

## The Ten Commandments of Step parenting By Nancy S. Palmer and William D. Palmer

Before taking on the responsibility of a step parent, consider the following guidelines.

1. Remember, you are not the parent, and behave accordingly. Refuse to compete with the parent.
2. Ask to see the written divorce and custody agreements and understand your spouse-to-be's obligations. When you marry, you take these on, too.
3. Do not put yourself or allow others to put you between your spouse and the ex.
4. Use "I" statements, rather than judgmental ones when expressing yourself to the child, your spouse, or the ex-spouse. Concentrate on open communication.
5. Make arrangements to meet with your spouse-to-be's ex (before marriage, if possible) to reassure him or her that you will care for the children but will never try to take on the role of mother or father.
6. Tell the children that you care for them but you are not a substitute for their biological parent. Ask the child's input on what they want to call you. Define your role.
7. Be sensitive to the children's world. Children do not distinguish between stepsiblings, half siblings, or nonblood relations who may appear to be a sibling as a result of divorce and remarriage.
8. Remember that each child is different and reacts to things differently. Personalities are neither good nor bad. Each has positive and negative aspects.
9. Discuss differences with your spouse behind closed doors. Together present a united front.
10. Develop a parenting plan with your spouse before the marriage.

