ParentFurther

Table Time:
How Parents and Kids Can Make Family Meals Count

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Why Are Family Dinners Important?

It isn't always easy to eat dinner together as a family. Research from the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) has found that when they asked teens and parents why they didn't eat dinner more often together, the two groups of people blamed each other.

The number one response for teens? Parents were either at work or had a late work shift.

The number one response for parents? Everybody is busy and has different activities.

Research studies, however, continue to highlight the power of family dinners. Now a new study* from CASA at Columbia University has been released, and it says that teenagers who don't eat dinner frequently with their family are:

- **Twice as likely to use tobacco**
- **Almost twice as likely to use alcohol**
- **More likely to use marijuana**

The same is true with grades in school:

- **Teenagers who have five to seven family dinners per week are more likely to get As and Bs in school**
- **Teenagers who have fewer than three family dinners per week are twice as likely to report receiving mostly Cs and lower grades in school**

**The Importance of Family Dinners VII* (The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, 2011)

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Making Mealtime Count

When you gather around the table, make it count!

Talk about what's going on in your lives. Tell jokes. Discuss current events. Make family meals fun! Use this kit with both young children and teens to help plan a quick, quality family dinner, or the ultimate family date night!

What If We're Too Busy for Family Dinner?

When everyone is too busy to be at home for regular family dinners, it's time to come up with creative solutions. Work family time in around the times that you are all together—a mandated family breakfast can be just as effective as a regular family dinner together. In many ways, it doesn't matter which meal you eat together. What matters is doing it as often as you can and then making the time worthwhile.

Gathering for a meal is about more than just eating. It's a time when everyone can be together and talk. So whenever your child or teen tries to test the idea of family dinners, make sure you pass the test.

Tell them that you want them to grow up well and that eating together as a family can help make that happen.

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Planning the Meal

Meal planning is a fun and educational aspect of planning family dinners. Planning a healthy and budget–friendly meal to feed an entire family is a valuable skill for young people to learn and practice. The following resources are great places to look for healthy, kid–friendly, budget–wise, and delicious recipes.

► Choose My Plate

http://www.choosemyplate.gov/healthy-eating-tipssample-menus-recipes.html

The USDA's official website features dozens of healthy recipe ideas for families including sample 7–day menus, White House recipes, food groups recipes, award–winning recipes, tips for vegetarians, tips for eating healthy when eating out, and much more!

► Super Healthy Kids

www.superhealthykids.com

Tips and ideas for healthy meals in a hurry. Features a weekly newsletter, and free, healthy meal plans. Be sure to check out the Healthy Freezer Meals for Busy Nights, and—if your family is up for a healthy challenge—Salad Week salad recipe ideas.

► Kraft Recipes

www.kraftrecipes.com/yourkids

Kraft's website is chock–full of fun, creative, and delicious recipe ideas and food activity ideas for kids. Some of our favorites on the website include the Kids Can Cook videos series and Tips for Kids in the Kitchen.

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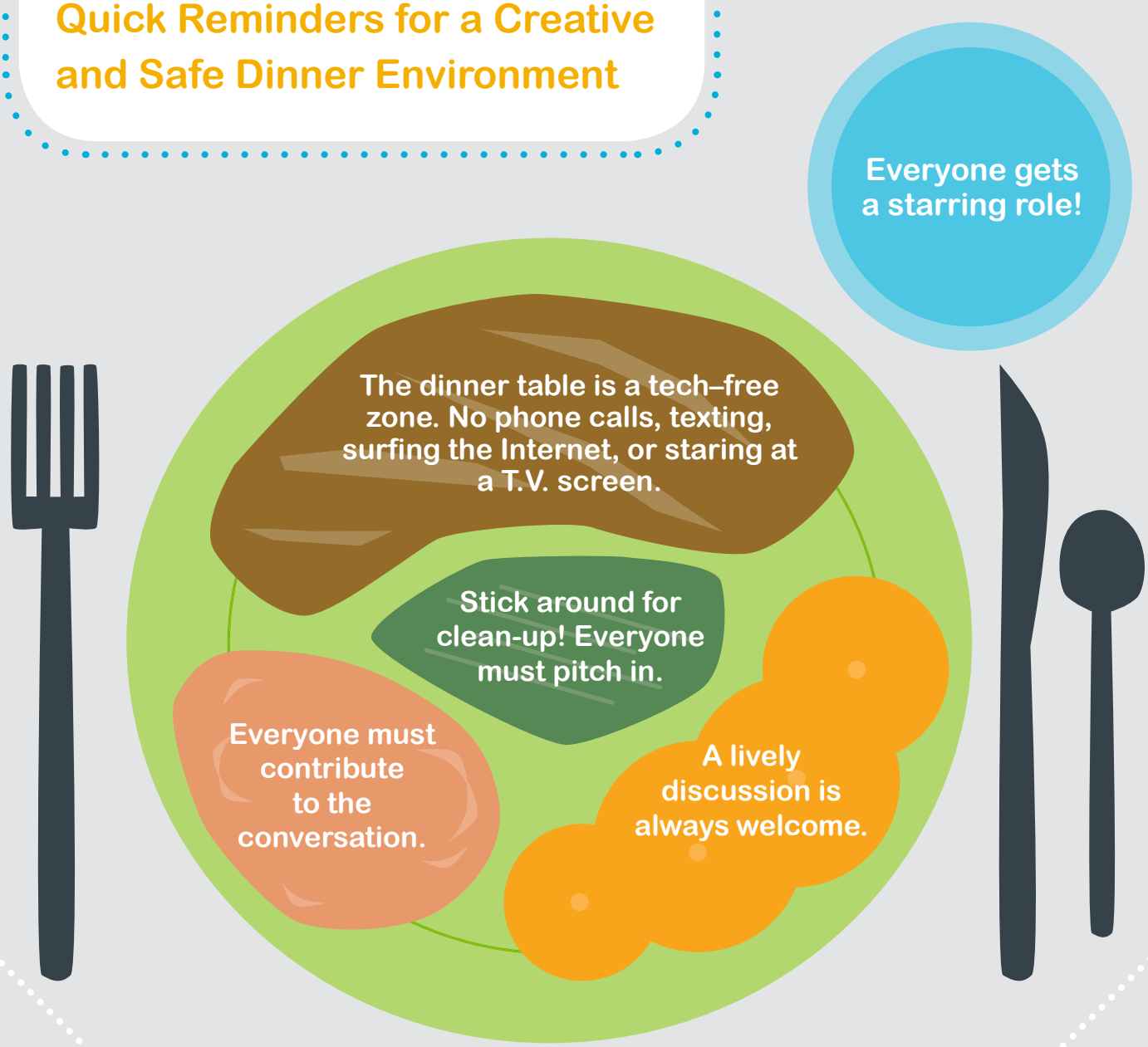
RULES FOR FAMILY DINNERS:

Quick Reminders for a Creative and Safe Dinner Environment



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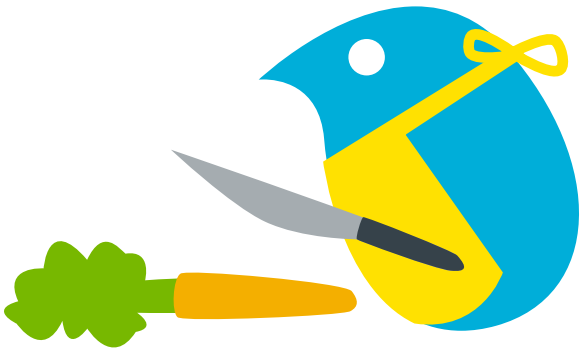
Starring Roles A Guide for Choosing Roles

Chef

As Chef, your teen will have the opportunity to practice an important life skills as well as practice his/her communication, teamwork, and leadership skills. If your teen has never prepared a meal, acting as Chef can also provide a great opportunity for him/her to uncover a hidden *spark.

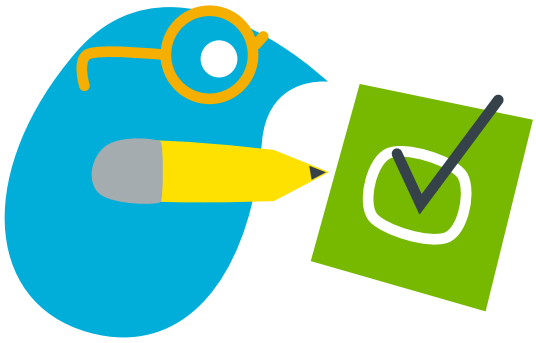


Sous Chef

As the Sous Chef, your child or teen will work closely with the head Chef to create a nutritious dinner for your entire family. Acting as Sous Chef is a great opportunity for elementary–aged children and tweens to make a hands–on contribution alongside an older sibling while building positive rapport, and practicing important life skills.

Kitchen Manager

As the Kitchen Manager, your tween or teen will be in charge of making sure the family has all of the necessary ingredients for the meal. Your child will have the opportunity to practice his/her money management and decision–making skills as s/he helps plan and shop for the meal and purchases needed ingredients. What can we afford? Organic vs. non–organic. Can we use a dozen eggs instead of a half–dozen?



*Spark: *An individual's deepest passions and interests. Your sparks give meaning, focus, joy and energy to your life: http://www.parentfurther.com/your-childs-spark*

Visit www.parentfurther.com/family-dinners for more information

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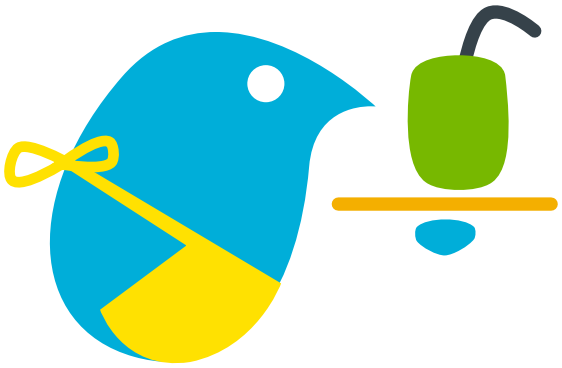
Starring Roles A Guide for Choosing Roles



Host/Hostess

The Host/Hostess is a valuable role in the restaurant. It's also an excellent role for younger kids to take. As Host/Hostess, your child will greet guests, decorate the place mats, and fill drink glasses. He/She will learn to appreciate the ritual of formal family dinners and the value of proper etiquette while feeling like he/she's making a valuable contribution.

Kitchen Patrol (KP)

The role of KP is important. KP is in charge of cleanup, but everyone is responsible for chipping in. KP is an excellent opportunity to practice leadership, learn the value of routines, chores and responsibilities, family organization, and appreciation of others' roles in the household.

Maître D'

The Maître D' is a fun role for anyone! Family members can print out and pass the microphone to take turns at being Maître D'. In this role, everyone has the opportunity to contribute. It's a great way to practice family communication and uncover hidden talents and sparks!

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Name Cards

Cut along the dotted lines and place on place mats in accordance with your families roles. Please feel free to use the "Soup du Jour" cards for your invited guest names.

Chef

I will oversee the preparation of tonight's meal. I am able to work well with my Sous Chef and manage the cooks in my kitchen to create a tasty meal that you will all enjoy.

Sous Chef

I am my Chef's "right hand". I am quick on my feet and able to work well with my Chef and cooks to create a tasty meal that you will all enjoy.

Host/Hostess

Welcome to our restaurant! My role is to ensure you have a pleasant experience. I am personable and eager to pitch in wherever I am needed.

Kitchen Manager

I will work behind the scenes to ensure our meal is the best quality and value. I am detail oriented and good at making decisions.

Kitchen Patrol

When it comes to clean–up, everyone pitches in, but I call the shots. I'm a good leader and I work well with others.

Maître D'

As Maître D', I'm in charge of the night's activities.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Let the fun begin!

Soup du Jour

NAME

.....

Soup du Jour

NAME

.....

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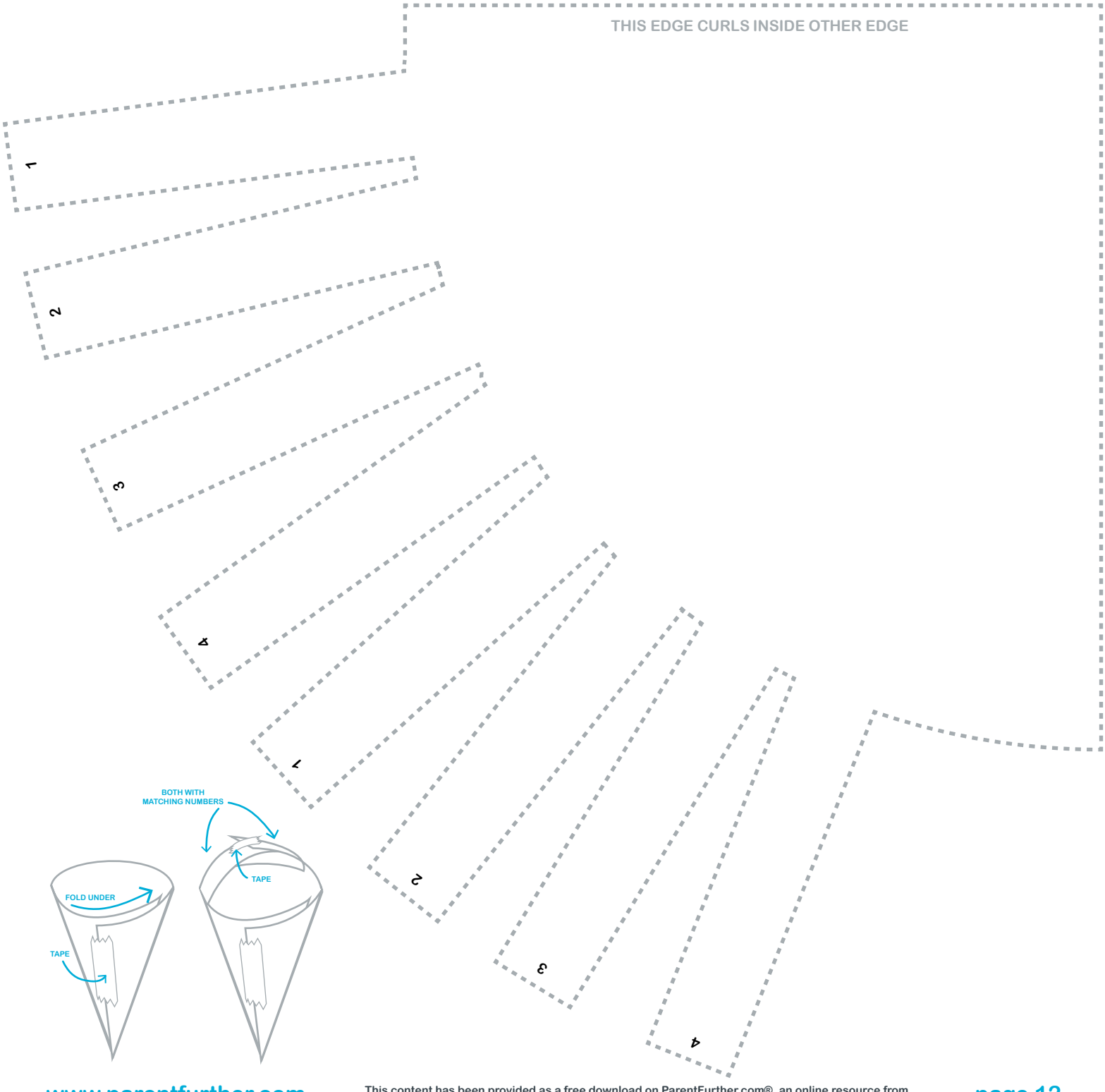
Microphone / Placemat

Follow the directions at the bottom of the page to print out and assemble the mircophone. Family members can pass the microphone to take turns at being Maitre D' during the activity portion of dinner. Print out the placemat on the next page to use as a table-setting guide, or turn it into a coloring activity where everyone can create their own placemats!



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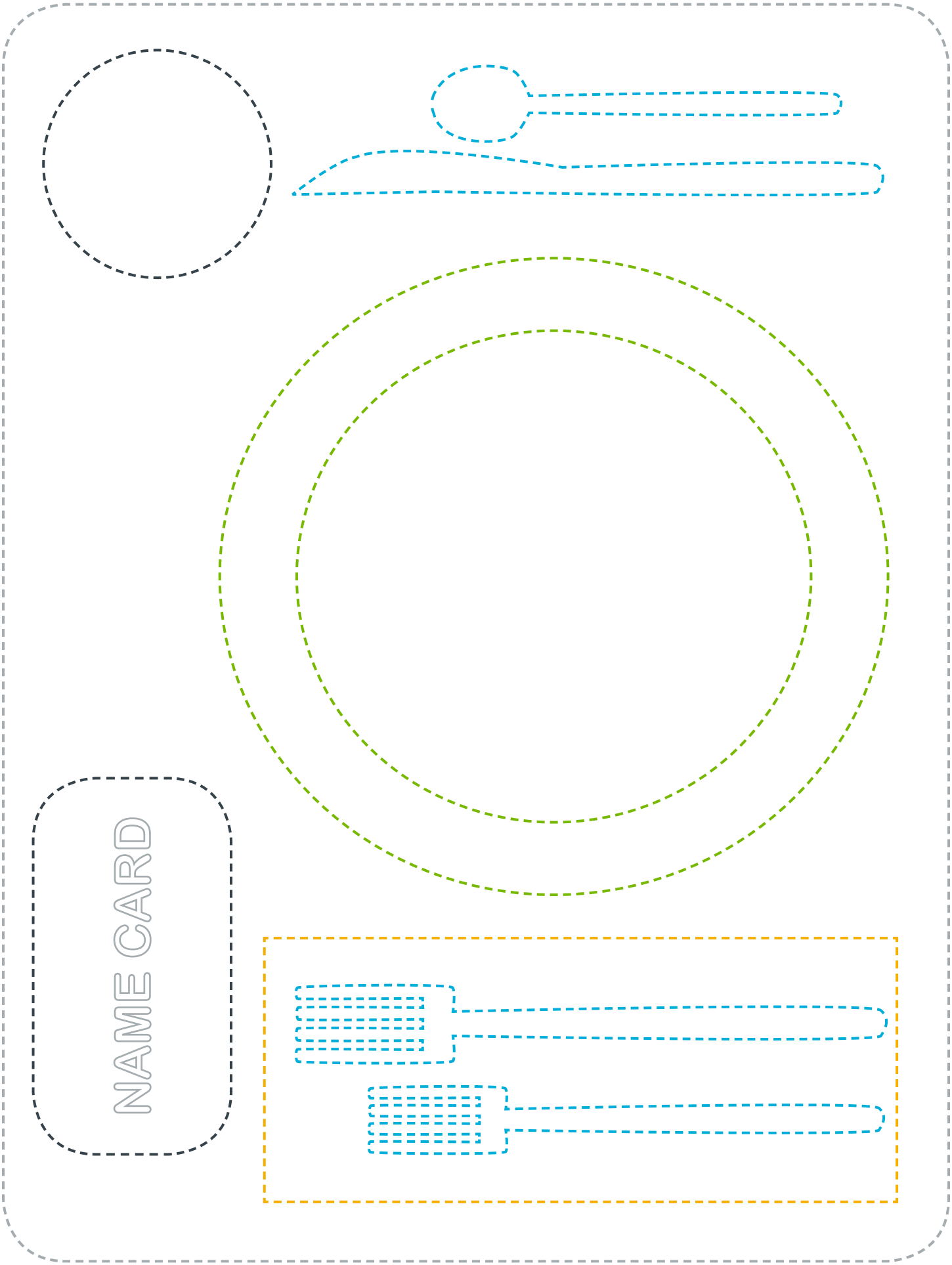
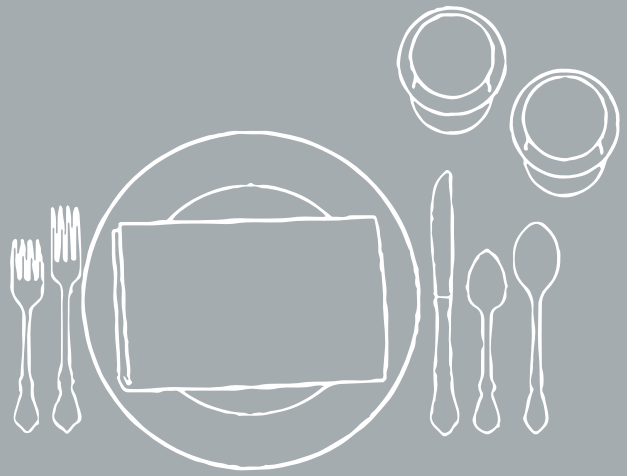

NAME CARD

Informal Place Setting



Formal Place Setting

FOLD ON LINE

THIS IS THE BOTTOM

FOLD ON LINE

GLUE THIS TAB TO TOP OF OTHER HALF

A Few Conversation Starters

Aid in opening communication

All Ages

What is your favorite family tradition? Does it involve an activity you like to do?

In you opinion, how important is it to dream and set goals?

Would you rather live in the country, a tiny rural town, a suburb of a city, or an urban city center? Why?

Elementary School–Aged Kids

What makes a good teacher?

What are three things about you that your friends would say make you a good friend to have?

Tweens

Who is yout favorite non–famous adult? Why?

Talk about a time when an adult treated you as an equal or listened to your ideas?

Teens

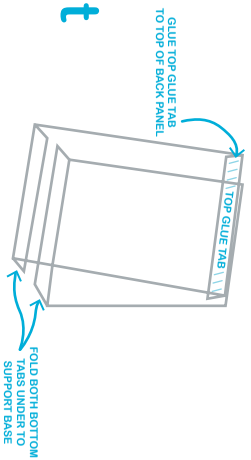
What was the nicest compliment you ever received from an adult?

What does it mean to have personal power? Are you born with it, or do you grow it, gather it, or discover it?

FOLD ON LINE

THIS IS THE BOTTOM

Conversation Table Tent



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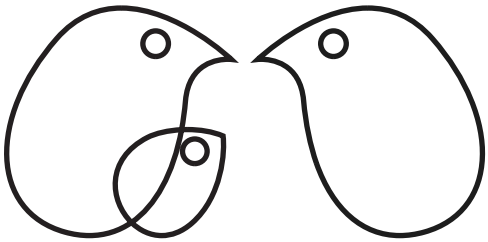
Dinner Invitation

Mix it up! Encourage your teen to invite friends, adult mentors, or extended family members to join your family dinners. Use the time to get to know their friends and ask them to learn more about your family. If you wish, you can even assign the dinner guest (Soup du Jour) a starring role in your family dinner—get creative! Print off and cut out on the dotted line of the following invitation, decorate and drop it in a friendly neighbor's mailbox or have your child present it to a friend or caring adult at his school or after–school program.

You Have Been Invited



Details:

Be prepared for fun! During dinner, you'll have a turn at being Maître D', which means you'll get to ask everyone at the table a question of your choice, or you'll get to lead a fun activity or game.

who

.....

what

.....

when

.....

where

.....

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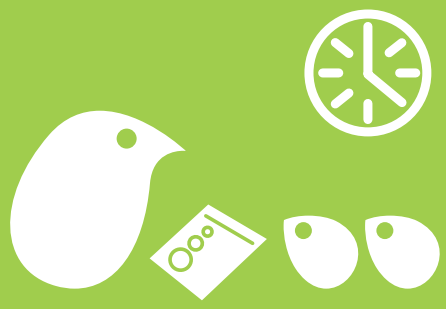
A Quick Family Dinner

If you don't have much time to spare, but want to make your family dinner count, try the following activity ideas. Of course, you may always refer to the conversation starters on the table tent to spark up interesting conversations around the dinner table. For more great conversation ideas visit: http://www.parentfurther.com/resources/conversation-generator



Common Grounds

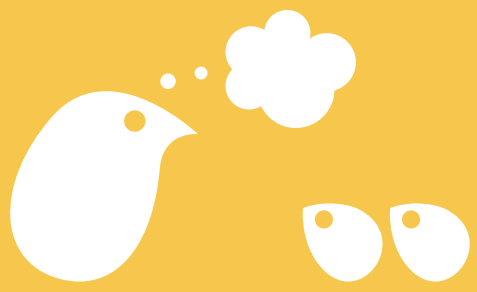
Materials

Blank Papers • Pencils • Timer

Directions

The Maître D' should provide some paper and pencils. Then, set the timer! Take 3 minutes to work together to list as many things as possible that members of your family have in common. Can you list 10 things that you have in common? What about 20? What about more?

Now list some things that make you unique from one another. Can you list 5 things? 10? More? Have the Maître D' ask: Which list was harder to make? How is your family stronger because of the things you have in common and the things that make each of you unique?



Two Truths and A Dream

Materials

Blank Papers • Pencils

Directions

Have the Maître D' give each person a few minutes to write on a sheet of paper two truths (activities/events that he is proud of) and one dream or hope (hasn't accomplished yet).

Ask each person to read their three statements out loud, then, have remaining family members vote on which statement they believe is the dream/hope. The family member who correctly identifies the "yet-to-be-accomplished" goal scores a point. Continue until all players have taken their turn. The person scoring the most points wins.

Talk about the various dreams. What can we do as a family to help make the dreams come true? What steps can each person take to make their dreams a reality?

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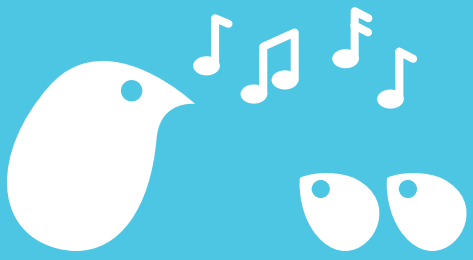


Name That Song

Materials

Music Player • Song Sheet • Pens

Directions

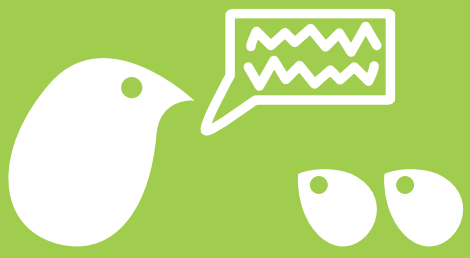
For families with young children:

Have the Maître D' distribute a pen and a song sheet http://www.parentfurther.com/activity-ideas/name-that-song to each person (or set of partners). After guesses have been made the Maître D can announce correct answers. The person with the most points at the end wins.

For families with older children:

Have the Maître D' create his/her own song sheet using song lyrics from some of his or her favorite songs.

Answers to Songs in Song sheet Download:
1. Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star 2. The Barney Song 3. Itsy Bitsy Spider 4. Baby Bumble Bee 5. Do Your Ears Hang Low? 6. Five Little Monkeys 7. B-I-N-G-O 8. How Much is That Doggie in the Window? 9. One, Two, Buckle My Shoe 10. Mary Had a Little Lamb 11. Row, Row, Row Your Boat 12. You Are My Sunshine 13. Yankee Doodle 14. The Wheels on the Bus 15. This Old Man



30 Second Spotlight

Materials

Blank Papers • Pencils

Directions

Think of any family topic (hobbies, sports, holidays, family traditions, family memories, etc.) and give each person 30 seconds of uninterrupted time talk about the topic. Take turns until everyone has had a chance to talk about a topic. Listen carefully to one another. Talk about the importance of listening to each other when done with the topics.

Ask each other questions like:

Why is it important to take turns talking?
Why is it important to listen well?
What keeps you from listening well?
How could you be a better listener?

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The Ultimate Family Dinner Date

If you're making it a full–on family night, consider these activity ideas for hours of fun and bonding.

Blind Design

Have the Maître D' distribute paper and colored pencils, markers, or crayons to each family member. Ask the oldest person to draw a simple picture and describe it to the others without showing or naming what it is. The other players should attempt to draw the same picture based on the person's verbal description (no peeking at the original!). For example, if Dad draws a snowman, he might describe it by saying "There are three circles, one on top of another with the biggest circle on the bottom, a medium circle in the middle and the smallest circle on the top." (Dad cannot simply say, "Draw a snowman.") After everyone has drawn their designs, let other participants see the original. Compare the original to the revised designs. Then let another person be the instructing artist. The Maître D' chooses the winner.

Name Stack

Have the Maître D' provide paper and pencils to each family member. Have each person take turns writing their first name on a sheet of paper until everyone has written their name in list format. (For example, Susan, George, Ricky, Cassandra). Give each family member (or teams) two minutes to create as many words as they can from the letters in their names. For example, the name list above might generate words such as "sack, rake, car, gorge…" Each letter can only be used once within a single word, but each letter can be used multiple times to make as many words as possible. The team (if you play with teams) with the most words wins.

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Card Castles

Have the Maître D' provide a package of regular–sized playing cards. Set the timer for 10 minutes and give your family the challenge of building a castle together out of the playing cards. Players can work together to build the "tallest" or the "strongest" and get as fancy as they desire with their playing card castles. This activity lets your family practice communication skills, planning and decision–making skills, and social competencies.

Get Gadgety

As a general rule–of–thumb, the dinner table should be a tech-free zone, but this is the exception to the rule! For this game, have the Maître D' give everyone a turn at controlling the CD player, computer, or iPad. Each person takes a turn as the DJ and plays a portion of a favorite song, and others have to guess the song and/or group/artist, and why he or she likes that particular song. This is a great way to talk about and enjoy music and learn what each person is listening to!

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Keep The Fun Going

Dessert is a good reason to sit, talk, and linger around the dinner table—and to keep the fun going! As you enjoy a delicious dessert, think about ways to keep family time going.

- Go for a walk together
- Play a board game
- Plan a family movie night

Use the form below to help plan your next family dinner!

Commit to a set day and time for regular family dinners; choose a theme or think of whom you'd like to invite as a special guest to your next family dinner, and then mark it on your calendars or hang these reminders on the fridge or on the family bulletin board.

Our Next Family Dinner Date

When/Where: ..... Time: .....

Starring Roles: .....

Guest of Honor/Theme: .....

Our Next Family Dinner Date

When/Where: ..... Time: .....

Starring Roles: .....

Guest of Honor/Theme: .....

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What can you do to create engaged parents in your community?

ParentFurther

Bring Search Institute's research to you!

Engaging families can be challenging, especially as kids get older. But there is little evidence that families have lost their power in the lives of children and youth—even though many families do face major challenges.

Through our research, we know that strong family relationships not only help kids through the transition period from childhood into adolescence, they also boost student motivation by deepening family relationships. These relationships are foundational to learning, achievement, and well-being.

These relationships build strong social and emotional strengths that kids will use throughout their lives.

In our family engagement workshops, designed for youth leaders, you'll learn how to engage parents and, in turn, strengthen kids' lives through better family relationships.

We offer three ways to get on board:

Keep Connected

This is a NEW family engagement program designed to grow the strengths of families. Designed for diverse families, this program brings youth and parents together one night a week for a shared family meal and to teach parents and teens how to stay connected at a time in their life when they're starting to grow more independent.

We are opening our new training institute in August. Click here to learn more about Keep Connected.

Engaging the New American Family

This workshop builds on new Search Institute research that identifies critical strengths that are relevant to families from different cultures, income levels, and structures. This research becomes a springboard for re-imagining family engagement to focus on celebrating and tapping the strengths of diverse families through building relationships.

Click here to learn more about Engaging the New American Family.

Discover Your Family's Strengths: A Workshop for Parent-ing Adults

Based on a new research on America's diverse families, this workshop introduces a framework of key family strengths that highlight five dimensions of family life that really matter. Participants will learn about developmental relationships, including ways families...

- Express care
- Challenge Growth
- Provide Support
- Expand Possibilities
- Share Power
- Routines and Traditions
- Community Connections

Click here to learn more about Discover Your Family's Strengths.

Search INSTITUTE

Discovering what kids need to succeed

ParentFurther is a resource from Search Institute. For more than 50 years, Search Institute has been a leader and partner for organizations around the world in discovering what kids need to succeed. Our knowledge and resources help motivate and equip caring adults to create schools, communities, and families where young people thrive. The core of ParentFurther's positive, strength-based approach to parenting is built on Search Institute's Developmental Assets®: 40 common sense, positive qualities and experiences that help in luence the choices kids make.

► www.search-institute.org

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