



## 9 Things to Ask at the Initial Consultation

### Experience & Expertise

**1. Do you specialize in divorces, or are divorces just a part of your practice? How long have you been practicing family law?**

Lawyers that practice in multiple areas of law may not have the expertise you need.

**2. Will anyone else in your office be working on my case? What experience do they have? Can I meet them?**

Working with a team can be beneficial in that a team can be more responsive and cost effective than working with just one lawyer.

**3. What geographical areas and courts do you cover?**

This ensures the lawyer is familiar with the judges and local court rules in that district.



### Approach

**4. What is your approach to resolving conflict? Are you collaborative and settlement-minded, or are you aggressive? Do you offer mediation?**

This will help you determine if the lawyer is a good fit for you.

**5. How do you communicate with your clients?**

Discuss the best ways to effectively communicate with you and determine if the lawyer has the technology to meet your needs.

**6. What is the divorce process like and what is an estimated timeline?**

An experienced lawyer should be able to give you a brief general overview of the divorce process and average length of a divorce.



### Fee Structure

**7. How will you charge me? What is your hourly rate? Do you charge for the time I spend with other lawyers, with paralegals, and/or with secretaries? If so, at what rate? What is your retainer up front?**

You should be able to discuss fees openly. Most lawyers expect to be paid for the work that is performed on your case. Having open communication about your financial situation and expectations is key to a good relationship.

**8. What's your estimate of the total cost of this divorce?**

Do not be alarmed that most divorce attorneys will resist answering this question as the cost of the divorce depends greatly upon the level of conflict in your case. However, the way attorneys answer this question may help you size them up. An honest attorney will often answer that it is difficult to estimate the costs in advance. An attorney that gives you an unrealistically low amount may just be trying to get your business. An attorney who charges a flat fee may have an interest in resolving your case quickly without much negotiation or court involvement or may charge extra hidden fees.

**9. How can I keep the cost of my divorce down? Are there tasks that I can do myself to cut down on the amount you will charge me?**

If you are willing and able, there may be things your attorney can have you do to keep costs down. However, some attorneys may prefer to handle everything themselves, which can also benefit you by being more efficient and keeping your stress levels down knowing that things are being handled by an expert.