

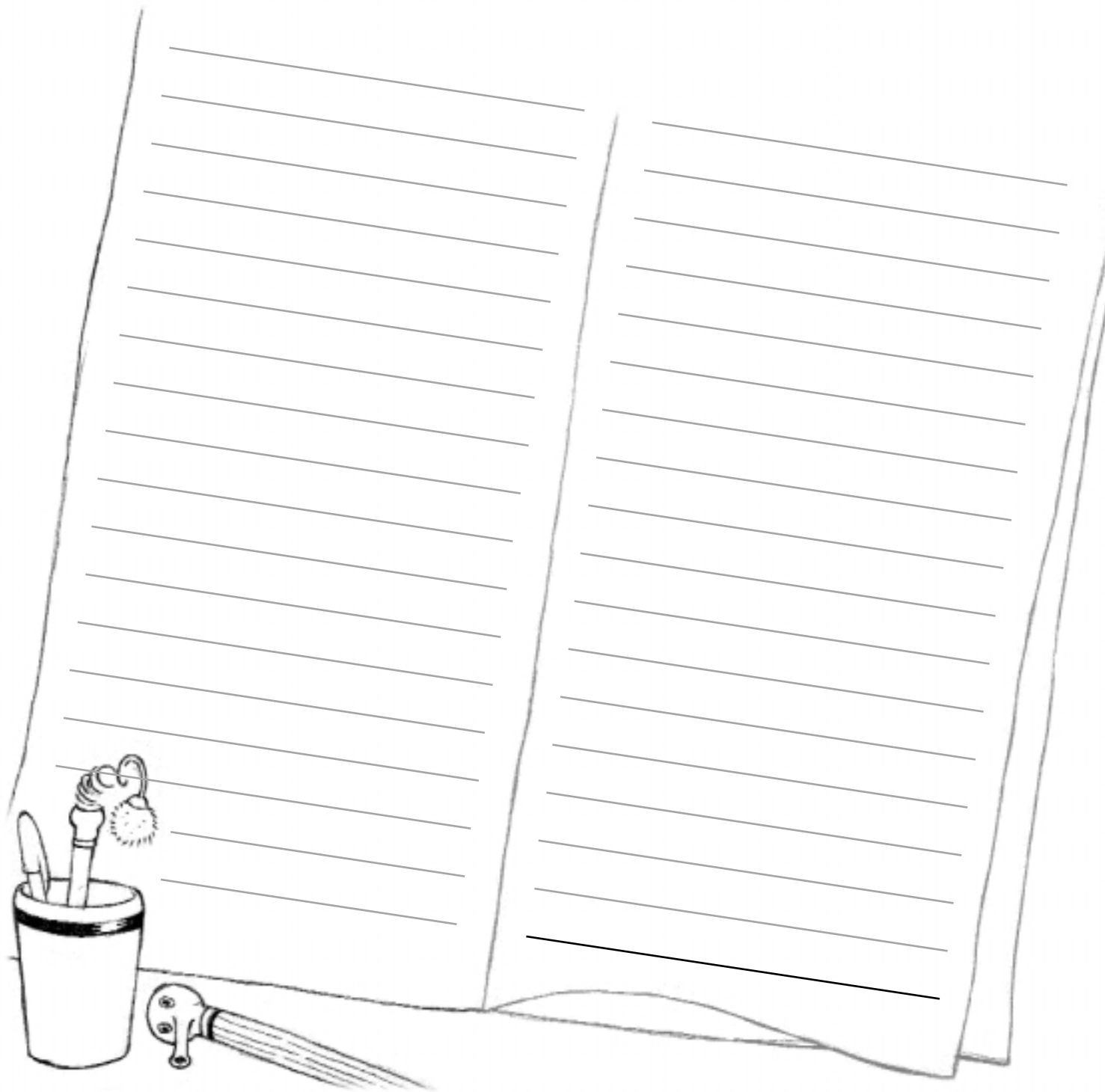
# Family Law Court

When a mother and father decide they can't live together anymore, they may decide to separate and live in different homes. If they have been married and don't want to live together or be married anymore, they can either get a **legal separation** or a **divorce**. Divorce is also called **dissolution**. To get a divorce, married people have to go to court. In court, a mediator will help the parents plan for how they will take care of their children, and a judge will decide how they will split up all the things they shared while living together.

Most of the time, children don't have to go to court even if their parents have a case there, but sometimes they do. If you have to go to court, remember that it isn't because you have done something wrong. Courts are different than other places you may have been, but you don't have to be afraid. Most court people are nice to children. Lots of children have parents who go to family court. If you are wondering about this or are a little scared, it helps to talk to someone about your feelings about going to court.

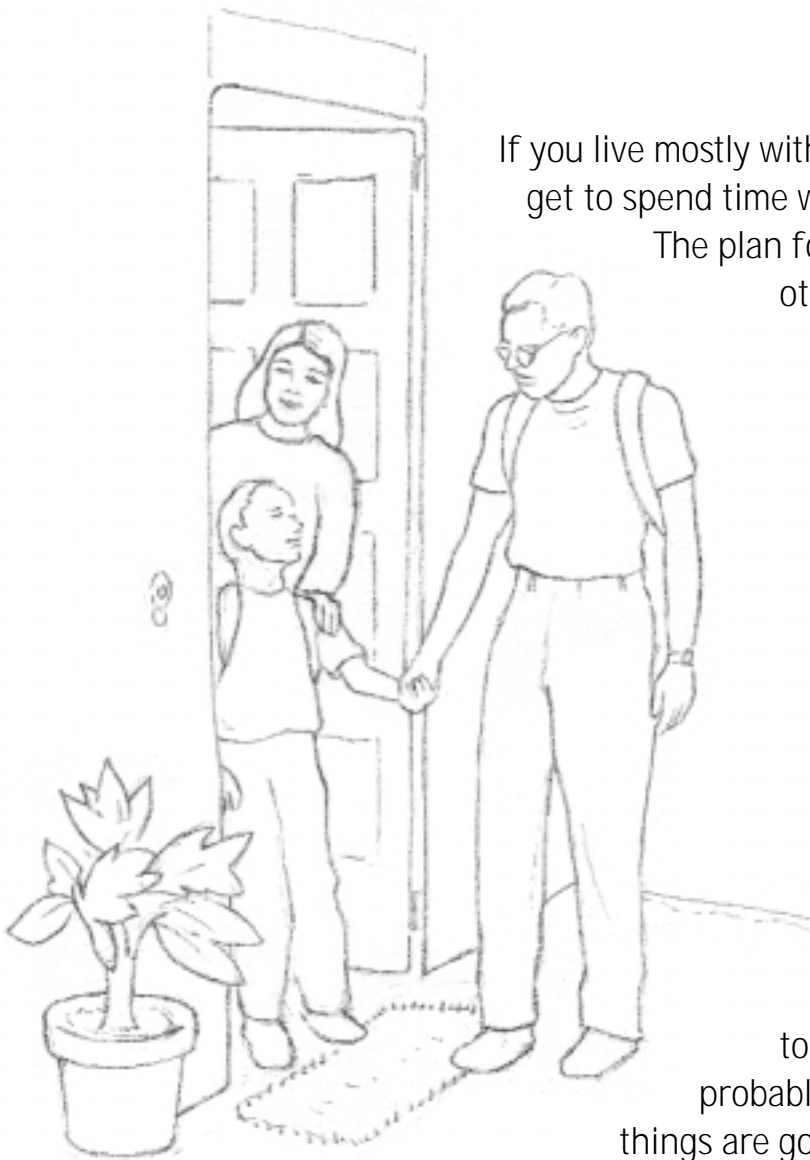
If your parents aren't living together, they need to figure out how you can spend time with both of your parents. They need to figure out when you will live with each of your parents. This plan about where you live is called a **custody plan**, or a parenting plan.





Write a story about a person going to family court.

Maybe you know someone who went to family court to fix a problem.



If you live mostly with one parent, you will usually get to spend time with, or **visit**, the other parent.

The plan for how often you visit with your other parent is called a

**visitation schedule.**

When your parents need help deciding about custody and visitation, they can see a court **mediator**. The mediator listens to your mother's and your father's ideas about how best to take care of you. The mediator helps them work out a plan that will be best for you.

Sometimes mediators also want to meet the children. If your parents' mediator wants

to talk to you, he or she will

probably ask you questions about how

things are going for you at home, at school,

and with your friends. The mediator won't ask

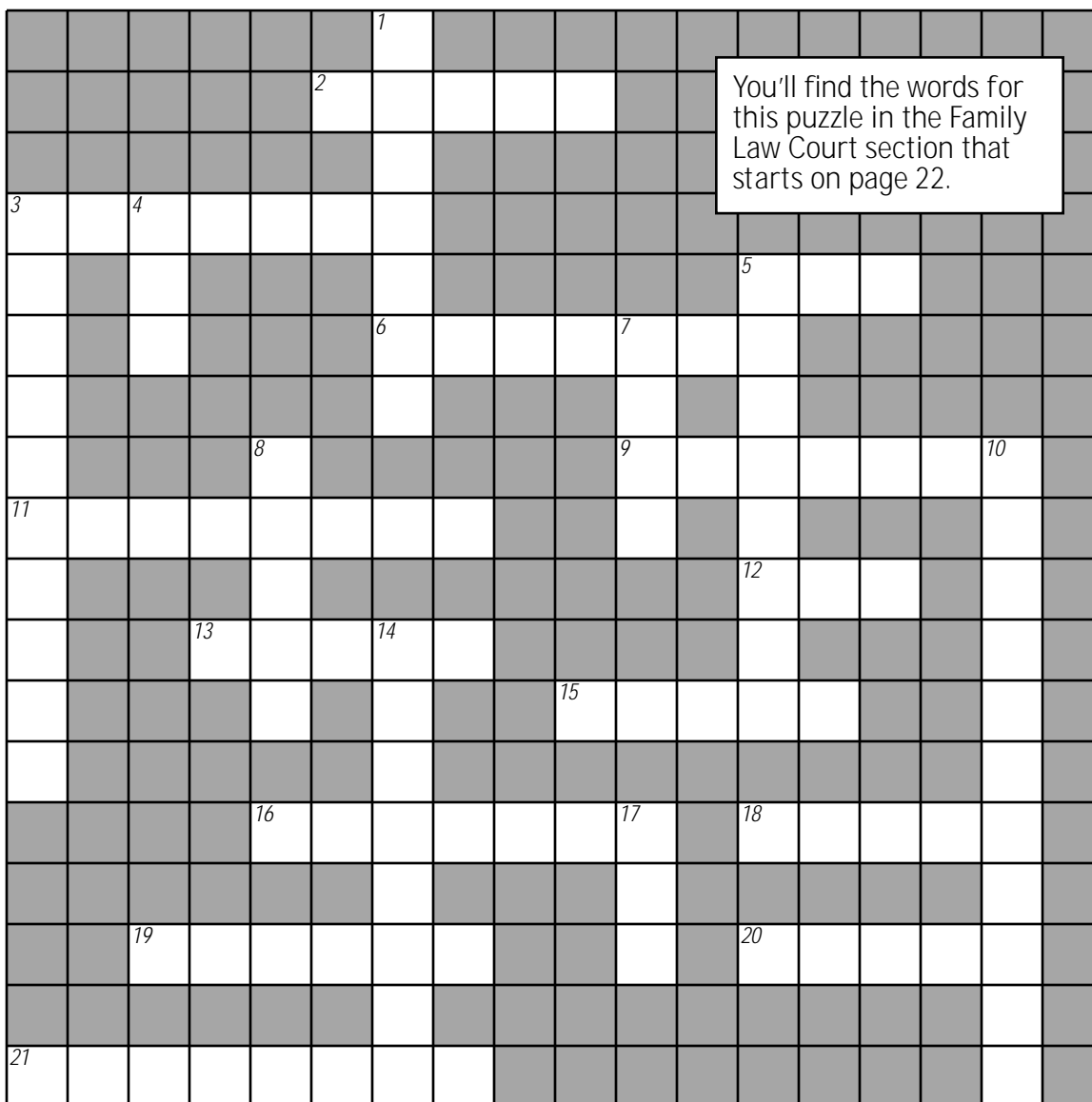
you to choose which parent you want to live with or to

say if you like one of your parents more than the other.

Parents also have to figure out how much money they need to give each other to take care of you after they separate. This money is called **support**. At court there is a lawyer called a **facilitator** who helps parents and the court decide how much support will be paid.

If parents can't agree on their own, the **judge** will tell them what to do. When the judge tells someone what to do, it is called an **order**. The judge has an office in the court and sits at a desk called a **bench**. The judge wears a black **robe**. The judge gets help from the **clerk**, who keeps the judge organized. In the courtroom, there is a special police officer called a **bailiff** who keeps everyone safe. Sometimes a judge can't finish a case in one day. Then the judge will **continue** the case.

# Crossword Puzzle



You'll find the words for this puzzle in the Family Law Court section that starts on page 22.

## ACROSS

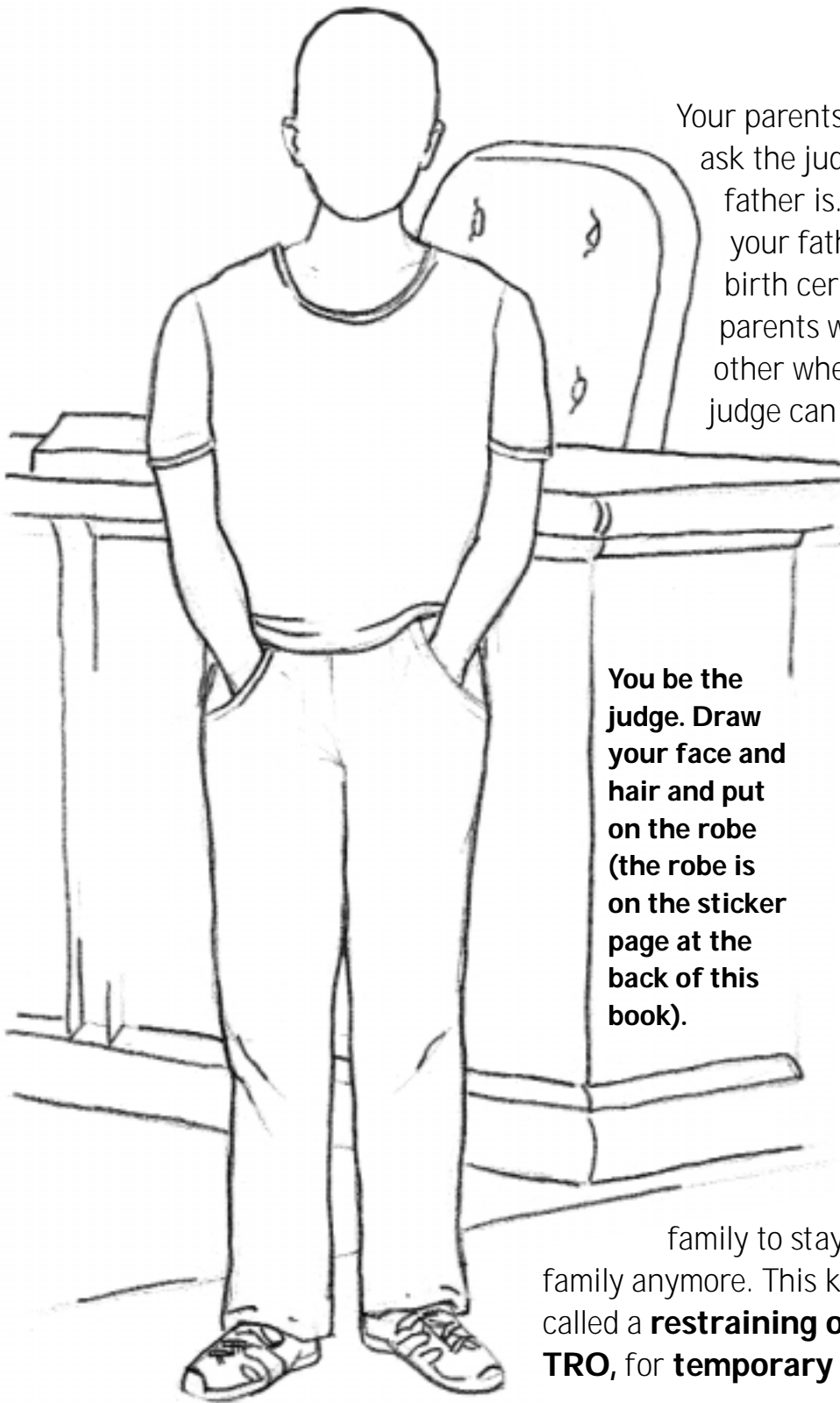
2. The person who makes decisions when parents cannot agree is the \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Money one parent pays the other to help take care of children is called \_\_\_\_\_.
5. A short name for mother is \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Getting unmarried is called \_\_\_\_\_.
9. The police officer for the court is the \_\_\_\_\_.
11. Another name for "lawyer" is an \_\_\_\_\_.
12. A judge's order to protect somebody is a \_\_\_\_\_.
13. The judge sits on the \_\_\_\_\_.
15. The person who helps the judge stay organized is the \_\_\_\_\_.
16. A person who tells what they know or saw to the judge is a \_\_\_\_\_.
18. The place where the judge works is the \_\_\_\_\_.
19. Someone you can talk to is a \_\_\_\_\_.

20. Spending time with a parent you don't live with is called a \_\_\_\_\_.
21. The person who types up everything that is said is a court \_\_\_\_\_.

## DOWN

1. The plan for where a child lives is called \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Parents who decide to live in different places are having a \_\_\_\_\_.
4. A nickname for dad is \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The person who helps parents decide together where children will live is the \_\_\_\_\_.
7. The clothing that the judge wears is the \_\_\_\_\_.
8. What the judge tells you to do is called an \_\_\_\_\_.
10. The person who helps the parent with child support is the \_\_\_\_\_.
14. If a case can't be heard that day, then the judge will \_\_\_\_\_ it.
17. A short name for sister is \_\_\_\_\_.

Answers on page 38.



Your parents can also come to court to ask the judge to decide who your father is. This may be because your father's name is not on your birth certificate, or because your parents weren't married to each other when you were born. The judge can make a decision about who is legally your father. This decision is called **paternity** or **parentage**.

**You be the judge. Draw your face and hair and put on the robe (the robe is on the sticker page at the back of this book).**

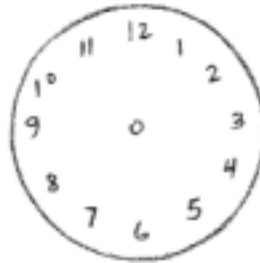
Sometimes parents, or people who live together, get scared of each other. Some parents hurt each other or their children. This is called **domestic violence**. If one parent hurts or really scares the other parent, that other parent can ask the judge for help. The judge can make a court order that tells the parent who is hurting or scaring the

family to stay away and not hurt the family anymore. This kind of court order is called a **restraining order**, or sometimes a **TRO**, for **temporary restraining order**.

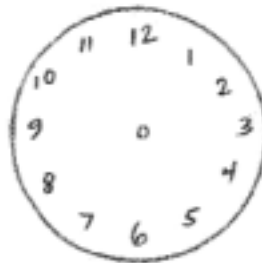
If your parents and the mediator can't work out a parenting plan, the judge may tell your parents to get a custody evaluation. A custody **evaluator** will spend some time getting to know both you and your parents. After that, the evaluator will think about what would be the best way for you to spend time with your parents, then the evaluator will tell the judge what he or she thinks.

Draw the hands on the clocks for:

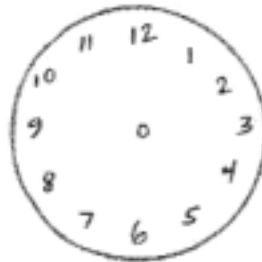
What time you woke up



What time you left your house



What time you got to court



What time it is now

