



# FAMILY

## House Rules

*A Guide to Creating, Enforcing & Growing Your Family's Shared Agreements*

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## WHAT ARE FAMILY HOUSE RULES?

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Values tell your family who to be. Rules tell your family how to act. They are the practical, everyday translation of your values into behavior — the specific, visible agreements that govern how you treat each other, share space, handle conflict, and show up in the world.

Research from Iowa State University Extension and the CDC consistently shows that clear, specific expectations — stated in positive terms — significantly improve children's behavior and reduce family conflict. When kids know exactly what's expected and why, they're more likely to internalize those expectations rather than simply comply with them under pressure.

### **RULES VS. VALUES**

*Values are the compass; rules are the road. "We value respect" is a core value. "Speak kindly — always" is the rule that lives it out. Good family rules are always traceable back to a value your family actually holds. If you can't explain why a rule exists, it probably shouldn't be on your list.*

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## HOW TO CREATE YOUR FAMILY HOUSE RULES

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The best family rules are created together — not handed down. Research consistently shows that when children are part of making the rules, they feel greater ownership, perceive the rules as fairer, and are significantly more likely to follow them. Here's a process that works:

- 1. Start With Your Values** – Look at your family's core values and ask: "What daily behaviors would make those values visible?" Let values drive rules, not the other way around.
- 2. Brainstorm Together** – At a family meeting, ask each person: "What would make our home feel safer, calmer, and more fun?" Write everything down — no idea is wrong at this stage.
- 3. Keep It Positive** – Phrase rules as what to DO, not what not to do. "Speak kindly" is more powerful than "Don't be mean." Positive rules describe the behavior you want to see.
- 4. Limit the List** – Aim for 5–8 rules that everyone can actually remember. A parenting coach once worked with a family that had 35 rules on the kitchen door — their five-year-old was miserable. More rules, less impact.
- 5. Explain the Why** – Attach a reason to each rule. "No phones at the table — because eye contact is how we actually connect" lands differently than a bare command. Kids who understand the why are more likely to self-regulate.
- 6. Add Rules to the Family Meeting Spot App** – Post them where everyone can see them. Review them at your weekly family meeting and check in: are we living these? What needs adjusting?



### THE THREE R'S OF CONSEQUENCES

*When a rule is broken, the consequence should be Related to the behavior, Reasonable in proportion, and Respectful of the child's dignity. Consequences that meet all three criteria teach — they don't just punish. And remember: parents follow the rules too. Children who see parents exempt from family rules learn that rules don't really matter.*

## KEEPING RULES ALIVE

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Rules posted on a wall and never mentioned again become wallpaper. What keeps them alive is consistent, low-drama reinforcement — and the willingness to revisit them as your family grows.

- ◆ Review them at your weekly family meeting — one quick scan: what's working, what isn't?
- ◆ Catch people doing it right — acknowledge rule-following out loud. Positive reinforcement is more powerful than correction.
- ◆ Stay consistent — the rule that gets enforced only sometimes teaches children the rule doesn't really matter.
- ◆ Update annually — rules should grow with your children. A bedtime rule for a seven-year-old shouldn't look the same at thirteen.
- ◆ Let kids propose new rules — when children see their suggestions make the list, their investment in the whole system deepens.
- ◆ Model it yourself — if you check your phone at the table, the no-phones rule is already dead. Parents are the first and most powerful rule-followers.

*Rules without relationship are just control. Rules within a loving family are a gift — they say: we care enough about each other to agree on how we'll live. • [familymeetingspot.com](http://familymeetingspot.com)*



## 45 EXAMPLES OF FAMILY HOUSE RULES

*Use these as inspiration. Choose the ones that fit your family. Make them your own.*

**1. Speak kindly — always.**

*Words shape how safe our home feels. Choose them carefully.*

**2. Listen when others are talking.**

*Full attention is a gift. Put down the phone and make eye contact.*

**3. No yelling indoors.**

*Calm voices solve problems. Loud ones escalate them.*

**4. Ask before you borrow.**

*Respecting property teaches respect for people.*

**5. Knock before entering.**

*Privacy matters. Every person in this house deserves it.*

**6. Tell the truth, even when it's hard.**

*Trust is built one honest moment at a time.*

**7. No blame-shifting. Own your mistakes.**

*Accountability builds character. Excuses erode it.*

**8. Say what you mean. Mean what you say.**

*Integrity starts at home, in the small moments.*

**9. Eat at least one meal together daily.**

*The dinner table is where families actually happen.*

**10. No phones at the table.**

*Eye contact and conversation don't compete with screens.*

**11. Greet each other when you arrive home.**

*Acknowledgment is love in action. Don't skip it.*

**12. Celebrate each other's wins.**

*Your teammate's victory is your victory.*

**13. End the day with one thing you're grateful for.**

*Gratitude rewires the brain toward what's good.*

**14. Have fun together every week.**

*Laughter and play are not extras. They are the point.*

**15. Say 'I love you' freely and often.**

*Love unexpressed is love unreceived. Say the words.*

**16. Complete chores before screens.**

*Contribution to the household is not optional.*

**17. Finish homework before free time.**

*Work before play is a habit that pays dividends for life.*

**18. If you make a mess, clean it up.**

*Everyone carries their share. No exceptions.*

**19. Put things back where you found them.**

*Respect for shared spaces makes home run smoothly.*

**20. Follow through on commitments.**

*When you say you'll be there, be there.*

**21. Honor your bedtime.**

*Sleep is not a reward. It's the foundation of everything else.*

**22. Be gentle — no hitting, pushing, or hurting.**

*This home is a safe place. Bodies and feelings both.*

**23. Screens off 30 minutes before bed.**

*Sleep quality matters. Wind down on purpose.*

**24. Move your body every day.**

*Energy, mood, and focus all depend on physical activity.*

**25. Eat something good before something fun.**

*We take care of our bodies. Food is fuel, not just reward.*

**26. Solve disagreements with words, not volume.**

*The goal is understanding, not winning. Stay calm.*

**27. Apologize sincerely — and mean it.**

*A real apology repairs. An empty one makes things worse.*

**28. Forgive and move forward.**

*We don't hold grudges here. Repair and reconnect.*

**29. Bring problems to the family meeting.**

*Issues aired in the open get solved. Issues buried grow.*

**30. Assume good intent first.**

*Give each other the benefit of the doubt before reacting.*

**31. Try new things before saying no.**

*Courage is a muscle. Exercise it at the dinner table first.*

**32. Help each other without being asked.**

*Notice what needs doing and just do it.*

**33. Do your best — not just what's required.**

*Average is a choice. So is excellent.*

**34. Read something every day.**

*Curious people become capable people.*

**35. Welcome guests warmly.**

*How we treat visitors reflects who we are as a family.*

**36. Screen time is earned, not assumed.**

*Devices are a privilege. Treat them like one.*

**37. Be as kind online as you are in person.**

*Digital character is still character.*

**38. No secrets kept from parents about online life.**

*Open access builds trust. Secrets erode it.*

**39. Give back — time, money, or both.**

*Generosity is not about abundance. It's about attention.*

**40. Take care of what you have.**

*Gratitude for things shows up in how we treat them.*

**41. Stick together — family first.**

*We are a team. Act like it, especially when it's hard.*

**42. Respect everyone, everywhere.**

*How you treat people when no one's watching is who you are.*

**43. Talk to a parent before big decisions.**

*Wisdom is a family resource. Use it.*

**44. What happens in the family stays in the family.**

*Loyalty and discretion are part of how we protect each other.*

**45. We review our rules and grow together.**

*Rules evolve as we do. This list belongs to all of us.*