



Handling Neighborhood Disputes

The loud parties next door are keeping you up all night. The people across the street let their leaves blow into your yard. These are typical problems that annoy neighbors, create a nuisance and make it difficult to enjoy your neighborhood. Before you do something rash, or resign yourself to living with such problems, consider following the steps outlined below to work through any neighborhood dispute.

Talk to the Neighbor

Try to resolve any differences by talking with the neighbor calmly and in person. Most people don't intend to cause a problem and they may be the last to know that they have. If you can help solve the problem, offer your assistance. If the yard hasn't been picked up because the neighbor is elderly or has been hurt, offer to help with the work. If you are uncomfortable talking to your neighbor, ask a friend to accompany you. A cooperative, friendly approach can resolve most neighborhood problems and may gain you new perspectives and a new friend.

Tips for talking with your neighbor

Build a relationship with your neighbor. One often over-looked strategy is to get to know your neighbor, if you are not already on good terms. Even if a problem has occurred, try to get to know your neighbor before making the complaint. Introduce yourself. Talk about general issues of interest. A few weeks later, raise your complaint.

Choose a good time. Try to talk in a quiet place where you can both be comfortable and undisturbed for as long as the discussion takes. Don't approach the other person as he or she is leaving for work, or after you've had a terrible day.

Plan ahead. Think out what you want to say ahead of time. State clearly what the problem is and how it affects you.

Don't blame or name-call. Antagonizing the other person only makes it harder for him or her to hear you.

Give information. Don't judge or interpret the other person's behavior. Instead, give information about your own situation and feelings and how the person's behavior affects you.

Listen. Give the other person a chance to tell his or her side of the conflict completely. Relax and listen; try to learn how the other person feels.

Talk it all through. Get all the issues and feelings out in the open. Don't leave out the part that seems too difficult to discuss.

Work on a joint solution. Two or more people cooperating are much more effective than one person telling another to change. Be specific. "I will turn my music off at midnight" is better than "I won't play loud music anymore."

Research Your Case

If talking to your neighbor does not solve the problem, do some research into the issue of concern. The problem could simply reflect cultural differences of which you may not be aware. While this may not make the matter go away, you will be more sensitive to the cause of the situation, and more understanding of your neighbor. Usually, a little information can make us more tolerant.

Sometimes it may be that the issue in question is a violation of City Code. In Richardson, the City Code is designed to maintain minimum property standards and to protect the peace and safety of the community. Problems such as junk cars, parking on the lawn, accumulating trash and debris are all violations of City Codes. Knowledge of the law, as it pertains to your neighbor dispute, can help you deal with an uncooperative neighbor. To learn more please visit us online at <http://www.cor.net/cs>.

Make Your Request To Your Neighbor in Writing

If the problem persists, make your request to your neighbor in writing. If you learned through your research that the matter is a violation of City Code, mention that in your letter. The letter should carefully state the situation and possible actions to correct the problem. If it is a recurring problem, you may wish to keep a log of the occurrences.

Contact Your Neighborhood Group or Association

Your neighborhood or homeowners association is interested in preserving the peace and quality of your neighborhood. It is likely that they will share your concern about your neighbor. Talk with the directors of the association and attempt to enlist their help in mediating the problem. Often, an offending neighbor will correct a problem once they realize it bothers the whole neighborhood, not just one neighbor. If your neighborhood does not have an association, you may want to work with your neighbors to form one. The City of Richardson's Community Services Division can provide information on starting a neighborhood organization. For more information please call 972-744-4180 or go online to www.cor.net/cs

Try Outside Mediation

If your neighborhood does not have an association, or if the problem persists, a neutral third party may be able to help. Mediation is less formal and likely to be cheaper than going to court. In addition, the chance to have a neutral third party sort out what are often multiple issues can help the overall situation.