A practical guide for litigants in person using AI in family court

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AI can help you prepare for family court. But a confident answer is not necessarily a correct one.

Having been through family court myself, I understand why people now turn to AI. When you are worried about your children, your finances and what happens next, being able to ask a question in plain English can be a real help. Used carefully, AI can make unfamiliar information more accessible and help you organise your thoughts. I believe that is a good thing for people with limited legal experience. But it cannot replace a

good solicitor or barrister

in family court. Knowing how to produce convincing wording is very different from knowing what matters in your case.

Where AI can be useful

Reasonable uses include asking AI to:

- Explain unfamiliar terminology, then checking the explanation against official guidance.
- Turn your own preparation notes into a checklist.
- Help prepare questions for a solicitor or barrister.
- Identify unclear wording or repetition in ordinary correspondence.
- Identify gaps or inconsistencies that you should check.

Treat the output as a working draft. Compare summaries with the originals, check dates and keep your original records. These are practical suggestions, not a guarantee that a particular use is permitted in every case.

> Your court's directions and the rules applying to your documents still matter.

Do not mistake agreement for accuracy

One risk is from AI is a phenomenon called

sycophancy.

This is where AI may agree with your interpretation rather than challenge it, flatter you and make you feel like your point of view is correct, when, in fact, sometimes it is clearly wrong. It also does not take into consideration the human factor. Arguing about who is having the kettle when you should just let some things slide. If you describe your former partner as dishonest, a chatbot may produce an argument supporting that view without having the evidence needed to assess it. A more useful question might be; "What does this information actually support, what remains uncertain, and what might I have misunderstood?"

> Even then, the answer needs checking. As commentary in Today's Family Lawyer highlights, polished legal wording can obscure the issues the court actually needs to decide.

Never rely on unchecked cases or quotations

AI can invent cases, legal principles, quotations and convincing-looking links. It can also cite a real judgment that does not support its argument. In

D (A Child) (Recusal) [2025] EWCA Civ 1570

, the Court of Appeal addressed inaccurate authorities in AI-assisted submissions. The court recognised why unrepresented people seek AI help, while emphasising the problems caused by unreliable material. Before relying on a case, open the judgment, read the relevant passage and check that it applies to the point you are making. Asking the same chatbot "Are you sure?" is not independent verification.

> If you cannot verify a citation, do not put it before the court as established authority.

Your evidence must remain yours

Do not ask AI to invent missing details, strengthen your recollection or turn uncertainty into certainty. "I cannot remember the exact date" must not become a precise date because software filled a gap. An allegation must not become an established fact because the wording sounds more persuasive.

Family Procedure Practice Direction 22A requires

witness statements, where practicable, to be in the witness's own words and to distinguish personal knowledge from information or belief, identifying the source of the latter. For witness statements, the safer approach is to write your own account and obtain professional help where possible. Even editing for tone can change meaning. Never sign a statement you do not understand or cannot honestly confirm.

> Do not use AI to manufacture evidence, alter original messages or rehearse invented answers.

Protect private information

Before uploading court papers, messages, medical information or material about children, establish whether you are permitted to share it and how the provider handles it. Removing names does not necessarily make a document anonymous. Dates, schools, addresses and circumstances may identify a family.

> If you are unsure, use a general question without case details and seek advice before uploading documents. An AI tool cannot authorise disclosure.

Be careful with claims about "new AI rules"

Legal Futures

reported on the

Civil Justice Council's October 2026 recommendations

concerning AI and witness evidence. The underlying report proposes changes to civil procedure and urgent further consideration of litigants in person. Those recommendations should not be presented as an automatically applicable new rule for every family case.

> Check the current rules and your court's directions. Be honest if asked how a document was prepared, and retain your original drafts and a record of significant AI assistance.

A prompt to encourage more careful answers

The following prompt sets stricter boundaries. It cannot eliminate hallucinations, protect confidentiality or guarantee legal accuracy. I recommend if your chosen AI has a project function start a new project for each separate part of the family proceedings. They are all separate,

divorce

,

child arrangements

, and

financial remedy

. Use the prompt below as instructions for each project. This will help mitigate the risk of falling foul from the wrath of a judge in court and watching your case evaporate into thin air. I am a litigant in person in family proceedings in England and Wales. Help me understand information and organise preparation. Do not present yourself as my solicitor or barrister. Apply these instructions throughout:

- 1. Do not agree with me simply to reassure me. Respectfully identify unsupported assumptions, inconsistencies and relevant alternative explanations. Do not invent an opposing argument just to appear balanced.

- Distinguish between my account, disputed allegations, documentary material, established court findings and your own inferences. Do not treat my account as independently verified.

- Never invent facts, dates, quotations, cases, legal rules, deadlines or document contents. If information is missing, ask or mark it as unknown.

- For legal propositions, prioritise current legislation, Family Procedure Rules, practice directions, official guidance and published judgments. Provide the exact source and relevant provision or paragraph.

- Only describe a source as verified if you have actually accessed it and checked that it supports the claim. If you cannot browse or verify it, say so clearly. Do not supply plausible-looking citations from memory.

- Check jurisdiction, date and procedural context. Distinguish binding rules, court orders, guidance, proposals and commentary.

- When summarising material, give a document and page or paragraph reference for each important point. Identify unreadable or missing sections. Preserve uncertainty and conflicting information.

- Do not generate or embellish witness evidence, suggest memories, coach answers or alter the substance of my account. Flag ambiguity for me to resolve.

- Do not predict that I will win or assign a percentage chance of success. Explain what cannot be assessed from the available information and what requires professional advice.

- Do not ask for identifying or confidential documents unnecessarily. Remind me to establish permission and suitable data handling before sharing sensitive material.

- Keep answers concise and in plain British English. Finish with what needs checking and questions worth taking to a legal professional.

My task is:

[insert a specific question]

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Know when professional representation matters

Divorcify recommends, at a minimum, having a barrister represent you at fact-finding hearings and final hearings wherever possible.

This is our recommendation, not a requirement imposed on every litigant. These hearings can have lasting consequences, and preparing with a barrister well beforehand gives them time to understand the evidence and advise you. If cost is a barrier, explore legal aid eligibility, pro bono assistance or advice on a limited basis as early as possible. I built Divorcify to help people organise their case information, documents and important dates. That preparation

can support the work you do with a legal professional.

> Use AI thoughtfully, check what it produces and get qualified help for the decisions that matter.

Sources checked on 3 November 2026:

- Local Government Lawyer
- Today's Family Lawyer
- Legal Futures

> General information for England and Wales, checked on 3 November 2026. Not individual legal advice.