



Why Family Night?

A 1998 study by the [University of Michigan](#) found that children, on average, spend about 43 minutes per week in "household conversations" and about 12 hours per week watching TV. That sounds like a major imbalance, but look at your own situation. Maybe it's not television; it might be soccer or gymnastics or music lessons, but there are just a lot of distractions for families today.

How Does Family Night Work?

The general concept of a weekly family night is to spend an evening once a week where the family is together having a meaningful experience together. The basic principles include:

- **The time is set.** Having a standard time each week allows better family planning. It is best if you can pick a given night each week (every Saturday or every Thursday) and keep it there.
- **Everyone commits.** When a family decides to focus on family night, each member commits to making it work. That means we have to say "no" to conflicts. Teenage kids need to have the night off from work and school activities. Moms and dads say no to work projects, phone conversations, and athletic events.
- **Time is spent together.** Television, listening to music or everyone reading something different doesn't count. Family activities on family night involve everyone together. Activities such as walking or hiking, playing board games, working together in the yard, being involved in community service projects, and visiting relatives together are the model.
- No heavy stuff. Family nights are not the time for discipline, for arguing, for forcing compliance. If you make it onerous, you will have a mutiny on your hands. Make them light, fun and engaging.

Getting Started With Family Night

So, you're sold on the idea of a family night each week. How do you get the ball rolling?

- **Hold a Family Council.** Invite the family together to discuss the need for more family time and introduce the concept. Make it fun and inviting. Talk about a variety of ideas that would appeal to all family members.
- **Speaking of Treats...** Children love treats! For many families, a special treat is a highlight of family night. It sounds simple, but reserving your best dessert for family night can be a real motivator.
- **Practice Saying No.** Invariably, as soon as you decide to set aside a weekly family night, you will be inundated with conflicts. Have some integrity and be willing to say no. It is important to make sure that your commitment is firm. Remember the feeling of the children in the movie [Hook](#) when their dad (Robin Williams) says, "My word is my bond"? Keep your word and put family first.

--Adapted from about.com website