Effective E-mails Between Homes

1. In general, send only necessary e-mails and limit the amount per day.

2. Limit the topics to no more than 3 at a time, and less if possible. Each item should be no more than two sentences in general.

3. Number the items to discuss so when the other parent is writing back they can address the issues in the same format for easy response. Each number is a separate item, not a continuation of the previous item.

4. Use their name to begin the e-mail, such as "Bill, Can you…".

5. Use basic manners, such as "please" and "thank you."

6. Make your e-mail brief and specific. Only elaborate if the other parent requests elaboration, and even then limit it to the information they are requesting.

7. Keep e-mails focused on the present or future.

8. Do not have others send your e-mails for you, but do e-mail directly to the person you want to communicate with instead of to one of their relatives or friends.

9. Make your e-mails non-judgmental. Do not give directions on how the other parent should parent or co-parent.

10. For the most part, keep the e-mails about appointments, activities pick up/drop off details, etc.

11. Give choices and be flexible when possible.

12. Ask instead of demand.

13. If you get an e-mail full of what you are doing wrong, don't take the bait. Respond as you would to a business partner or co-worker. Focus on solutions.

14. If there are concerns address them by using 'I' Statements. "I feel _____when _____and I recommend _____." For example; "I feel concerned when I see Bobby's low grades and I recommend we take him to a tutor, what do you think?"

15. When an e-mail is received that asks for a response immediately let the sender know that you have read it. If you don't have an answer let the other parent know when you will make your decision.

16. Don't speak for anyone else. You can say, "The children said…" or "I think they may feel…", but not "The children feel…".

Before you hit send, review this list. Ask yourself is this about the co-parenting relationship and does it meet all the criteria listed? If not, then stop and rewrite.