



The Tale of Family Meetings

Written by: Pat Tanner Nelson, Ed.D., Former Extension Family & Human Development Specialist

Revised by: Kayla Hayes

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Ideas For Family Meetings

Family Time together can be a good time for all!

A family meeting can be a time to:

- Have fun together.
- Listen to each other.
- Talk to each other.
- Schedule family duties and chores.
- Plan family fun.
- Make decisions together.

[Download this comic publication, The Tale of Family Meetings](https://www.udel.edu/content/dam/udelImages/canr/pdfs/extension/factsheets/Tale-of-Family-Meetings-HC-FM.pdf)
(<https://www.udel.edu/content/dam/udelImages/canr/pdfs/extension/factsheets/Tale-of-Family-Meetings-HC-FM.pdf>)

Tips for holding family meetings:

1. Schedule Meetings Consistently and Respect Time

- Hold meetings at a regular, pleasant time, such as after dinner. Try not to exceed 20-30 minutes of scheduled meeting time, unless the family chooses to continue.
- Begin and end on time to respect everyone's time and maintain engagement.
- Assign a timekeeper to give a 10-minute warning before the meeting ends. If needed, decide as a group whether to extend the time or schedule a follow-up meeting.

2. Rotate Roles and Responsibilities

- Create leadership roles like discussion leader, timekeeper, secretary, or rule-keeper.

- Parents can model leadership skills at first, then rotate roles to include older children as they gain confidence.
- Roles should match developmental abilities; for younger kids, consider co-leading with a parent or assigning simpler tasks.
- The secretary can record key decisions, upcoming events, and goals on a shared calendar or in a family journal to review at the next meeting.

3. Create a Safe, Respectful Environment

- Set and explain clear ground rules, such as "one person speaks at a time" and "listen to understand."
- Encourage all family members to speak openly without fear of punishment, criticism, or being interrupted.
- Use "I" statements to express feelings ("I feel frustrated when..."), which helps avoid defensiveness and encourages empathy.

4. Focus on One Issue at a Time

- Stick to topics that impact the whole family. Avoid turning the meeting into a space for scolding or bringing up past mistakes.
- The leader should gently redirect off-topic comments and summarize when needed to keep the conversation on track.
- Allow different ways for people to express themselves. Talking, writing, drawing, or role-playing may be helpful, especially for younger children.

5. Use a Collaborative Problem-Solving Approach

- After identifying a specific issue, begin the discussion by reflecting on positives/successes related to the issue

- Brainstorm solutions together and agree on a plan. Remember to use “I” statements and consider everyone’s needs.
- If emotions run high, anyone can call a short break to cool down before continuing.

6. Make Decisions by Consensus

- Aim for decisions that everyone can live with—not just what the majority wants or what one person decides.
- Confirm consensus by summarizing: “So, we’re all agreeing to... Does anyone have any major concerns?”
- If someone raises an objection, revisit the issue and explore other options.

7. Celebrate Progress and Share Positives

- Acknowledge successes, efforts, and improvements.
- Use meetings to distribute allowances or rewards if applicable, and recognize personal and family achievements.
- Share upcoming family news or events to keep everyone informed.

8. Reflect and Improve

- Before ending, invite feedback: “What worked well today?” or “What could we do better next time?”
- End with something fun like a game, snack, or favorite family activity. This can build positive associations with family time.

9. Respect Family Structure

- Everyone should feel heard, but it's important that children understand parents have the final say on significant decisions.
- Parents should monitor emotional cues and pause the meeting if someone seems uncomfortable or overwhelmed.

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