

Family meetings

Family meetings are an opportunity for connection and engagement. Have them regularly, and for all sorts of reasons, such as trips, celebrations, chores and rules. However, don't let them drag on. Keep them short, light and make them fun. If they are too long, the team will lose interest. Remember that family meetings are not AGMs.

There might be some resistance from older children at first, so the earlier you start this practice, the better. Children thrive on the sense of ownership they feel in having a say in decision making, and family meetings are a great way to get buy-in from each member of the family.

Family meeting checklist

- Choose a chairperson – everyone gets a turn. Even toddlers can chair meetings (they can bang the spoon at the start, and then they can defer to a deputy chairperson).
- Begin with a fun activity – a game, joke or quiz.
- Work through a list – a plan is a good idea. Keep an agenda on the fridge and all family members can add to it.
- Everyone gets a say, but one at a time. Try this – the person holding the salt shaker has the floor.
- No put-downs. Everyone's ideas are respected – even if they are wacky. The wacky solutions highlight how good the good ones are.
- "What's something we can all live with?" is a way to get consensus. Chances are you won't all agree on one decision, but there might be a compromise you can all live with.
- Keep a record book. This keeps decisions clear, is comforting for a child who wants to be sure no one will forget and is fun to read at a 21st.
- Follow through on the decisions made. Trial periods can be useful – review how things are going at the next meeting.
- Have an incentive at the end to keep the meeting moving. For example, pizza or ice cream to finish with.

Content extracted from *Kind, Firm, Calm: Simple Strategies to Transform Your Parenting* by Jenny Hale. Parenting Place 2020.

Simple strategies to transform your parenting

Using 50 real-life stories, *Kind, Firm, Calm* opens the lid on common parenting struggles and provides proven strategies and insights that cut to the heart of each issue. Available as a hardcopy or an e-book.

[Buy now](#)

