Blended Family Kit

Who is family on paper, how two households work, and where the money and estate go.

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If you only read one page

The law was written for first families. In a blended family, what you intend and what happens can be very different unless it is on paper.

1. **Stepchildren may inherit nothing.** Without a will that names them, stepchildren usually receive nothing from a stepparent under state law.
2. **Beneficiary forms override the will.** Check every retirement account and life insurance policy. The name on the form is who gets paid.
3. **Leaving everything to your spouse can leave out your children.** Your spouse can later change their own will. A trust can provide for a spouse and still protect your children.
4. **A stepparent needs written permission.** Without it, a stepparent cannot consent to medical care or sign school forms. Sign a consent form for each stepchild.
5. **Agree on the money.** Whose accounts are separate, what is joint, and how household costs are split. Put it in writing, even informally.
6. **Share one calendar.** Custody schedules, support payments and school events, visible to both households.
7. **Update everything after the wedding.** Wills, beneficiaries, emergency contacts and insurance. Old forms follow the old family.

Then start here: **Who is family, on paper**, page 5.

What is in here

4 worksheets in two sections. Start with the first section, then whichever page someone is about to ask you for. A page filled in roughly is worth more than a blank one.

01 Family

The household as the law sees it, across two homes.

Family
Money and estate

Who is family, on paper

The household as the law sees it. This page is the one your estate attorney will want first.

The full guide: hubstone.com/guides/blended-family-legal

Person	Lives here	Legal parent of	Stepparent of	Other parent

Stepchildren do not inherit by default. In most states a stepchild inherits nothing unless a will, trust or beneficiary form names them, or they were adopted. If you want a stepchild provided for, it has to be written down.

Agreements that already decide things

Agreement	Between	Where the original is
Divorce decree		
Custody order or parenting plan		
Child support order		
Prenuptial agreement		
Adoption papers		

Two households

Schedules, contacts and what each adult is allowed to do for each child.

The full guide: hubstone.com/guides/blended-family-legal

The other household

Child	Other household	Contact	Phone

What a stepparent can do

A stepparent usually needs written permission from a legal parent to consent to medical care or sign school forms. Put it in writing and give copies to the school and the doctor.

Child	Pick up from school	Medical consent signed	Where the permission is kept

The calendar

Regular schedule ______________________

Holidays and birthdays ______________________

School breaks and summer ______________________

Where the shared calendar lives ______________________

02

Money and estate

Accounts, support, and who inherits what.

Blended family finances

Who inherits what, how the two of you set up the accounts, and where child support fits in the budget. Fill it in together before you see the estate attorney.

The full guide: hubstone.com/guides/blended-family-finances

Estate planning

- [ ] List all current assets (home, vehicles, investments, retirement accounts, insurance)
- [ ] Identify who has a legal claim on your estate (your children, your spouse)
- [ ] List any earlier agreements (divorce decree, custody order, prenup)
- [ ] Decide whether your spouse inherits everything, or only what you specify
- [ ] Decide whether you want to leave anything to stepchildren, and how much
- [ ] Look into a QTIP trust if you want to provide for both your spouse and your own children
- [ ] Update the beneficiary designations on every retirement account (401(k), IRA, and the rest)
- [ ] Update the beneficiary designations on your life insurance policies
- [ ] Name a guardian for minor children in your will
- [ ] Name an executor, the person who carries out your will
- [ ] Book a consultation with an estate planning attorney
- [ ] Sign the will and have it properly witnessed

How to set up the accounts

Approach	Best for	Pros	Cons
Pool and allocate (one joint account)	Similar incomes and a high commitment to sharing everything	Simple. One household budget, run as a team.	Power dynamics if incomes are unequal. Less personal control.
Separate and contribute (individual accounts)	A big income gap, past financial trauma, or a strong need for independence	Clarity and autonomy. Protection from a partner's debt.	Less sense of partnership. Harder to track household spending.
Hybrid (joint for the household, separate for the rest)	An income gap plus a wish for unity, or children from earlier relationships	Flexibility with a shared commitment to the household.	Needs clear boundaries, more bookkeeping, and ongoing negotiation.

Child support

Who pays ______________________ Amount ______________________

How long it runs ______________________ Review schedule ______________________

Resentment level, 1 to 10 ______________________

Effect on the household budget

____

____

Monthly income and expenses

Partner 1 gross monthly income ______________ Partner 2 gross monthly income ______________

Combined household expenses ______________ Retirement contributions ______________

Share of expenses, partner 1 (%) ______________ Share of expenses, partner 2 (%) ______________

Emergency fund target ______________

Next steps

- [ ] Have the first of the three conversations on this page (estate, accounts, or child support)
- [ ] If it applies, talk with your partner about a prenup
- [ ] Choose an account structure from the table above
- [ ] Put a reminder on the calendar to revisit this plan yearly, or after any major change

Beneficiaries and estate

Who each account and policy goes to today, and who you want it to go to. In blended families these are often out of date.

The full guide: hubstone.com/guides/blended-family-legal

Account or policy	Owner	Goes to now	Should go to	Updated
Life insurance				
401(k) or 403(b)				
IRA				
Pension				
Bank accounts with a payable-on-death name				
The home				

Check for an ex-spouse. A beneficiary form signed before a divorce may still name the former spouse. Some states revoke that automatically and some plans do not follow state law, so change the form rather than relying on it.

Decisions for the estate attorney

If one of us dies, where does the other live, and for how long?

What goes to each of our children, and when?

Does anything go to stepchildren?

Who is guardian for each minor child?

This does not have to stay paper

You have just written down the things your family would otherwise have to work out under pressure. Keep this binder somewhere two people know about, and tell them it exists.

Paper goes stale. A phone number changes, a policy renews, a parent moves, and the page you filled in last spring is quietly wrong.

Hubstone holds the same record and keeps it current. Enter something once, and share each page only with the people who should see it. When a detail changes, the record changes with it, and the reminder comes before the deadline. The Blended Family Kit is free, on paper and in the app.

Fill it in once

Scan to start at hubstone.com/start. No card needed.

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