



Family Meeting Guide

Building Connected, Values-Driven Families Through Intentional Conversation

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Why Family Meetings Matter

Family meetings are one of the most powerful tools for building a strong, connected family. They are a dedicated time where everyone, regardless of age, has a voice and a seat at the table.

What makes family meetings transformative is that they create structure for intentional conversation. Instead of communicating only when there's a problem or crisis, regular family meetings become a rhythm where you:

- Clarify your family values and what matters most
- Make decisions together, from logistics to bigger questions about how you want to live
- Solve problems collaboratively, teaching children that their ideas matter
- Celebrate wins and acknowledge efforts
- Build belonging, kids know they are part of something bigger than themselves

When children grow up in families where decisions are made together, where their voice is heard, and where family values guide behavior, they develop confidence, resilience, and a strong sense of identity.

Starting Point: Clarifying Your Family Values

Before you can make decisions or solve problems together, you need to know what your family stands for. Family values are the principles that guide how you treat each other, what matters most, and what you want to be known for.

Activity 1: Values Brainstorm (All Ages)

Time: 20-30 minutes

Ask each family member: "What do you think makes our family special? What do we do well together? What values do we want to be known for?"

Write down ALL ideas without judgment. Even young children can contribute ("We like to laugh together" or "We help each other").

Then group similar ideas. You might see themes like: Kindness, Humor, Learning, Honesty, Adventure, Loyalty, Creativity, Respect.

Choose 3-5 values that resonate as YOUR family values. Write them down where you can see them.

Activity 2: Values in Action (All Ages)

Time: 20-30 minutes (can be ongoing)

For each value, ask: "What does this look like in our family? What are examples of when we've lived this value?"

Example: If "Kindness" is a value, what does kindness look like in your family?

- We listen when someone is upset
- We help each other without being asked
- We speak with respect, even when we disagree

When kids see values in concrete action, they understand what matters.

Your Family Values Statement (Template)

Our family values: _____

[Example: Our family values kindness, honesty, growth, laughter, and adventure]

What these mean to us:

Family Meeting Structure & Format

Basic Meeting Structure (30-45 minutes)

Time	Section	What Happens
5 min	Check-in	Each person shares a highlight from their week or how they're feeling
10 min	Celebrate	Acknowledge efforts, wins, growth, kind acts. Give shout-outs to each other.
15 min	Business	Discuss upcoming events, logistics, decisions. Problem-solve together.
10 min	Fun	Play a game, do an activity, watch something together, or just laugh

Key Principles

- ✓ Everyone gets a voice
- ✓ Listen without interrupting
- ✓ Use respectful language
- ✓ Make decisions by consensus when possible, vote if needed
- ✓ Keep it positive and solution-focused

Making Family Meetings Work Across Ages

Ages 4-6: Preschool & Early Elementary

What They're Developing:

- Language skills and listening comprehension
- Basic problem-solving (simple choices)
- Understanding family roles and routines

Meeting Tips:

- Keep meetings SHORT (15-20 minutes max)
- Use CONCRETE language ("We eat snacks together on Saturday" vs. "spending quality time")
- Ask yes/no or either/or questions ("Do you want to play at the park or at home?")
- Use visual aids (pictures, colors, pointing)
- Celebrate with physical affection (high fives, hugs)

Activity Ideas:

- Feelings game: Point to faces showing different emotions and name them

- "Thumbs up/down": React to simple proposals ("Should we bake cookies this weekend?")
- Draw or color family pictures together
- Sing a family song or do a silly dance

Ages 7-9: Elementary School

What They're Developing:

- Logic and cause-and-effect thinking
- Ability to consider other people's perspectives
- Interest in fairness and rules

Meeting Tips:

- Meetings can be 25-35 minutes
- Ask "why" and "how" questions to deepen thinking
- Encourage kids to generate solutions, not just identify problems
- Use turn-taking and hand-raising to manage discussion
- Involve them in simple family decisions (where to go for dinner, weekend plans)

Activity Ideas:

- Problem-solving scenario: "The bathroom is messy. What's a solution that's fair?"
- Fairness discussion: "What does 'taking turns' look like in our family?"
- Family goal-setting: "What do we want to be better at this month?"
- Gratitude circle: Go around and say what you appreciate about each family member

Ages 10-12: Upper Elementary & Early Middle School

What They're Developing:

- Abstract thinking (starting to think about bigger concepts)
- Independence and autonomy needs
- Sense of justice and fairness

Meeting Tips:

- Meetings can be 35-45 minutes
- Give them more voice in decisions that affect them
- Discuss values and principles, not just logistics
- Invite them to help facilitate or lead parts of the meeting
- Ask for their input on family challenges ("How can we handle screen time fairly?")

Activity Ideas:

- Values discussion: "What does respect look like in our family?"
- Proposal system: Family members propose ideas, discuss, vote
- Challenge problem-solving: "We've been arguing about chores. What's a fair system?"
- Celebration of growth: "What did you learn or improve at this month?"

Ages 11-13: Middle School Transition

What They're Developing:

- Identity exploration and peer influence increasing
- Complex problem-solving and debate skills
- Need for autonomy balanced with family connection

Meeting Tips:

- Meetings can be 40-50 minutes
- Create space for them to raise topics (not just parents agenda)
- Discuss why rules and expectations exist, not just what they are
- Ask for their perspective on family issues—they have valid insights
- Let them disagree respectfully (it's healthy)

Activity Ideas:

- Debate: "What makes a fair allowance/screen time policy?"
- Identity circle: "What are your strengths? What do you want to be known for?"
- Family vision: "Who do we want to be as a family? What do we stand for?"
- Conflict resolution practice: Discuss ways they've handled disagreements with friends

Ages 14-16: High School

What They're Developing:

- Complex abstract thinking and philosophical reasoning
- Strong need for autonomy and self-determination
- Values formation and identity solidification

Meeting Tips:

- Meetings might be shorter but more substantive (45-60 min when they happen)
- Work WITH them on scheduling (their buy-in matters)
- Discuss bigger questions: values, future, life philosophy
- Respect their growing independence while maintaining connection
- Share your own thinking, not just directives

Activity Ideas:

- Big picture discussion: "What matters to you? What do you want your life to be about?"
- Family legacy: "What do we want to be remembered for as a family?"
- Values alignment: "How do our family values show up (or not) in how we live?"
- Shared interests: Watch something together, discuss a current event, play a complex game

Sample Meeting Agendas

Agenda Template (Use This Every Time)

Family Meeting Date: _____ Time: _____ Duration: _____

Who's here: _____

1. CHECK-IN (5 min)

Each person shares: A highlight from this week or how they're feeling

2. CELEBRATE (10 min)

What we're proud of:

3. BUSINESS (15 min)

Topics to discuss:

- _____
- _____
- _____

Decisions made:

4. FUN (10 min)

Activity: _____

Sample Agenda 1: Getting Started

(First family meeting—focus on values and connection)

Check-in: Everyone shares one good thing from this week

Celebrate: Acknowledge good effort or kind acts you've noticed

Business: Introduce family meetings and why they matter. Do the "Family Values Brainstorm" activity.

Fun: Play a game or do something together everyone enjoys

Sample Agenda 2: Problem-Solving (Chores)

(Addressing a specific family challenge)

Check-in: Everyone shares—aim for a positive start

Celebrate: Shout-out someone who helped without being asked

Business: "Our challenge: Who does what chores? Problem: It doesn't feel fair. Let's solve this together."

- Ask: "What's working?" and "What's not working?"
- Brainstorm solutions together (no judgment)
- Discuss what feels fair and why
- Decide together. Try it for 2 weeks, then review.

Fun: Celebrate deciding together with a favorite snack or activity

Tips for Facilitating Great Family Meetings

Before the Meeting

- ✓ Choose a regular time (Sunday evening, Saturday morning—consistency matters)
- ✓ Send a reminder so everyone knows it's coming
- ✓ Have a quiet space where you won't be interrupted
- ✓ No screens. Everyone is fully present.
- ✓ Have snacks if that helps everyone feel comfortable

During the Meeting

- ✓ Start on time and keep it moving (respect everyone's time)
- ✓ Use hand-raising or a talking stick so one person speaks at a time
- ✓ Listen without judgment. Your role is to facilitate, not to lecture.
- ✓ Ask clarifying questions: "Tell me more about that" or "Why do you think that?"
- ✓ Seek understanding first. You don't have to agree, but understand their perspective.
- ✓ Make decisions by consensus when possible (everyone agrees, or can live with it)
- ✓ If stuck, vote. Respect the outcome.

After the Meeting

- ✓ Write down decisions made and who's responsible
- ✓ Post the decisions somewhere visible (family board, fridge, group text)
- ✓ Follow through on what you decided. This builds trust.
- ✓ At next meeting, review: What worked? What needs to change?

What NOT to Do

- ✗ Don't use the meeting to ambush or punish
- ✗ Don't dismiss or minimize anyone's ideas, especially younger kids
- ✗ Don't let one person dominate the conversation
- ✗ Don't make decisions that affect people who weren't there
- ✗ Don't make it longer than people can sustain (attention spans are real)
- ✗ Don't skip the celebration and fun parts (these matter most)

Final Thoughts: The Power of Coming Together

Family meetings aren't about perfection. They're about showing up, being present, and letting your kids know that their voice matters. Every meeting will be different. Some will flow beautifully. Others will feel awkward or derailed. That's okay.

What matters is that you keep showing up. You say: "We're a family. We make decisions together. Your ideas are valuable. We figure things out as a team."

Children who grow up in families where their voice is heard develop confidence. They learn to problem-solve. They understand that disagreement doesn't mean disconnection. They know they belong to something bigger than themselves.

Start small. Start messy. Start now. Your family meetings don't have to be fancy. They just have to be real.

Want Support?

If your family is struggling with communication, conflict, or connection, coaching can help. As a parent coach, I work with families to build the communication skills, family systems, and intentional practices that create strong, healthy relationships.

Let's talk about what would help your family thrive.

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