



# Family Meetings

*Adapted from: Strengthening Families Program by Karol L. Kumpfer*

**Family meetings** can be used to strengthen your family and help make your children more cooperative and competent. Family meetings have the potential to increase:

- **Family Unity.** Family meetings help to create a sense of family togetherness.
- **Family Cooperation and Decrease Family Conflict.** Regular family meetings teach cooperation. Each person has a say. Problems are resolved through discussion.
- **Love and Mutual Respect.** Giving compliments and sharing fun activities together increases your family's good feelings.
- **Family Organization and Decrease Last Minute Crises.** Including "calendar time" lets family members make plans for the coming week.
- **Competencies.** The family meeting is a place to teach social skills, negotiating, communicating and solving conflicts

**How Often Should You Hold Family Meetings?** Holding a weekly family meeting is best. It allows for families to plan for the coming week and regularly connect with each other.

**Who Should Attend?** All members of a household who think of themselves as a "family" should attend the family meetings. Even if only two family members want to have the meeting, hold the meeting. Others may change their minds once they see the advantages of the meetings.

**Time and Place.** Start with a 15 minute meeting. Pick a time when everyone is able to attend and give their attention. Many families meet Sunday or Monday evening, because this is at the beginning of the week and events for the coming week can be discussed. One of the best places for the meeting is the kitchen or dining room table, if all members can pull up a chair.

**The First Meeting.** Your first family meeting may seem awkward. After a while, the children will look forward to the meetings and you will find the meeting very useful for scheduling and organizing your family activities.

Make your first meeting short. Focus on one or two topics. You might talk about the idea of the family meeting, the different things that you could do, or plan a fun family activity for the week.

At future meetings you can add to the agenda and incorporate chairperson and secretary roles.

**Meeting Leadership.** Each meeting should have a chairperson. The chairperson starts the meeting, moves discussion along and calls on family members to speak. The chairperson makes sure that each person's opinion is heard.

Someone should write down decisions in a notebook or somewhere else where they won't be lost. If this is not done, family members will forget what was decided or remember it differently, which may result in disagreements.

## Sample Family Meeting Agenda

- **Compliments.** This is a time for each family member to mention some of the good things other family members have done in the past week. It could be thanking another for help, mentioning special talents noticed, recognizing new skills learned, and encouraging improvements.
- **Previous Decisions.** Read decisions made at the last meeting.
- **Calendars or Scheduling Time.** Each person in the family discusses what they need to do or have ready for the coming week. Arrangements are discussed and conflicts negotiated.
- **Family Business.** Discuss any new family business you have.
- **Family Treat.** End your family meeting with good feelings by having a family game, fun family activity, singing, or a special food. Family treats increase the feeling of family love and unity.
- **Extras.** Some families may choose to add additional parts to the meeting schedule, such as prayer or religious lessons or family music sessions, or sharing talents or instruction in life skills. The “sky is the limit” if you have the time and the inclination. Although some children may seem to resent the time spent in family meetings, most children later tell their parents, as adults, that family meetings were one of the most important activities they did with their family.

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### Ground Rules for Family Meetings

*Start with a round of compliments!*

1. Everyone’s opinion is respected. No lectures. No put downs.
2. Help everyone stick to the issue
3. Keep a notebook or list of decisions made
4. End the discussion with a summary.
5. Keep meetings short. Table items you don’t have time for
6. Check back next week to see if decisions are working out.
7. Keep trying!



*Source:*  
Kumpfer, K. (2001). Strengthening Families Program 6-12.  
University of Utah.

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