

Fair Fighting Rules for Couples

A one-page checklist from The Relationship Blueprint. Print it, stick it on the fridge, and agree it together before the next argument — not during one.

- ☐ **1. No name-calling, ever.**
Attack the problem, not the person. Insults are remembered long after the issue is gone.
- ☐ **2. Stay on one topic.**
One fight, one subject. If something else comes up, write it down and come back to it later.
- ☐ **3. No bringing up the past.**
Old arguments belong to the past. Today's issue gets today's conversation.
- ☐ **4. Say “I feel”, not “you always”.**
“I feel shut out when plans change” invites a reply. “You always do this” invites a defence.
- ☐ **5. Ask for what you want, not what you don't.**
Name the thing that would help, clearly and small enough to actually happen.
- ☐ **6. Either of you can call a timeout.**
When one of you is flooded, nothing useful gets decided. Pause instead of pushing on.
- ☐ **7. Always name a return time.**
“I need 20 minutes, then I'm back.” A pause with a return is safety. Walking out is abandonment.
- ☐ **8. No threatening the relationship.**
No leaving, no divorce talk, no “maybe we shouldn't be together” as a weapon in a row.
- ☐ **9. No involving other people mid-fight.**
No texting friends or family for backup while the argument is still live.
- ☐ **10. Listen to understand, not to reply.**
Repeat back what you heard before you answer. Being understood lowers the heat faster than being right.
- ☐ **11. Repair beats winning.**
“I can see I hurt you” ends more fights than any perfect argument ever will.
- ☐ **12. Close the loop.**
Agree one small next step, and check in later. An unfinished fight quietly restarts itself.

How to use the timeout rule

Either of you can say the word. The person who calls it says how long they need and when they'll be back. During the break, do something calming — walk, wash up, breathe. Don't rehearse your case. Then come back, even if it's only to say you're not ready yet.

One line to keep

“I'd rather understand you than win this.”

If arguments at home feel frightening rather than frustrating, fair fighting rules are not the answer — safety is. Free, confidential helplines in your country: findahelpline.com

therelationshipsblueprint.com — free attachment style quiz. Educational, not therapy.