



Understanding Final Orders

A final order is the court's decision that resolves your case. Depending on the case, it may be called a Final Order, Final Judgment, Final Decree, or Consent Order. Whatever the name, it sets out what each party must do going forward, so it is important to understand and follow it.

Key steps

- 1 How It Is Reached.** A final order comes either from an agreement both parties sign or from the judge's decision after a hearing or trial.
- 2 Entry of the Order.** The order generally takes effect once the judge signs it and it is filed with the clerk. Deadlines in the order often run from that date.
- 3 Keep a Copy.** Store the order and anything attached to it, such as an agreement, parenting plan, or child support addendum, in a safe place.
- 4 Complete Follow-Up Tasks.** Some orders require next steps, such as transferring property, setting up payments, or updating a birth certificate, driver's license, or other records.
- 5 Follow It Exactly.** Comply with every term, including payments and deadlines. Parents may agree to vary the parenting schedule, but child support and all other terms must be strictly followed.

After the order is entered

Attached Documents. Anything attached to or incorporated into the order becomes part of it and is enforceable.

Modifications. Some terms, such as custody and support, can be changed later through a new case if circumstances change. Others generally cannot.

Enforcement. If a party does not follow the order, the court can enforce it, including through contempt.

Appeals. Deadlines are short, generally 30 days, and many family law appeals require court permission first.

What to keep in mind

The order controls. Informal side agreements between the parties are generally not enforceable.

Do not stop payments or change terms on your own, even if circumstances change.

Keep records showing you have followed the order in case questions come up later.

If something in the order is unclear, ask before a deadline passes, not after.

This guide provides general information about final orders in Georgia family law matters and is not legal advice about your specific case. Your attorney will explain how your final order applies to your situation.

YOUR ROLE

Read your final order carefully, complete each follow-up task by its deadline, keep records showing you have complied, and email us promptly if the other party is not following the order.

QUESTIONS?

As always, all questions and requests should be directed to the team via email to team@pepitone.law.