

Preparing the “A/B List”

How do household items get divided in a divorce?

The “big ticket items, like the house, car, and retirement accounts, can be valued and a fair settlement reached. For instance, the Kelly Blue Book value price of a car can be used to derive a value and one party can pay the other party for their community interest in the car.

Often, however, smaller household items are more difficult to separate – the three TVs, 2 sofas, 3 beds, 2 sets of cutlery, etc. While it is possible for two parties to sit down and agree on a division, it can often be difficult to divide possessions in the heated, acrimonious atmosphere of a divorce.

One way to ensure a fair division is the “A/B list.” In this process, one party (list preparer) prepares two (2) lists of items that he or she thinks may fairly divide the furniture, furnishings, appliances and household goods. The other party (list selector) is then free to choose either “List A” or “List B.” Parties are then free to exchange items on their respective list by mutual agreement.

Dividing items using the “A/B List” method helps ensure that an approximately equal division of the parties’ furniture, furnishings, appliances and household goods will occur. The reason – it is unlikely that the list preparer will put all the “good stuff” on one list because if the list is unbalanced, the list selector will choose that list. Thus, the division is likely to be an equitable division of the parties’ assets.