



Nicole Schaefer's
Secret 5-Step
Divorce Prep Power Plan

*Feeling stressed navigating the divorce process alone?
There is so much to do. It can get overwhelming*

Let me be your guide.

In this PDF I will reveal some little-known secrets I've discovered for radically improved success in divorce proceedings. The key is to start early.

Read this PDF and learn to:

- ✓ *Finish your divorce in 43% less time*
- ✓ *Save yourself at least \$10,000 in fees*
- ✓ *Protect assets during the divorce process*

and much more!

Hi there, _____

If you're starting the divorce process...sorry to be the one to tell you but...yes, it really is going to be as bad as you think. At times in the coming months, you will feel hurt, betrayed, confused, lost, and, ultimately, at peace.

What is so incredibly difficult about divorce is that you aren't just divorcing another person, you are also, in a way, divorcing an identity you've held for yourself.

The person you thought you were and the person you planned to be for the rest of your life are gone forever.



You're going to be...single again?

As a divorce lawyer here in Portland, Oregon, I've shepherded thousands through the process and I've noticed some interesting things. About 10 years ago, I started keeping track of how much money my clients spent on things like lawyers, taxes, and fees and what kind of results they got in their divorce and how happy they were.

What I found was that a lot of the common advice divorce lawyers are taught to give clients actually ends up costing thousands of extra dollars in the long run.





I hired a statistician to search for trends in the data and uncover what all of the happiest people had in common.

*Turns out the top **5%** who were most satisfied did things radically differently than the other **95%**, spending an average of **\$10,923** less on legal fees and saving over **\$30,000** on taxes over the course of the process.*

They also finished their divorces in about 43% less time.

How did they do all of this?

I codified the strategies used by these super-satisfied divorcees and worked with a professional graphic designer to create this guide for you. Follow these 5 steps and you will find yourself closer to the happy 5%...

*Hope it helps,
Nicole Schaefer*



*Divorce Attorney
nicole@nicoleschaeferfamilylaw.com*

OVERVIEW

The Six Strategies

1 Immediately Execute these Financial Maneuvers

As soon as you start the divorce process, your life is going to become immediately scrutinized to hell. So there are certain important things you need to get done before this process is initiated. Consolidating accounts, cancelling credit cards, making large purchases, etc. This section lays out what to do



2 Make these Important Calculations

Next, I'm going to walk you through a bunch of essential calculations to do. Mostly financial stuff. And I will explain how to use stealthy methods, like running your credit score, to find the numbers you need. Don't worry, I'll keep the math minimal. These are vital numbers for you to have.



3 Prepare these Necessary Documents

During the divorce process, you're going to need paper copies of everything imaginable. Don't let a sneaky spouse close accounts or hide information. The number of documents you will need is quite large so it's best to start early. I reveal simple techniques for getting the documents you need.



OVERVIEW

The Six Strategies

4 Adjust Your Expectations

You need to set goals going into your divorce proceedings and this section will help you do that. It's important not to focus on trying to 'win' because, in the end, everyone will 'lose' if you do. Instead, keep the big picture in mind and practice a short elevator speech so you can easily articulate your vision.



5 File the Paperwork

Once you've completed all the previous steps, it's finally time to file. Don't worry about who files first, it really doesn't make a difference. This section will guide you through the process. Also, I'll reveal a proven strategy for finding an incredible lawyer to help you from here on out.



1

IMMEDIATE MANEUVERS

Do these things as soon as you possibly can

One of the weird things about divorce in general, and this is sometimes hard for people to understand, is that you essentially lose control of your own life for a while during the divorce process.

For a period of time, the goal will be to carefully scrutinize all assets that you and your partner own together, figure out what they are really worth after taxes and depreciation and maintenance, and fairly distribute all of it.

So it makes sense that if you are making lots of changes--shutting down credit card accounts and opening new ones and buying a house in Hawaii and selling your sailboat--while the process is underway, it is going to totally mess up the analysis

Because of this, the judge will issue an automatic financial restraining order, locking everything down and preventing you from making any changes to accounts or financial assets (even completing large purchases) until after the divorce is finalized. And that takes 4-10 months.

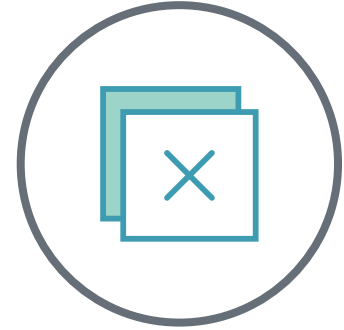
If you do want to change anything or make any purchases during this time you have to request permission from the judge. And the request letter has to be written by a lawyer. And so does the response. And every letter costs \$500.

But nothing we can't deal with! I've noticed that the most successful divorcees are the ones who take certain financial actions before filing. This can dramatically simplify the process and leave you set up to at least live comfortably while the divorce proceedings drag on.

There are three categories of actions you can take immediately to save yourself time later on

2 Cancel this Stuff as Soon as Possible

Now, keep in mind that this freezing-of-your-assets thing is going to run both ways. So not only will you not be allowed to buy new things without a judge's consent, you also won't be able to cancel existing things. This means any joint services you and your spouse share including cable, internet, cell phone, utilities, as well as all joint credit card accounts, should be cancelled beforehand.



I cannot stress this enough. Cancel the family plan and get yourself your own cell phone. Do it now. Immediately. Well before you file for divorce

Cut off, pay, and close down all credit cards as soon as you possibly can. Maintaining these during divorce proceedings when you are unable to communicate about things and are working to divide shared assets can be incredibly stressful and confusing.

Trust me, you're going to want to get rid of all this stuff soon but it will be frozen. Just do it now.

Use the table below to list all of the shared services that you and your spouse have, as well as the customer support numbers that you would need to call in order to cancel them.

Studies show if you have the number already located you'll be more likely to call...

Shared Service Name	Customer Support
	() -
	() -
	() -

3 *Get Your Own Personal Accounts Set Up*

Like the squirrel who stockpiles nuts and roots because he knows the winter is coming, you personally need to know that difficult times lie ahead of you now. The divorce process will stretch you emotionally, physically, and definitely financially.



It would be wise to stockpile some resources.

Create for yourself a savings account and set a goal of saving up at least 6 months worth of living expenses. I also recommend keeping another 1-2 months' worth on hand in cash.

Of course, make sure this is not a joint account; you want to be the sole owner.



2

IMPORTANT CALCULATIONS

Let's crunch some actual numbers here

This step is all about gathering the data you're going to need during the divorce process. Then Step 3 will be all about how to assemble the necessary documents.

Divorces are mostly about numbers and data (you'll notice certain numbers are especially prevalent: dollars). And in battles of numbers you need to be armed with numbers of your own.

The major thing they will look at during the divorce is your monthly cash flow. They want to know how much available cash you each have per month so they can see if one partner needs to make some payments to the other.

In some of these cases this is where it devolves into a situation almost resembling a Saturday Night Live skit, with everyone claiming to have zero cash flow and saying it would be impossible to make payments...

2

IMPORTANT CALCULATIONS

Let's crunch some actual numbers here

Whoever is presiding will pretty easily see through these types of phony claims, so you don't want to go overboard. However, in order to portray your own finances in the best possible light, it is very important to be able to quickly and easily discuss your various expenses and income streams and how they impact your monthly bottom line.

So let's get to it.

To start, what are all the ways you spend and receive money? Do you have a main checking account and savings account that things are routed through? Or numerous accounts and credits cards cobbled together in a complicated system that nobody fully understands?

I'm going to ask you to conduct a 6-month audit, looking back over your finances for the past 6 months and filling in information about your spending and earning.

Then we will divide your answers by six, to get your average monthly spending and income.

You'll see what I mean...

1 Expenses

First, let's look at your expenses. In the EXPENSES chart, below, you'll see lines for your spending in various areas. I recommend you just go through 6 months worth of bank statements with a calculator and add up all of the transactions that fall into each category. Then simply jot that number down and continue to the next category.



I also recommend printing your bank statements out and actually crossing off the transactions as you include them, so you won't accidentally use the same one in multiple categories, or to fail to include one in any categories.

To calculate the average monthly spending in any category, just divide the total number by 6.

**Only include items here that you actually pay for, not things that are paid for by your spouse.*

Category	Past 6 Month Budget	Monthly Budget
Children		
Household		
Transportation		
Health/medical		
Food		
Clothing/hair/makeup		
Business		
Investing/retirement		
Entertainment/leisure		
Travel		
TOTAL		

2 Income

The flip-side of expenses, of course, is taking a look at how much money you actually have coming in. So now let's go back through those bank statements one more time and look for places where you made money.

For the purposes of calculating current cashflow, it is OK to use the amount you actually receive from your employer for paychecks. However, if you have a retirement fund, like an IRA or 401K that deducts money from your paychecks pre-tax, you need to know all the numbers, including what your initial paycheck is, how much goes into your fund, how much tax you pay, and then how much you receive



Write this all down.

But for now, let's look at the numbers on your bank statements, reflecting the amount you actually took home each month, and start from there.

Use the following table to help you. Going back through your statements for the past 6 months again, note times when you received income



2 Income

Category	Past 6 Month Income	Monthly Income
<i>Working wages</i>		
<i>Gifts</i>		
<i>Sales of assets</i>		
<i>Real estate sales</i>		
<i>Dividends</i>		
<i>Allowance/pension</i>		
TOTAL		

So, with these two numbers in hand (your average monthly income and expenses) we are finally able to calculate your net income, or the amount of cash you have available each month.

Simply subtract the expenses from the income :

$$\text{MONTHLY INCOME} - \text{MONTHLY EXPENSES} = \text{NET INCOME}$$

At the end of the day, if one partner has a high net monthly income while the other has a really low or negative monthly income, there's a good chance the higher one will be asked to make some form of payment to the lower one.

So at the very least you want to know where you stand and be able to argue your case either way

3 Debts

This one might seem obvious on first glance. Yes, there are large debts that many people have, like student loans, a mortgage, car finance payments and the like. These are definitely important and should be accounted for.

But many people have additional obligations that they aren't aware of or had never considered as debt before. You definitely want to take some time and dig a bit deeper, because the more in-debt you can make yourself look, the less money they will take from you.

One trick I always recommend is to run credit checks on yourself. Seriously, as many free credit checks as you can find in Google. Run them all and you will get slightly different information from each one. It's well worth your time.

Additionally, do you have financial assets like stocks and bonds? If your investments have appreciated you may owe taxes on the gain (a debt) and if they have depreciated then you lost money (also potentially creating debt). Do you have an ETrade or Fidelity or investment account with a broker or some kind? Try to see where you might owe money on these investments and report it as debt.

Debt Description	Amount
TOTAL	

3 Assets

Now, before you log out of your Fidelity account, the next section is about assets--anything you own that has value or is worth money.

Start a spreadsheet where you are going to keep track of all these assets, with different pages for each asset class like “furniture,” “stocks/bonds,” “real estate,” “intellectual property,” etc. How you label these exactly is up to you and should just be done based on what makes the most sense according to your actual asset holdings.

One word of caution is, if you are under 65, you should definitely separate retirement funds from all other assets in a page of their own within this sheet. This is because the court will often consider the predicted value of these funds when you are 65, rather than their actual value now, depending on when you are being asked to make certain payments.

This might sound crazy if you own a lot of stuff, but you really do want to think about everything you own here. It will all have to be equitably divided.

When it comes to stuff like furniture, go through every room and find used values for all of the major items using quick Google searches. Add them up as you go and keep track of the total for each room in the spreadsheet. Most people find that method easy.

Do you own any art? Maybe a page in your spreadsheet is devoted to art and you use it to list the approximate values of all your pieces. These may be difficult to estimate. However, you can generally start from the previous known value as a jumping-off point. If the last known value is over \$1,000 and it has been a while (like over 10 years) since the piece was appraised, you are probably due for an appraisal.



3 Assets

The same for your homes and other real estate properties; 10 years or more means it's appraisal time. Realtors will scoff at Zillow estimates. However, I have found they are actually generally pretty good for predicting real estate values in a pinch.

Write the **TOTAL** from each page of your spreadsheet on the following table, and then calculate the total of **THOSE** for your overall asset total.

Asset Description	Amount
TOTAL	

You are now ready to calculate your net worth by subtracting all of your debts from your assets.

$$\text{ASSETS} - \text{DEBTS} = \text{NET WORTH}$$

Once you've completed these calculations you will have all the major numbers you need to be incredibly successful in your divorce. I recommend printing out all of the tables you prepared during this section so that you can bring them with you to important meetings and share them with only the most trusted of people, like your lawyer.

3

DOCUMENTS TO PREPARE

Yeah, there are a lot of these, so get started early...

In addition to focusing heavily on numbers, divorces also often center largely around documents. That's because divorce proceedings aim to find the "truth," and this means people who deal with divorces like to make sure all our facts are well-documented so we can feel like we are being objective and official and unbiased.

Did you ever go on a scavenger hunt when you were a child? Those were so much fun.

If you don't recall, the basic idea is that some adult dreams up a list of random hand-to-find artifacts and lists them. The lists are handed out to a group of children at the same time and the first kid to obtain all of the artifacts on the list wins some fabulous prize like a Jello casserole.

I'm sorry to say it, but during this section of the handbook you're bound to feel a lot like those kids in the scavenger hunt--galloping off blindly in search of random meaningless pieces of paper.

Trust me when I say I'm not the most organized person, so I know how tough it can be to track down old documents you've completely forgotten about. This is not fun. I get it.











But I'm still asking you to do it.

This is because it's really important! If you don't have documents for something, then, in the eyes of the court, it basically didn't happen or doesn't exist. If you aren't used to a career in science or journalism where everything must be backed up with citations and references to previous literature, you might not have much experience with this.

Now, I'm not guaranteeing this list covers every single document you could ever need. But I've spent a lot of time keeping track of this stuff and, in my experience, these are the key ones you will need 98% of the time.



Make HARD COPIES of the following:

-  *A recent appraisal of your home.*
-  *Any partnership or business agreements.*
-  *A copy of any life insurance policy held either in your name, your spouse's name, or your children's names.*
-  *Stock/bond certificates owned by you or your spouse.*
-  *Credit Card statements from the past year.*
-  *All vehicle titles or leases held by you, your spouse, or the two of you jointly along with the Kelley Blue Book information if you own the vehicle.*
-  *Documents for any other loans or debts.*
-  *One year of statement(s) for any account held in your name, your spouse's name, or both of names (including checking, savings, money market, investment, pension, stocks annuities, mortgage).*
-  *Your (and your spouse's) W-2s for the past 3 years.*
-  *Your (and your spouse's) Tax Returns for the past 3 years.*

4

ADJUST YOUR EXPECTATIONS

You need to have the proper mindset going in.

Without a doubt the most common mindset I see people have going into divorce proceedings is that they want to “win” and beat their spouse. To be honest, however, the sad truth is that far too often both parties lose. These are always emotionally harrowing times for both sides and my data clearly shows that everything works much better off when people adopt a more helpful attitude and are able to support each other instead of antagonizing.

The whole point is to find a fair and equitable settlement, so it is never the case that one side completely “wins” and the other “loses.” If one gets full custody, the other might get a break financially. They really do balance out and it’s usually very hard to tell the winner from the loser.

There is a famous psychology study where researchers looked at a convent of nuns who had been eating the same foods, getting the same exercise, and living in the same environment their whole lives. So what factors would predicto how long they would live?

Well, one thing they discovered that made a significant impact on life expectancy was the number of positive words they used in their entrance essays to the convent as teenagers and young adults many decades hence.

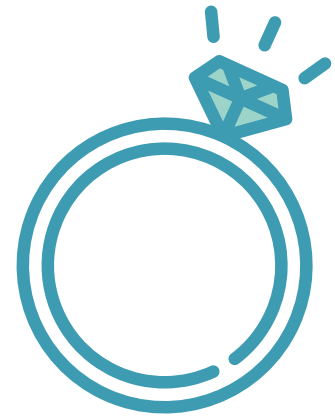
Your attitudes and expectations have a significant impact on the quality of your life. And it is especially true during divorce. Maintaining a productive attitude is key for keeping everything on track and running smoothly.

Maybe your expectation is that everyone stays respected throughout the whole process. Maybe it's that you and your spouse stay good friends. Maybe it's that the final outcome will be fair and just.

You need to choose a positive attitude for yourself.

Don't expect to win or to "teach that loser a lesson" or anything like that. If these are your motives it really will backfire because you'll never be satisfied with the result. I can't tell you how many times I've seen it.

Please, do yourself a favor and adopt a productive attitude from the start.



It's also important to be able to communicate effectively about your divorce to others. And when you do this you want to be able to firmly communicate your positive and productive attitude to the people with whom you're speaking.

So I teach people who are going through divorce to essentially develop a little 30-second commercial about how things are going.



Think about it. The first question everyone is going to ask is, “How are things going with the divorce?” So you need to be ready for that instead of just floundering around every time it comes up.

Write a brief 100-word summary of how things are going that conveys your attitude. For instance, “So far, everyone has been very respectful of each other, which is one of the most important things for me.” Summarize how things are genuinely going and throw your attitude in there a few times. Then try to edit it down to just 100 words.

Memorize this and practice reciting it.



5 FILE THE PAPERWORK

Congratulations, you just saved \$10,000.

Some couples get so competitive during the divorce process, it cracks me up. I've represented a few different people who told me they actually raced their spouses out the door and in their cars down to the courthouse to file the divorce paperwork so they could file first.

Hey, relax. Totally not necessary.

In fact, filing first isn't always in your best interest. Often you're better off filing second. More often still it doesn't make any difference at all. Don't worry about it.

At this point, if you have followed all of the advice in this PDF yourself instead of hiring a lawyer to do this stuff for you, then you've already saved at least \$10,000. The actual filing of the document would only be a few hundred bucks to have done by a professional. This is the stage where it often makes sense to call in a lawyer and have them actually file for you.

During the divorce proceedings themselves you are definitely going to want a lawyer to represent you. That is worth paying for. But you can save a ton by doing all of this research and gathering these documents yourself.

One issue is how to find a divorce lawyer you can trust.

Well, if you do happen to be in the Portland, Oregon area you are lucky enough to be able to hire my firm :)

We are efficient, trustworthy, and affordable while taking great care of our clients through the whole process.



Email me personally at:
nicole@yourlawyersonline.com

For those in another city, here's what I recommend. Find a law firm that doesn't even do family law and go to their website. Scroll through the photos and look for an attorney who looks particularly trustworthy. Get in touch with this individual and tell them that you know they don't personally do divorce but that you wondered if they might be able to recommend someone good.

This is the trick that attorneys use when we are in a new area or are advising a family member in an unfamiliar part of the world. I can always find a great lawyer anywhere using this simple formula.

Book 60-90 minutes with your lawyer and say you want to discuss filing for divorce. Bring everything you prepared in this folder to that meeting and show it to your attorney.



Make sure the attorney knows you just need minimal assistance through the process. You'd like them to do the initial filing, respond to any queries from the court, to be present to represent you during the proceedings, and to review all settlements and other contracts.

Then, let the process begin.

I can't say it'll be easy. In fact, I can almost guarantee it'll be a struggle. But I can say that after working through this packet you're incredibly well prepared

Good luck!

