

# Fifteen Fair Fighting Rules

1. **No Zapping:** No name calling, snide remarks, put downs or negative facial expressions
2. **Don't Interrupt:** Let the other person finish before you speak
3. **No Cross-Complaining:** When the other person complains, don't answer with a complaint
4. **No Brining up the Past:** Do not use "always," "never," "should," and "if only once you would" – stick to the here and now, not history.
5. **Stick to the Issues:** Do not distract from the issue and do not be distracted
6. **No Physical Violence Allowed:** This is a firm guideline for effective fighting
7. **Don't Play Psychologist:** Don't try to tell the other what s/he is thinking or why s/he is doing something. Don't make assumptions
8. **No Emotional Blackmail:** "If you really loved me, you would..." No fair using love as a weapon or punishment
9. **Don't Make Speeches:** State your gripe and then let the other person answer. If your opponent states a point, you must respond to it before you can make a new one. Answer questions directly.
10. **Negotiate**  
**State Your Gripe:** Say it in a form of a positive request, not a demand. Report feelings, not just the issues. Utilize I statements **Suggest Some Alternatives:** Be willing to accept alternatives or meeting the other person halfway. **Examine Consequences:** Look at both the positive and negative consequences of each alternative. **Reach a Solution:** Instead of attempting to win the argument, be confident you can reach a solution. Think win – win solutions.
11. **Own Your Own Problems, Feelings, & Behaviors:** Use "I" messages rather than "you" messages.
12. **Time-outs Are OK:** If things get too heated, ask to continue the discussion at another time. Specify a time.
13. **Be Accepting:** Try to understand both of you are different in the way you see things and in your emotional reactions
14. **Paraphrase:** Make sure you heard the other person correctly. Restate what you "think" you heard
15. **Be Willing to Listen:** Sometimes just listening to the other person helps the other person to get their feelings out, no need for arguing