Family Mealtimes

Strengthening Family Bonds

FAMILY MEALS CAN BRING A VARIETY OF FEELINGS AND MEANING TO EVERYONE; BUT THEY ARE ESSENTIAL TO FAMILY LIFE.
CONVERSATION STARTERS for family mealtimes.

- Parent(s) share a story about the kids when they were babies or toddlers.
- Each kid tells how they think their parents met. (Parents go last.)
- Parents share what you were like at your kids’ ages. Kids say what they think they will be like as parents.
- What do you want to be when you grow up? (This answer changes often with kids.)
- Best thing, worst thing. Go around the table and ask each person to share the best thing about their day and the worst thing about their day.
- What is your favorite meal Mom cooks? What is your favorite meal Dad cooks? (You'll get some dinner ideas from this conversation!)
- If you could have any super power, what would it be?
- Name 3 foods you would never eat.
- What is your dream job?
- What is the thing you worry about most?
- What are you most thankful for?
- What is the best gift you've ever received? What is the best gift you've ever given?
- What is your favorite movie?
- What is the best book you've ever read?
- Describe the person sitting to your right in 3 words. Keep it positive.
- What is your least favorite chore?
- What is your favorite thing about our family?
- What is your all-time favorite toy?
- If you won the lottery (at least $1,000,000), what is the first thing you would buy?
- What is the hardest thing about being your age right now?
- If you could live in any state, which would you choose? Why?
- Describe your life 10 years from now.
- When you have children, what will they like most about each aunt and uncle (your brothers and sisters)?
- If you planned our next family vacation, where would we go and what would we do?
- If you could pick any age and stay that age, how old would you be?
- What do you know more about than your parents?
- How can you tell when you’re grown up?
- What is your favorite place in our home?
- What is your most favorite fast food restaurant? What is your least favorite?
- What is your greatest strength? Why?
- Would you ever change your name? If so, what would your new name be?
- What makes you feel loved?
- What habit would you most like to break? What habit would you like to start?
- What motivates you?
- Think of the people you respect the most. What is it about them that you respect?
BE PURPOSEFUL
in building your family bonds!

To Build Sense of Self
The High/Low Game
Have everyone at the table share one "high" and one "low" that happened to them that day. This gives kids a chance to see their parents and siblings work through hard things. This simple exercise helps children develop "empathy and solidarity with those around them."

To Build Family Identity
The "Do You Know Me?" Game
Have the kids ask questions about themselves (What is my favorite food? What do I do at recess?), and then have them answer questions about YOU (What town did I grow up in? What is my favorite book?). This exercise is the idea of showing our children that it takes effort and thoughtfulness to really know another person.

Service Suppers
Children share one thing they did that day to serve someone else. A great way to encourage children to look outside of themselves as a habit and help others around them.

To Build Verbal & Other Skills
Tough Questions
Throw out a topic, and encourage curiosity by having the kids come up with questions about that topic. The toughest question wins.
(Topic ideas: photography, basketball, Broadway, air travel, nocturnal animals.)
# Developmentally Appropriate Tasks

Remember that every child matures at a different pace. Adapt to what you know about your children’s skills and talents and only use this as a guide.

## 3-4 Year Olds
- Putting dirty clothes in hamper
- Putting toys back in their place
- Dressing self
- Matching socks into pairs
- Watering outside plants
- Putting coat on hook
- Putting shoes in proper place
- Putting out dinner napkins

## 5-6 Year Olds
**All of the above plus:**
- Collecting small waste cans around house
- Carrying small grocery bag from car
- Helping to put groceries away
- Bringing mail in
- Stacking newspapers for recycling
- Brushing pets
- Walking pets
- Separating whites and colors
- Bringing their dish to the sink after dinner

## 7-8 Year Olds
**All of the above plus:**
- Watering plants - indoors
- Cleaning litter box
- Emptying trash
- Sweeping floors
- Loading dishwasher
- Feeding pets
- Cutting and sorting coupons
- Putting clothes in proper drawers
- Folding clothes
- Clearing the dinner table
- Setting the table for dinner
- Dusting

## 9-10 Year Olds
**All of the above plus:**
- Vacuuming
- Unloading the dishwasher
- Changing sheets
- Fixing snacks for self and younger siblings
- Walking a pet
- Set the table independently
- Cleaning their room
- Cleaning glass
- Pulling weeds
- Put all laundry away with supervision
- Take the trash can to the curb for pick up
- Screen phone calls using caller ID and answer when appropriate
DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE TASKS

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12-13 Year Olds
All of the above plus:
- Change light bulbs
- Change the vacuum bag
- Dust, vacuum, clean bathrooms and most dishes
- Clean mirrors
- Mow the lawn with supervision
- Baby sit (in most states)
- Help prepare an occasional family meal with supervision
- Learn proper use of sharp and hot kitchen tools
- Add items to the grocery list and follow the grocery list
- Begin to cook scrambled eggs, rice and pancakes.

14-15 Year Olds
All of the above plus:
- Do assigned housework without prompting
- Do yard work as needed
- Baby sit
- Assist with grocery list and go with adult to buy items
- Help plan and prepare meals by learning to cook more difficult items like pasta, soups, or casseroles
- Wash pots, pans, and more delicate items

16-18 Year Olds
All of the above plus:
- Do housework as needed
- Do yard work as needed
- Get dinner started without adult supervision
- Prepare family meals — from grocery list to serving it — as needed
- Deep cleaning of household appliances, such as defrosting the freezer, as needed
- Learn food safety such as how to manage raw meats
- Plan, budget and execute a short grocery shopping trip