

## What to Provide in a “Chronology” or “Time Line” of Events

We often ask clients to supply a chronology or time line of events leading up to the current dispute; sometimes we ask for an outline of the entire relationship. We do this because it is sometimes just as important to know what led to a problem as it is to know the details of the problem itself. Events from months or years earlier can determine the outcome of many different kinds of issues, from jurisdiction to child custody to alimony.

If we have requested such a time line from you, don't panic – this is just a tool we use to gain an understanding of your case as efficiently and quickly as possible. This paper is intended to tell you what and how much information we are looking for and give you some pointers on how to organize it.

It is not necessary to write a novel or to include every detail. Unless we give some more specific direction, what we are looking for are the “major events” that led you to your current circumstances. If you are providing a history of your relationship, start at the beginning and move forward. When did you meet? Move in together? Separate? Did you relocate from one place to another? Start or stop jobs or careers? What major events (births, deaths, illnesses, accidents, incidents) were turning points in your history?

There is no required or “right” way to write a time line. For most people, it is easiest to create a time line in the form of a list, putting dates of major events on the left and writing a short description of those events next to them. For example:

June, 1985:	We met on a blind date.
November, 1985:	He moved into my apartment in New York; we started combining finances.
August, 1992:	I lost my job with the accounting firm and started making ceramics at home.
May, 1993:	Our first child, John, was born.
August-Dec. 1993:	Spent a lot of time at the hospital during John's serious illness.
September, 1993:	We moved to Los Angeles; my husband started drinking heavily.

Etc. Obviously, what is “important” varies enormously from case to case; if you think it is important, bring it to our attention. It is often much easier to understand (and give advice regarding) the “why” of a situation once we understand the “what” that led up to it. As a general rule, it is better to supply more information than less if you are not sure of the relevance of given facts.

Finally, if you are not sure what to put down or how to do it, ask! The better the information we can obtain, starting with the initial consultation, the more thoroughly your questions can be answered and the better we will be able to assist you.