

# preparing for mediation

a step-by-step guide to navigating conflict with clarity and confidence



**rainbridge**

**Rainbridge Resolution Services**  
Empowering you to build bridges that last.

# welcome

Conflict can feel heavy, uncertain, and hard to navigate. If you're considering mediation - or you've already scheduled a session - know this: showing up is a courageous first step.

This guide is designed to help you feel prepared, supported, and grounded as you enter the process. You don't need to have all the answers. You just need to be willing to begin.



## **Inside, you'll find:**

- A simple overview of what to expect in mediation
- Questions to help you reflect and prepare
- Tips for participating in a constructive, productive conversation
- Practical advice for before and during your session

Feel free to read through at your own pace, take notes, or print this out as a reference.



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# what to expect in mediation

**Mediation is a voluntary, confidential process guided by a neutral, third-party facilitator. At Rainbridge, we're here to support you – not to judge, take sides, or make decisions for you.**

Here's a basic overview of how the process works:

## 1. Connect with a Mediator

Prior to the process beginning, you will connect with the mediator on a call that provides you the opportunity to share context about the issue you're looking to resolve and the parties involved. The mediator will explain the mediation process, and help you to determine how mediation could support resolution of your issue.

## 2. Agreement to Mediate

An Agreement to Mediate is a written contract that all parties – and the mediator – sign before the process begins.

It lays out how the mediation will work: what will be discussed, how costs are shared, and what happens if an agreement isn't reached. It also confirms that mediation is completely voluntary and confidential, and that the mediator's role is to support open, respectful dialogue without taking sides or making decisions. At its heart, this agreement is about creating clarity, safety, trust – and a shared commitment to working together toward a fair and forward-looking resolution.

## 3. Pre-Mediation

In pre-mediation, each party will meet privately (individually and confidentially) with the mediator to discuss their goals, share context, and ask any questions. This helps the mediator tailor the process to your needs (scheduling, logistics, accessibility, comfort) and ensure everyone feels ready.

Pre-mediation can happen days in advance of the mediation session, or on the same day as the mediation session.





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## 4. Mediation Session(s)

During the mediation session(s), parties will come together in a structured conversation, either virtually, or in person. The mediator helps keep the discussion focused and respectful, while making space for each person to speak, listen, and explore solutions.

The mediation may require more than one session. Parties will agree in advance how they intend to proceed if the mediation requires more than one session.

A mediation session may be anywhere from two to four hours long. If scheduled in advance, a mediation session could even span an entire day, if desired by the parties. Mediation sessions that are scheduled for longer than two hours will include regular, scheduled breaks. During the mediation, parties may request a break at any time.

Parties may also request a break to meet privately with the mediator, during the mediation. If one party requests a private discussion with the mediator, the other will be provided the same opportunity to meet privately with the mediator as well. In some instances, the mediator will suggest a break to meet privately with each party.

Mediation is always voluntary, and a party can request to stop the mediation at any time.

## 5. Resolution

Parties will be guided toward developing and evaluating potential solutions to resolve their issue during the mediation session. If an agreement is reached by the parties, it may be documented either formally or informally. This can often be done by the mediator, however in some cases (e.g., separation or parenting arrangements), it may need to be reviewed or filed by a legal professional to become binding.

# your role in the process

**Mediation only works when everyone shows up with honesty, openness, and the willingness to engage. That doesn't mean you have to agree - it means you're participating in good faith.**

Here's what you can expect for yourself:

- You have the right to speak - and the right to pause.
- You are not here to convince the mediator of anything.
- Your role is to share your perspective and listen to others.
- You are in control of any decisions or outcomes.

**Mediation is rooted in choice.** You are never obligated to agree to something that doesn't feel right for you.



## Questions For Self-Reflection

Before your mediation session, take a few minutes to reflect on the following questions. You can write them down, speak them aloud, or simply think them through.

- What is this conflict really about—for me?
- How is it impacting me, practically or emotionally?
- What do I want to walk away with—what would resolution look like?
- What do I need in order to feel safe, heard, or understood?
- What concerns or fears do I have about the conversation?
- What am I open to? Where might I be flexible?
- What boundaries or limits do I want to honour?

These reflections are for you alone—but they'll help you show up with more clarity and confidence.

# tips for a constructive conversation

## Preparing Emotionally

Mediation can stir up all kinds of emotions - it's totally normal. The goal isn't to be perfectly calm, but to feel steady enough to express yourself and listen with openness. These approaches might help:

- **Be specific:** The more clearly you name a concern, the easier it is to address it. For example: "I felt overlooked during that decision" explains how you were feeling more clearly than "You never listen to me."
- **Consider 'ground rules':** What might you suggest to help support a constructive conversation, and reduce the likelihood of escalation in the moment? For example, asking for 'no interruptions'. Reflect on how you want the mediator to respond if the ground rules are broken by either party.
- **Keep the focus on needs:** Mediation is about creating understanding of what each person needs, and using those needs to find a way forward. Moving past blame and judgement brings parties closer to collaborating on a solution.
- **Breaks are an option:** If you need a moment to process or pause, you can request a break any time.

## Preparing Logistically


Taking care of a few practical details in advance can help you feel more comfortable during your session. You might consider:

- **What to bring:** A pen and paper can be useful for jotting down thoughts, or bring along any documents that might help you speak to the situation. A water bottle or beverage is recommended.
- **What to wear:** Casual and comfortable clothing - unlike court, there is no requirement for formal attire. Wear whatever helps you feel at ease sitting and talking for a while.
- **Timing:** Sessions often run 2-3 hours, and sometimes more than one is needed. You might want to keep your schedule flexible, just in case. Make any necessary arrangements to ensure you're available for the full session.
- **If your session is virtual:** Try to find a quiet, private spot with a stable internet connection. Headphones can help minimize external noise and distractions.

If you're wondering about any part of the process, feel free to ask your mediator. You don't need to have it all figured out—curiosity is welcome.







## Considering mediation? Consider Rainbridge.

Conflict is hard. But resolution is possible – and you’ve already taken the first step. At Rainbridge, we’re here to support you through the process with clarity, compassion, and care.

Whether or not you reach agreement, we believe every conversation has the potential to move things forward.

Your voice matters. Your choices matter. And you are not alone.

## Let’s connect

If you’re curious about mediation, need clarity on your next steps, or just want to talk through your options – we’re here to listen.

[rainbridge.ca](https://rainbridge.ca)

[connect@rainbridge.ca](mailto:connect@rainbridge.ca)

# brighter conversations begin here.

[Click here to schedule your free consultation](#)



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