



GO DIVORCE CLINIC[®]
THE END OF THE UGLY DIVORCE

California Divorce Timeline Guide

A general overview of the divorce process

Divorce in California follows a series of legal steps. While every case is different, most uncontested divorces follow a similar timeline.

This guide provides a general overview of the process so you know what to expect as you move through each stage.

Step 1: Filing the Petition

The divorce process begins when one spouse files the Petition for Dissolution of Marriage with the court.

This document formally starts the divorce case.

Once the petition is filed:

- The case receives a court case number
- The court officially opens the divorce case

This step is sometimes referred to as “filing the divorce.”

Step 2: Service of Papers

After the petition is filed, the other spouse must be formally served with the divorce papers.

Service ensures that both spouses are properly notified that the divorce case has begun.

Once service is completed:

- The six-month waiting period required by California law begins.
- This waiting period is sometimes called the cooling-off period.

Step 3: Preliminary Financial Disclosures

Both spouses must exchange financial disclosure documents early in the process.

These disclosures typically include:

- Income information
- Bank accounts
- Retirement accounts



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- Real estate
 - Debts and liabilities

Financial disclosures ensure that both spouses have a clear understanding of the family's financial picture.

These documents are exchanged between spouses but are generally not filed with the court.

Step 4: Negotiating the Settlement

Once financial information has been exchanged, spouses work together to reach agreements regarding:

- Division of property and debts
- Child custody and parenting schedules
- Child support
- Spousal support (if applicable)

When spouses reach agreement on all issues, the terms are written into a Marital Settlement Agreement (MSA).

Step 5: Preparing the Final Judgment

After the settlement agreement is completed, the final Judgment packet is prepared and submitted to the court.

The Judgment includes:

- The Marital Settlement Agreement
- Required court forms
- Child support documentation (if applicable)

Once submitted, the court reviews the documents before approving the divorce.

Step 6: Court Review

Courts typically take several weeks to a few months to review submitted judgments.

If the paperwork is complete and accurate, the court signs the judgment and enters it into the case file.

If corrections are required, the court may request revisions before approval.

Step 7: Divorce Finalization

California law requires a minimum six-month waiting period before a divorce can become final.



This six-month period begins on the date the responding spouse is served with the divorce papers.

Even if all paperwork is completed earlier, the divorce cannot legally become final until the six-month period has passed.

Typical Timeline for an Uncontested Divorce

While each case is different, many uncontested divorces follow a timeline similar to the example below:

Stage	Approximate Timing
Petition Filed	Day 1
Service Completed	Within first few weeks
Financial Disclosures	First 1–2 months
Settlement Agreement	1–3 months
Judgment Submitted	2–4 months
Divorce Finalized	After 6 months minimum

A Note About Timing

Many uncontested divorces are fully negotiated and submitted to the court well before the six-month waiting period ends.

However, California law requires that the divorce cannot become final until the six-month minimum period has passed.

Moving Through the Process

As you work through the GDC portal and complete each section of the process, you will gradually move through these stages.

Our goal is to help you move through the process efficiently, clearly, and with as little stress as possible.