> PARENTING PLAN

**HOW TO STOP 'GOOD  
COP VS BAD COP'  
AND PRESENT ONE  
CALM TEAM**

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# WHY THIS PLAN EXISTS

## **Problem:**

In many families, one parent is seen as 'strict' and the other as 'soft'. The child quickly learns to:

- ask the soft parent for permission first,
- avoid the strict parent,
- play parents against each other ('But Mum said I could...' 'Dad doesn't mind...').

## **The result:**

- constant conflict between parents,
- mixed messages for the child,
- rules that feel unfair and unpredictable.

## **This plan is designed to:**

- help parents become a united team,
- create shared rules and shared language,
- give the child a clear sense of who's in charge (both of you, together).

**You do not have to parent in the same style.**

**You do need a shared framework.**

# HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

## **Parent-only first:**

Complete this booklet without your child first. This is your private agreement.

## **Agree on values + non-negotiables:**

Decide what matters most (sleep, safety, school effort, respect, etc.).

## **Choose shared rules + consequences:**

So you're saying the same thing when it matters.

## **Create signals + scripts:**

Quick ways to say 'we'll decide together' when a child is trying to split you.

## **Meet weekly for 10 minutes:**

A short check-in to keep you aligned.

**Think of this as a playbook for you two as co-coaches.**

# STEP 1: PARENT-ONLY RESET (MINI-CONTRACT BETWEEN YOU)

Use this page as a gentle reset between you and your partner.

## 1. Acknowledge the pattern

Each parent completes:

*I often get cast as the 'strict/soft' one when it comes to:*

- homework: \_\_\_\_\_
- screen time: \_\_\_\_\_
- bedtime / routine: \_\_\_\_\_
- behaviour / respect: \_\_\_\_\_

*When this happens, I usually feel:*

- (e.g. unsupported / blamed / taken for granted / alone)

\_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Shared commitment

We agree that:

- Our child benefits when we act as a team, not opponents.
- We will not undermine each other in front of our child.
- If we disagree, we will press pause and talk away from the child.

Parent A signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent B signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# STEP 2: FAMILY VALUES & NON-NEGOTIABLES

Before rules, get clear on why.

## 1. Top 5 family values (circle or write your own)

Respect Honesty Effort Kindness Responsibility

Independence Health / Sleep Faith / Spirituality

Curiosity / Learning Other: \_\_\_\_\_

*Together, list your Top 5 in order:*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Our non-negotiables (we agree these ALWAYS matter)

Tick or write what is non-negotiable in your house:

- School attendance
- Minimum study / homework effort
- No physical aggression
- No deliberate cruelty / bullying
- Basic politeness (no swearing at parents, no 'shut up')
- Bedtime by \_\_\_\_\_ pm on school nights
- Devices out of bedroom after \_\_\_\_\_ pm
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

*These non-negotiables will shape your house rules and consequences.*

## STEP 3: HOUSE RULES MATRIX (SHARED RULES)

Use this matrix to agree on your baseline rules. Keep it simple and realistic.

### A. Core areas

Area	Our agreed rule	Notes
Homework/Study	Example: 'Min 60 mins on school nights before screens.'	Compromise between strict/soft.
Screens (weekday)	Example: 'Max 1 hour, after homework.'	Clarify: games vs YouTube.
Screens (weekend)	Example: 'Max 2-3 hours per day.'	Track time together.
Bedtime	Example: '9:30 pm school nights.'	Note exceptions.
Devices in bedroom	Example: 'No phones after 9 pm.'	Both enforce.

*Add more rows if needed.*

# STEP 4: OUR SHARED SIGNALS & STANDARD ANSWERS

**Big goal: stop giving different answers in the moment.**

## 1. Standard 'pause' line

Write one line you both will use when child asks for something big:

*Our shared line:*

'Thanks for asking. Mum and Dad will talk about it and give you one answer together.'

**You both commit to:**

- NOT answering big questions on the spot.
- Using that line every time.

## 2. Private signal between parents

Choose a subtle signal meaning: 'We're not aligned, let's pause.'

*Examples:*

- Light touch on the arm
- Code word: 'Let's park this for a moment.'
- Phrase: 'We'll come back to this after we talk.'

*Write yours:*

Our private signal: \_\_\_\_\_

Our de-escalation phrase: \_\_\_\_\_

## 3. Agreed default when you disagree but must answer

If you disagree in front of the child:

Parent A: 'I'm leaning no.'

Parent B: 'I'm leaning yes.'

*Your shared response:*

'We're not sure yet. We'll talk about it privately and let you know by \_\_\_\_\_.'

**This protects unity even when you're not yet unified.**

# STEP 5: UNITED CONSEQUENCES MENU

Kids exploit inconsistent consequences. You don't need to be identical, but you do need a shared baseline.

## 1. Pick 3-5 core behaviours and agreed consequences

Behaviour	First response	If repeated
Disrespectful language	Calm reminder: 'Try that again respectfully.'	Loss of privilege for 1 day.
Ignoring homework rule	Reminder + choice.	Lose screen time.
Refusing basic rule	State rule, explain reason.	Natural consequence.
Physical aggression	Immediate stop + repair.	Loss of privileges + repair.

## 2. Make it visible (for parents, not child)

Keep this in a cupboard or bedroom so you both remember what you agreed.

The child just needs: 'We agreed that when X happens, Y consequence follows.'



# STEP 6: WHAT WE WILL NOT DO IN FRONT OF THE CHILD

**This page is critical. It's your pledge to each other.**

## **We agree that in front of our child we will not:**

- Criticise the other parent's decision
- Change a rule the other parent just gave
- Use the child's emotions to 'win' an argument
- Say 'Fine, go ask your mother/father' sarcastically
- Threaten each other

## **Instead, we will:**

- Back each other in the moment, then
- Debrief later, in private.

## **Write your own personal 'never again' behaviours:**

*I will try to stop doing:*

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*I'd like you to try to stop doing:*

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*(Share these gently; this is about teamwork, not blame.)*

# WEEKLY 10-MIN PARENT CHECK-IN

Once a week (e.g. Sunday night), sit down together with this page.

## 1. What went better this week?

*Parent A: 'I noticed things went better when we...'*

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*Parent B: 'I noticed things went better when we...'*

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## 2. Where did we accidentally split?

- Did one of us give a different rule?
- Did the child quote one parent against the other?
- Did we contradict each other?

*Write 1-2 examples:*

Example: \_\_\_\_\_

Example: \_\_\_\_\_

## 3. Small adjustments for next week

*One rule we want to tighten:*

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*One rule we want to relax:*

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*One phrase we want to use more:*

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**You're making small, consistent tweaks, like a team after a match.**

# QUICK ONE-PAGE SUMMARY (TO KEEP ON YOUR PHONE)

You can turn this into a small printable card.

## Unified Parenting Cheat Sheet

### Pause line to child:

'Mum and Dad will talk and give you one answer together.'

### Private signal:

(e.g. touch on arm / phrase 'Let's park this for now.')

### Non-negotiables:

- Respect
- Basic homework effort
- Bedtime & devices
- No physical aggression
- (Your extras)

### Top 3 house rules:

- Homework: \_\_\_\_\_
- Screens: \_\_\_\_\_
- Bedtime / devices: \_\_\_\_\_

### Default consequence pattern:

- Warning - chance to repair
- If repeated - agreed consequence

### Golden rule:

'We never debate each other in front of our child.  
We can disagree. We just don't do it there and then.'

### Used well, this Unified Parenting Plan turns 'strict vs soft' into:

- one calm, united team,
- clear, predictable rules,
- far fewer opportunities for your child to play you off -
- ...and a much more peaceful home around study, screens and everyday boundaries.