

Your Possible Home

Building Meaningful, Enduring Family Bonds in the Age of AI


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Family Meeting Guide

How to create your guidelines together so everyone owns them

Family guidelines that two parents wrote alone in the kitchen are guidelines the kids will resist. Family guidelines the whole family helped shape are guidelines the kids will remind each other of. Buy-in matters more than precision. This guide walks you through running the meeting that gets you there.

Plan for thirty to forty-five minutes. Pick a calm time, not a Sunday night when everyone's tired. Have snacks. Make it feel like a family event, not a tribunal.

Before the meeting

A few small things that make the meeting work:

- Pick a time when nobody's hungry, exhausted, or about to leave for something
- Tell the kids what you're doing and why, in age-appropriate language
- Have paper, pens, and a single piece of large paper or a whiteboard
- Decide who's writing things down (one parent, usually)
- Put phones away

The agenda

1. Opening question (5 minutes)

Start with something everyone can answer.

"What helps our home feel peaceful and safe?"

Let everyone answer, including the youngest. Don't grade the answers. Just write them down.

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2. Values brainstorm (5–10 minutes)

"What kind of people do we want to be in our home, especially when things are hard?"

Each family member shares one or two values they care about. Younger kids will say things like "nice" and "fun." Older kids might say "honest" or "chill." Write everything down. You'll cluster later.

3. The hard question (10 minutes)

"What behaviors make our home feel unsafe or unkind?"

This is the section that surfaces the real stuff. Some of it will be uncomfortable. Some of it will be about you, the parents. Don't get defensive. Just write it down. Use phrases like:

- "Yelling."
- "When someone slams a door."
- "When you're on your phone and not listening."
- "When mom snaps at us before school."

The honesty in this section is the foundation of everything else. Receiving it without flinching is one of the best parenting moves you'll make all year.

4. Draft the guidelines together (10 minutes)

Working from the values and the unsafe-behaviors lists, the parent-scribe writes a first draft of three to five guidelines. Read each one out loud and ask:

"Does this sound right?" "Anything missing?" "Would a five-year-old understand this?"

Refine until everyone can nod. Don't aim for perfect. Aim for something the family can stand behind today.

5. Choose a mantra (5 minutes)

A single short phrase that captures the spirit of the guidelines. (See the Mantra Builder for the longer version of this exercise.) Vote on a few options, or blend the best ones together.

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6. Decide where it will live (2 minutes)

The kitchen? The fridge? The hallway? A frame? A binder? Decide together. The visibility of the document determines how often anyone thinks about it.

7. Set the next review date (1 minute)

Pick a real date. Put it on the calendar. The first review is when you find out what's working and what needs to change.

A few tips for parents running this meeting

Don't over-talk. Your job is to facilitate, not lecture. The more the kids talk, the more the guidelines belong to them.

Don't reject hard feedback. When a kid says *"I don't like when you yell,"* the right answer is, *"You're right. I'd like to work on that. Can we put 'no yelling' on the list for everyone, including me?"*

Include parents in the rules. This is non-negotiable for the document to feel fair. Whatever applies to the kids applies to you. If the kids can't yell, you can't yell.

Resist the urge to make it perfect. Imperfect guidelines that the family wrote together will outperform perfect guidelines that the parents handed down.

End with something warm. A treat, a favorite show, a walk together. The meeting should feel like an act of love, not a board meeting.

One small reframe

The point of this meeting isn't to produce a document. The document is a byproduct. The point is to practice the kind of family conversation you want to have for the rest of your lives, where hard things can be named and worked through together. The guidelines are the artifact. The conversation is the gift.