

Family Night Ideas

By Steve Capp



Make Dinner Time Fun

Make family nights special by starting off with a great meal. Add some fun to your family meals by playing family dinner games. Games add fun to the family dinner, open up family conversation, breakup the monotony of family dinner, and encourage children to eat their vegetables and drink their milk!

Family Game Night

Games are a great way to bring the family together as well as teach children how to be good winners and losers. Why not try to set aside one night a week or month as family game night

Create a Family Cookbook

Create a family cookbook by asking family members to send you copies of their favorite recipes. After the family cookbooks have been completed, you can give them as gifts on birthdays, Mother's Day, or at Christmas or Hanukkah.

Make a Family Mailbox

Kids love getting mail and as long as the mail isn't bills, parents love mail too. Add some zip to your family communications by creating a family mailbox. Great for leaving messages of encouragement, love, and support for fellow family members.

American Idol

Do you have a family that loves to sing and dance? Then try holding your own American Idol show. Pick one or two family members to be the judges and let the rest compete to see who is the next American Idol. To make the show more real, you may want to try using a Karaoke Machine or microphone.

Charades

Acting more your style? Then try a fun game of Charades. Simply makeup charade ideas and write on a piece of paper. Divide the family into teams and act away.

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Dinner and a Movie

Love to cook? Then try spending an evening whipping up one of your favorite meals together and finishing up with dessert and a movie. Give each family member a job in the meal preparation, so that everyone is included. Need some suggestions for easy and quick family meals? Then check out FamilyFun's Cookbook or FamilyFun Recipe Finder. Also check out gradingthemovies.com, kids-in-mind.com, or Common Sense Media for a quick and easy way to check the appropriateness of a movie for young eyes.

Family Video and Picture Night

Similar to our dinner and movie night, but rather than watch Hollywood movies, why not spend an evening watching old family videos or leafing through family photos. Kids love to see themselves when they were babies or reminiscing about last year's family vacation. Also, don't forget your wedding video. Kids really get a kick out of watching their parents tie the knot.

Hiking, Biking, and Exploring

How about an adventure into the outdoors? Take advantage of some of the great national parks and hiking trails and spend your day hiking, exploring, and picnicking.



Family Totem Pole

If you enjoy the outdoors, why not try making a family totem pole? Using items you collect on your next nature or hiking trip in addition to other supplies you might have around the home, create a totem pole that represents the family. Make sure every family member is represented.

Volunteer Together as a Family

Why not spend your family time helping others in need? Working together as a family to help others in need can be an incredibly powerful way of building family bonds and developing a great sense of pride and fulfillment in all family members. Visit the Family Giving section on familieswithpurpose.com for great ideas on how to give to others in need.

Family Banner

Making a family banner is a fun way for everyone to express themselves and gives the family something to display and look at every day.



Dinner with Mom and Dad

Finding quality one on one time with each child can be very difficult. One way of fitting this quality time in is to plan a special breakfast or dinner out with each child either once a week or once a month. Get a sitter for the other children and just take one child at a time. This will give each child the opportunity to spend just with you and feel special at the same time.

Surprise Lunch

Why not surprise your child for lunch one day at school? If your school allows it, join the child for lunch in the cafeteria or better yet pack a quick picnic lunch to share at a nearby park. Don't tell them ahead of time you are coming. This makes the lunch all the more special.

Cousins Camp

If you are like many families, cousins often don't live close enough to one another to see each other on a regular basis. To foster the family ties, and keep cousins close, try organizing a cousins camp where the cousins get together either at one of the aunt/uncle's home or even better at Grandma and Grandad's for a few days of fun.

Family Newsletter

Give your family communication a whole new twist with a Family Newsletter. They are fun, educational, and more importantly a great way to keep families connected.

Backyard Campouts

Backyard campouts are a great way to get the camping experience without the hassle of packing. Pitch your tent in the backyard and roast your marshmallows over the coals of an inexpensive charcoal grill. You can tell ghost stories, catch lightening bugs in a glass jar, and look for some of the great constellations in the sky.

Breakfast in the Park

Beat the summer heat by having your outdoor fun early in the morning. Pack a simple breakfast of muffins, yogurt, fruit, and juice boxes/water, invite your closest friends and head to the nearest park. Let the kids run and play or if you prefer you can use the opportunity to play some great outdoor games.

Breakfast Treat

I'm certainly not a "morning person," but my kids and I have been taking a day or two a week and waking up a little bit earlier to go out for breakfast before school starts. It doesn't have to be any place special. We've really just enjoy going to a local bagel shop and getting bagels.



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The customers in the shop are usually business people picking up large orders for their offices, or just people getting started on their work day. They all seem to get a kick out of watching the kids giggling and playing together. Smiles are plentiful and it really sets a nice tone for the day.



Family Vacation Jar

A family vacation jar (or box) is a decorated jar used to save for the next big adventure. Decorated with pictures and words of places you want to visit or have visited, the jar becomes a daily visual reminder of your dreams. **TQR**

Steve Capp is a father of two and lives in Des Moines Iowa with his two kids and wife, Krista. Families with Purpose is an online resource dedicated to helping families build their best life. To learn more about what they do and find additional ideas, visit them at www.familieswithpurpose.com