

MERIT BADGE SERIES



FAMILY LIFE



SCOUTING AMERICA
MERIT BADGE SERIES

FAMILY LIFE



"Enhancing our youths' competitive edge through merit badges"

Scouting  America.

Note to the Counselor

Some of the issues surrounding requirement 6 for the family meeting could be considered of a personal nature. Use discretion when reviewing this requirement with the Scout.



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Requirements

Scouts should go to www.scouting.org/merit-badges/Family-Life or check Scoutbook for the latest requirements.



Contents

What Is a Family? 7

The Family Meeting. 31

The Dangers of Drugs and Substance Abuse 37

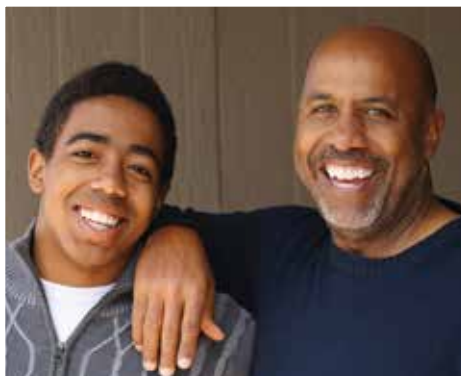
Family Matters 41

Understanding the Growing-Up Process 47

Your Future Family 53

Family Life Resources 61





What Is a Family?

The family is the basic unit of society and is important to both individuals and communities. The world in which we live is rapidly changing, making today's society much more complex than ever before. As you earn this merit badge, you will realize why it is important to know more about family life and how to strengthen our families.

Families are the small groups in which we learn our first and most important lessons about how to live and be happy in the larger society. Strong families are the foundation of strong communities. You know that a strong foundation is needed to construct a sturdy building. Think of society as the building, the family as the foundation of that building, and individuals and the community as pieces of building material. All the parts are important and none can be left out, but it all starts with a strong foundation. Just as these parts are necessary to have a strong building, your basic understanding about families and how to strengthen them will help you, your family, your community, and society, now and in the future.

A family is made up of people who care about one another. All members of a family give and receive love and support from the others. Family members reach out to one another and share both happy and sad times together. They talk and listen to one another, and they share ideas, thoughts, and concerns. They share fun as well as sorrow and help heal one another's hurts. All of this makes the foundation stronger.



When times are difficult, family members learn how to pull together. This helps them get through those tough times.



Learning begins in the family, where basic physical and material needs are met, training takes place, and character and lifelong behaviors develop. Family is the foundation for physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and moral development. Families feed, clothe, and provide shelter to their members. They also provide love, nurturing, and protection from harm. People learn to speak, think, and trust, and to feel and express emotions from being a part of a family. Mature family members teach the younger ones important skills like how to get along with others and how to know right from wrong.

Family life will always have its ups and downs as family members go through both good times and unpleasant ones. But in most strong families, people give support and show concern and loyalty to one another when needed. Communities and society care about families, too, by creating laws and providing services to help families.

Many families also share faith and religious activities with one another. As a Scout, part of your duty is to do your best to make your family strong and help your family thrive. By doing this, you are helping to lay the foundation for a stronger community and society.

Good Turns at Home

Your family life will be one of best opportunities to put the Scout slogan into practice. “Do A Good Turn Daily” means a lot more than just doing your household chores and homework without being reminded. Doing kind deeds for others is great way to show that you love and appreciate them. Some examples might include:

- Taking a moment to read a book or do an activity with a younger sibling
- Doing the chore of another family member who is either unwell or struggling with a stressful situation
- Saying a kind word when someone is sad
- Keeping the home clean by picking up trash or pulling weeds in the yard
- Sharing a funny story
- Sending a kind message to a grandparent or other family member who is away from home
- Making an extra effort to practice good etiquette
- Playing with a pet
- Helping bring in the groceries
- Noticing when someone needs help
- Preparing a meal or treats for your family



The Family Structure

No two families are alike. For many Scouts, the family is made up of parents, brothers, and sisters who all live under the same roof. But there are other types of families, too. Some Scouts may have a single parent; some have stepparents and stepbrothers and stepsisters. Some Scouts may have adoptive or foster parents or no parents at all. Some families may be large, while others are small.

Due to economic or other reasons, some families include nonrelatives like friends who share a household.



No family is ideal or perfect. Most real families are very different from what you may see on television or in magazines. Do not let these images mislead you.

In today's families, one or both parents may work, either traveling to an office or working from home. In some families, parents may be at home due to early retirement or other factors. In other situations, grandparents and other relatives may share the home; there may also be aunts, uncles, and cousins who live nearby. Other family members might live in another city, state, or country.

Each family forms its own set of values and decides what is most important to them. Discipline also varies among families. Families have different ways of dealing with different issues. In some families, one or both parents make all the decisions with no input from the children, while other families may encourage input from all family members before decisions are made. Perhaps you know of a family where there is equal decision-making among family members.

There is no one family style for everyone. A family's style develops based on each family's individual situation and the values they care about. For example, your family may be quiet and relaxed, while another family is very active and hurried. Many different ways of living together can work. What makes a family strong is not the number of people in it, whether its members are related, or their pace of life; people caring for one another and sharing their lives is what really matters.

Types of Families

- Nuclear family (parents and their children)
- Extended family (members beyond the nuclear family such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins)
- Single-parent family (one parent with children)
- Blended family (made up of stepparents and stepbrothers or stepsisters)
- Adoptive family (family with children who are not biologically linked to their parents)
- Childless family (couple who does not have children)

Who Is Your Family?

Think about your own family. Who are the members? You may be a member of a small family or a very large one. You may live with one or both parents or have to share your time between them. You may be an only child or have brothers and sisters. You may be the oldest, middle, or youngest child. You may also have other relatives living with you, near you, or far away. You may be adopted or have stepparents. Perhaps you have no parents and are cared for by other relatives or guardians. You may live in a foster home or in a youth home, and you may have a temporary family in addition to your regular family. Remember that every family is different.



Your family provides you with shelter, food, and clothing. They make you feel safe and loved. They want you to be the best person you can be. No matter what your age, you can make the most of your family life and help your family grow strong.

Family life is all about touching each other's lives so everyone benefits. But that takes work because you are all helping to build a solid foundation. Remember that there will be ups and downs. You can play an important role by always doing your best to help your family flourish and be happy and by building bridges of mutual respect and love. You also can help lay the foundation to strengthen your community and society.

Positive Family Traits

Just as an athletic team works and plays together, each person who is part of a family can affect everyone else for better or worse. Strong and supportive families do not just happen. Like a winning team, each family member needs to develop certain traits and skills and then practice being a strong and supportive member of the family.



Here are some positive traits that will help form and maintain a strong family. Most of these will be discussed further in this pamphlet.

- Love
- Security
- Acceptance and respect
- Mutual trust
- Good relationship and communication skills
- Shared roles and responsibilities
- Cooperation and interdependence
- Time spent together
- Good management skills (for example, financial or organizational)



Love

There are many different ways that family members show they love one another. Caring about how other family members feel, sharing their hurts, helping them solve problems, and being there for them at important times are just a few ways to show love. Knowing they are loved unconditionally can help loved ones through difficulties and bring them a feeling of security, happiness, peace, and contentment.

You can show love for your family through special words, deeds, and actions such as not being afraid to say “I love you,” spending time with your family, doing favors for family members, listening to what they have to say, being patient, and doing things without being asked. In what other ways can you show love to your family? In what other ways do your family members show they love you?

Loving family members even when you do not always agree with what they do, say, think, or feel is called unconditional love.

Security

Security refers to physical and psychological safety. Families can provide security. People feel secure when they know that their physical needs are being met and that they are protected and safe from harm. Receiving encouragement, guidance, and training from the family makes family members feel secure.

By contrast, troubled family members who feel insecure may be distrustful and suspicious of others. This can create an unstable environment. Financial problems, health troubles, divorce, and other kinds of problems also can cause insecurity in a family.

Acceptance and Respect

You are important. Of all the billions of people in the world, no two are exactly alike. There is no one else like you. You are special. Without you, your family would not be the same. You are important to your family, because you fill a special place in your family that no one else can fill.

Part of growing up is learning to accept and respect yourself and others. It is important to recognize that each person has strengths and limitations. Each person has some talents, gifts, or strengths that makes him or her unique. Everyone should respect these qualities and understand how they can make positive contributions to family life.

There are many ways you can add to the strength, happiness, and well-being of your family. Ask yourself the following questions.

- Do you live by the Scout Oath and Law and set a good example for other family members?
- Are you dependable and honest?
- As a Scout, are you always prepared to help your family members, neighbors, and friends in an emergency?
- Do you have a positive attitude that makes others enjoy being with you?
- Do you understand and respect the unique structure and style of your family?
- Do you understand the importance of your family to the community and society?
- Do you understand the traits and skills needed to make your family stronger?
- Do you enjoy helping care for younger family members such as reading to them or teaching them to do worthwhile things?
- Do you help carry on family traditions?
- Do you let other family members know you care about them and appreciate what they do for you?
- Are you willing to help around the house?
- Do you offer to help without being asked?



Trust is something that must be earned. You can earn trust by keeping your word and by being truthful, reliable, unselfish, and caring. Remember, being trustworthy is one of the 12 points of the Scout Law.

Mutual Trust

Your parents or guardians know you better than anyone else. They know your strengths and weaknesses. They know what things might tempt you. They have probably set guidelines to help protect you, help you grow, and help you make thoughtful decisions.

What does trust mean to you? Perhaps you think it means that you should be permitted to go anywhere and do whatever you want to do. That's not really trust. However, if you make good decisions and show that you keep your word and follow the guidelines set by your parent or guardian, you prove that you can be trusted.



Good Relationship and Communication Skills

Good communication helps prevent misunderstandings and involves both listening and talking. Sometimes people make the mistake of talking too much and listening too little.

All families have disagreements from time to time. There may be times when you feel that others in your family do not understand you. You may disagree with the way a family member does something. One of the best ways to maintain understanding in a family is to listen to each other. When people listen, they learn to respect the opinions of others, to cooperate to meet each other's needs, and to be sensitive and responsive to others. As a result, disagreements can be resolved. Listening is the beginning of understanding.

People usually are better at communicating their thoughts rather than their feelings. Communicating feelings helps family members better understand one another as opposed to using methods such as blaming, shouting, denying, bottling feelings inside, or even physical abuse. Learning how to communicate feelings takes work and practice.

A good way to improve family communication is to send clear messages. "You" messages can put down or make the other person feel guilty. Such statements involve blaming others. "I" messages accept responsibility and tell what you are thinking or feeling without blaming or offending the other person. Here are some examples.

Instead of Saying This	Say This
"You are the meanest person in the world!"	"I really feel angry with you because you won't let me go out tonight."
"Will you shut up?"	"When you tap on the table with your fork, it makes me mad because it's noisy and I can't concentrate on my homework."
"You never ask if you can use my bike; you think it's OK to ride my bike without my permission!"	"When you take my bike without asking, I feel angry."

Here are some roadblocks to good communication.

- **Criticizing.** No one likes ridicule, sarcasm, or negative comments. These hurt and put down a person.
- **Judging.** Quick judgments cause tension and close communication channels.
- **Labeling.** Assigning negative labels such as *lazy*, *sloppy*, *slow*, *mean*, and *stupid* to someone is hurtful. Sometimes people begin to live up to those labels.



When communication is good, people say what they mean to say. There are no hidden meanings to guess or worry about. Unclear communication creates insecurity.

Shared Roles and Responsibilities

Think of all the responsibilities involved in running a home and raising a family. Managing a home is a lot of work. Doing your share in the family will help make things run more smoothly. It is also a good way for you to prepare for the future and the responsibilities that will be required of you as an adult. A good way to show your responsibility and commitment to your family is to do your chores without complaining or being asked. When you carry out these responsibilities, you are letting the family members know that you love them and that they can depend on you.

As you depend on your family members, they also will depend on you. This is called interdependence.

Cooperation and Interdependence

The more each family member cooperates by participating in the management of the home, the more smoothly things will go. Think about some of your own responsibilities and how you might help other family members with their chores. Here is a list of suggested duties. You might already be doing some of these. See if you can add other ideas to the list.

Your Room

- Make your bed.
- Hang up your clothes.
- Put all your belongings away.
- Clean the floor.
- Keep all surface areas clean and neat.



Family Meals

- Set and clear the table.
- Help prepare the meal.
- Help with meal planning and food shopping.
- Carry in the grocery bags and put the groceries away.
- Wash, dry, and put away the dishes.
- Sweep the floor after meals.

General Chores

- Take out the trash or recycling.
- Wash the family vehicle.
- Help with simple home repairs.
- Clean the bathroom.
- Dust and vacuum.
- Mop the floors.
- Help younger brothers and sisters or elderly relatives.
- Help care for family pets.

**Laundry**

- Wash, fold, and put away the laundry.
- Iron your clothes.
- Make simple clothing repairs such as sewing on buttons.



Yard Work

- Clean up the yard.
- Mow the lawn and trim shrubs.
- Shovel snow.
- Plant and care for a family garden.
- Water plants (indoors and outside) and the lawn.
- Paint when needed.

Use this sample home duties chart to create your own. Most of these tasks need to be done every day.

Home Duties Chart							
Home Duties	Day Completed						
	S	M	T	W	TH	F	S
1. Your Room							
• Make your bed.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
• Hang up clothes.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
• Put belongings away.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2. Family Meals							
• Set and clear the table.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
• Put away the dishes.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
3. General Chores							
• Take out the trash.*		X			X		
• Clean the bathroom.*			X	X			X
• Feed the family pets.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4. Laundry							
• Fold and put away laundry.*	X			X			
• Iron your clothes.*	X			X			
5. Yard Work							
• Mow and trim the lawn.					X		
• Water plants.*		X			X		
*Denotes a chore that should be done as needed or at least once a week.							

SPECIAL PROJECTS FOR YOU

In addition to your regular duties, you can do many other things around the home that would benefit your family. Take some time to think about what projects need to be done and which ones you could do. You might ask other family members to give you some suggestions. See how many other items you can add to the list shown here, such as the project you have outlined for requirement 4.

- Build or create new storage areas for your room.
- Organize the clothes in your closets and drawers.
- Paint your room or another room in the house.
- Prepare a family meal on your own.
- Clean and organize a kitchen cupboard.
- Wipe down the stove or refrigerator.



Go through all your clothes and belongings, and fill a box with items that you no longer need. Donate them to charity.



Take down the window treatments and wash the windows.



Give the family pet a brush.

- Clean the garage, attic, or basement.
- Give the family pet a bath.
- Do the laundry for another family member.
- Assist other family members by helping them do their chores or providing some special help if needed.
- Create a home video or digital scrapbook of family events.
- Teach a family member how to use the computer and the internet (with your parent or guardian's permission).
- Help a younger brother or sister with homework.
- Read a story to a younger sibling.

Time Spent Together

As part of the Scout Oath, you pledge “to help other people at all times.” There are many projects you can do to help others, but there are lots of projects you and your family can do together.

Working on requirement 5 is an excellent opportunity for your family to work together on a special project. It can be a service project for someone else or a project that can benefit your family. To get ideas for a project, think about activities you like to do with your family and some of the things that your family needs done. Select a project that will involve as many family members as possible and that is fun and enjoyable. There might even be some activities that you can do together that may help the members of your community.



Many schools promote *service learning* to help students become more aware of the many benefits of helping others. It is a wonderful feeling to know that you have provided help to others, such as elderly or disabled people. Thoughtful acts of service can be fun and will not only strengthen your family but will also provide much needed help to your neighborhood, community, state, or even the nation.

You may want to do some service activities on your own at another time. This also might inspire you to earn one of the citizenship merit badges.

Before you decide on and carry out your project, you will need the approval of your parents or guardians and your merit badge counselor.

Here are some suggestions for family projects.

- Create a scrapbook or video of your family's history. Learn about your family roots. (This may spark your interest in the Genealogy merit badge.) Include family customs and traditions. Interview elderly family members so they may share their memories of earlier years. Be sure to record this information.
- Can, preserve, or freeze fruits and vegetables.
- Prepare a week's worth of meals together to freeze for future use.
- Plan, prepare, and conduct a family reunion or party for a special event.
- Plan and conduct a garage sale.
- Start a new family tradition. Here are some ideas.
 - Have a regular family night once a week. You can even vary the theme.
 - Celebrate family birthdays in special ways.
 - Plant a tree to commemorate the birth of each new family member or those whom you have lost.
 - Make a list of thoughtful gestures that can be done for the family. Have each family member choose one every Sunday and do it during the week.



Do home repairs for elderly people in your neighborhood or community.

Your family might decide on a project that will benefit the community.

- Plan, cook, and deliver a meal to a person who is confined at home.
- Bake items for a bake sale that benefits a local senior citizens group.
- Spruce up a community center by painting, cleaning, doing yard work, etc.

- Help out at a food bank by stocking shelves, making deliveries, assembling food baskets, or conducting food or clothing drives.
- Assist with a community beautification project such as picking up trash, raking leaves, planting a garden, or creating a bike path.
- Run a bike-repair clinic for children or senior citizens in your community.
- Assist at a local animal shelter.
- Clean and deliver toys to needy children.
- Plan a program for people in long-term care facilities.
- Help local citizens put up flags for display.
- Volunteer at an ethnic community festival to learn about a culture different from your own.

PLANNING

Be sure you know the objective or goal of your project.

- Think about what needs to be done. Do you want to do a project that will benefit your family? Your neighborhood? Your community? Your state or the nation? To choose a project, you may need to ask people or read about current issues in the newspaper.
- Decide what you will do, why you are doing it, and who will benefit.
- Be sure that it is OK to do your project before you begin. You may need to get permission from the group or agency you intend to help. Some groups have specific rules for anyone who wants to volunteer their services.
- Be sure you have all the supplies you will need.

PERFORMING THE SERVICE

Before you begin, answer the following questions.

- What activity will you do?
- How will you do it?
- Who will do what?
- When will it be done?

REFLECT ON WHAT YOU HAVE ACCOMPLISHED

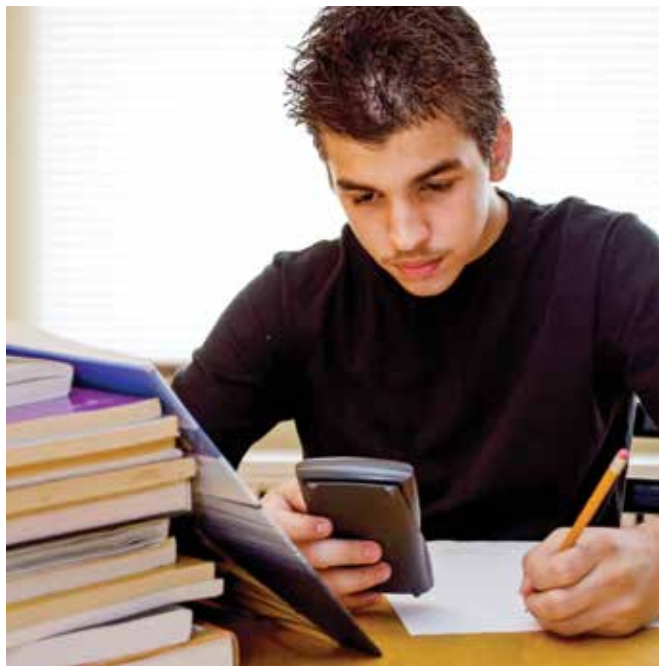
Afterward, think about your project and what you have achieved.

- What did you accomplish?
- How did doing this make you and your family feel?
- What did it do to make your family feel closer?
- What did this mean for the group that benefited from your project?
- What could you do in the future?
- How might you improve the project?
- How has doing this project changed the way you feel about helping others?



Good Management Skills

Effectively managing a family requires balancing time and money. It means taking the time to do what needs to be done so that the family will have time to do fun things together, too. It means making responsible financial decisions that do not put the family at risk.



TIME MANAGEMENT

You may have heard the saying “A family that plays together, stays together.” Well, in order to have time to play and relax, families need to plan and use their time wisely. Setting goals and priorities will help your family stay on track.

Say that your family is thinking about buying a new car. It’s Saturday, and you, your dad and stepmom, and your sister want to see the auto show in town. The family van needs to be washed. If all of you pitch in, the chore will take far less time. Best of all, you will have plenty of time left to see the auto

Things to Do Today

1. Do homework right after school.
2. Pack football gear.
3. Grab some grub.
4. Head to the field for the game.
5. Beat the Cougars!

Saturday

1. Do chores.
2. Call Brad.
3. Hang out at the mall.
4. Call Grandma —

show. Solving time problems takes a little planning and some cooperation, but it pays off in the long run.

Here are some ways you can manage your time more wisely.

- Reward yourself for accomplishments along the way, like enjoying a juicy apple for a snack after your homework is done.
- Schedule some relaxation time each day; everyone needs some downtime. Be sure to communicate this to your parent so that you are not relaxing or taking a break when he or she thinks you should be working.
- Schedule “emergency” time for activities that take longer than expected or for unanticipated matters.

- Create a to-do list and check off

each item as you complete it so that you can see your progress.

Stop and ask yourself, “What is the best use of my time right now?”

- Try to schedule the most difficult tasks at a time when you are the most productive, such as in the morning if you are a morning person.
- Make sure you get enough sleep. Studies show that teenagers need eight to nine hours of sleep each night.
- Be flexible, and make adjustments if necessary.
- Ask for help or instructions if you need them.
- Eliminate low-priority items from your to-do list.
- Determine important priorities. Be prepared to say no—to yourself, to family, to friends—to things that might interfere with your schoolwork.

MONEY MANAGEMENT

“Take care of the pennies and the dollars will take care of themselves.” This old saying suggests that doing without little things now can help you save for bigger, more important things later on. In other words, do not waste money on items you do not really need.

You may earn money for mowing lawns or pet-sitting, or you may receive an allowance. This is your *income*, the money available for your use. Regardless of where your money comes from, it is still important to know how to handle it wisely.

Record your spending patterns for a few weeks to find out where your money goes. You may contribute money to family expenses or charity, or be expected to help pay for your clothing, entertainment, or school supplies. These are your expenses. Some expenses are *fixed*, that is, the amount you need to spend on them stays the same from month to month. Examples of fixed expenses are what you pay for school lunches, transportation, and school activity fees. Other expenses are *flexible*, which means they vary. Some examples of flexible expenses are purchases of computer games and school supplies.



If you have ever saved for something expensive that you really wanted, you know how rewarding it can feel.

Here are some money-management tips.

- **Develop a budget.** A *budget* is a plan for spending and saving the money you have available. It helps you prioritize what you need and want.
- **Limit impulse purchases.** For example, suppose you are at a concert and everyone is buying T-shirts. You might want to buy one, too, but if the shirts are overpriced and you already have a drawer full of T-shirts, buying it would be a waste of money. Don't feel the need to purchase a game just because your friends are buying games, too.
- **Avoid shopping when you are under the influence of a strong emotion.** Some people use shopping as a form of therapy when they are angry, hurt, or disappointed. Buying yourself something is not going to solve the problem.
- **Stay within your budget limits.** If you go over your budget, you will need to remember to earn more and spend less.

Money is important, but it is not the most important thing in life. Some of the more important things include your family, friends, and faith.



The Family Meeting

It is important that family members talk and listen to one another. With today's hectic schedules, families often do not take the time needed for this. Scheduling a family meeting on a regular basis is a good way to make sure this happens. It also is a good way to handle small concerns while they are still manageable.

Guidelines

Include in the meeting as many family members who live in the household as possible. In some instances, family members who live elsewhere, such as married siblings or grandparents, might also be invited to attend if their input is relevant to the current discussion. Some families might decide that certain topics are not suitable for all family members to be present. Each family will have its own comfort level. For example, when speaking about the growing-up process or family finances, some families may decide to limit who is present for that discussion.

Set a day, time, and place in advance. This may vary from week to week depending on the family's other obligations, but it works best if the day and time remain the same. Once a week is a good start. Some issues may take more than one meeting to resolve.

One person should lead the discussion. The choice of who leads may rotate among all members who are old enough. Another person should be responsible for keeping a written or taped record of the proceedings. This task may also be rotated.

To stay on track during your family meeting, develop an *agenda*, which is determined by what is happening in the family. Any aspects of family life are open for discussion. It also is a good idea to review the issues and accomplishments from the previous meeting. This task can be rotated among family members.

Set aside a specific time so that your family can discuss family life, current issues, and ongoing events (both happy and unpleasant), and share in decision-making.

Ground Rules

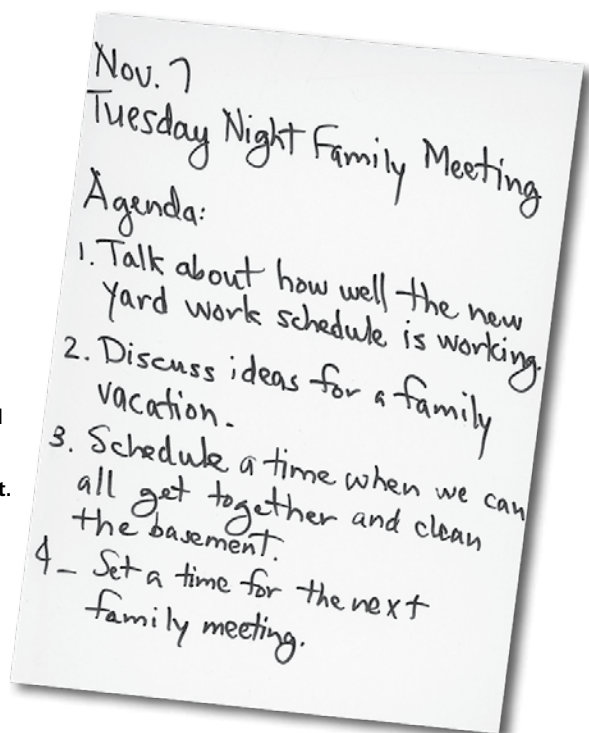
Use a drop box for current issues and hot topics. Talk about any critical items first, then take turns drawing for the other topics to be discussed that week.

The topics should be about situations, not individuals. For example, phrasing a question as, "How can we make sure to get the trash out before the garbage truck comes?" rather than "How can we get Brent to take out the trash?" will help prevent anger and hurt feelings. Avoid bringing up old hurts or disagreements or turning the meeting into a gripe session.

Family members must listen without interrupting. Having family members hold up a card or raise their hand when they wish to speak may be useful. Everyone must be treated with respect and must avoid making criticisms or judgments.

It is fine to discuss complaints, but the person raising the issue should try to offer a suggestion for a solution. Having a family suggestion box with ideas can be helpful.

Posting an agenda that can be modified if necessary is a good idea. Having this agenda in a visible place also helps family members know what to expect.



The Problem-Solving Process

Identify the problem. Be sure that everyone understands exactly what the issue is and the feelings that it evokes. Be sure to put the issue into words.

Identify options. Come up with different ways the problem might be solved. All family members can generate ideas. Use a suggestion box if you have one.

Evaluate options. Decide on the strengths and weaknesses of each idea. Consider whether a suggestion is realistic, whether it solves the main problem, and whether family members are happy with this solution. For each option, determine the possible consequences.

Choose the best option. The right choice may become very clear as you review and evaluate the options. You may need to use a process of elimination to choose the most suitable option.

Make a plan. Decide on steps that need to be taken to put the chosen option into action. Consider who needs to do what and what resources are needed. It also is a good idea to put your plan in writing.



Conflict Resolution

You can use the problem-solving process to successfully resolve a conflict. Bring the issue out into the open as soon as possible. Keep emotions under control, and make sure everyone sticks to the issue and avoids blaming, name-calling, and making accusations.

Many topics may be addressed in a family meeting. For the purpose of earning the Family Life merit badge, here are the necessary topics of discussion for your family meeting. These are usually of concern to every family, but you may add to this list with other topics important to your family.

- The dangers of drugs and substance abuse (how to avoid using drugs, recognizing signs of substance abuse)
- Understanding the growing-up process, how the body changes, and making responsible decisions concerning sex
- How helping with chores contributes to your role in the family
- Personal and family finances
- Crises within the family (various types)
- Whom might the family turn to in such crisis situations to provide additional support
- The effect of technology on your family (the impact of computer and email use; mobile phones; the advantages, disadvantages, and abuse of technology)
- The importance of showing good etiquette and manners to your family and all others



Before the close of the meeting, have each person state at least one good thing that is happening within the family. End the meeting by reviewing the discussion and the tasks at hand.



Putting yourself in someone else's place is called *empathy*.

Zoom Family Meetings

Zoom and other video-conference technology enabled many families to meet together remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Aside from the pandemic, these platforms could be helpful for families separated by long distances, such as a parent serving in the military or on an extended business trip, an older sibling in college, etc.

Video conferencing also creates an opportunity to reunite with more of your extended family, making it easy to reconnect with aunts, uncles and cousins. The biggest winner could be a lonely grandparent who is craving interaction with all of his or her loved ones. The high point of their week could be the chance to hear about some new great Scouting adventure from their grandchild.

Having regularly scheduled family meetings gives all family members an opportunity to discuss their concerns, share news, and make suggestions.

Many leadership skills you will learn and practice in the family meeting, such as conflict resolution and problem-solving, will serve you in other situations throughout your life.



Choose your friends carefully. Practice refusal skills. Do not apologize for saying *no* and suggesting other activities. If your friends are not Scouts, maybe they would benefit from joining Scouts BSA.

The Dangers of Drugs and Substance Abuse

Peer pressure can be a big influence in your life. Everyone wants to be liked and accepted by friends, but you should be cautious about the price you could pay for popularity. Some people may think that they can become popular by trying cigarettes, alcohol, or drugs. Doing so will not make you popular, build your confidence, or solve problems. What these things *will* do is harm your mind and body.

Abusing substances is not cool. It does not make you popular or adult, and it hurts the people who love you. If your friends want you to use drugs, then find new friends who care about what happens to you. There are better ways to have fun.

Harmful substances can affect your mood, concentration, and memory. They also can

- Interfere with learning and impair your performance in school.
- Cause behavior problems, mood changes, and sleep disturbances.
- Slow you down and impair your ability to think clearly and make sound decisions.
- Interrupt healthy physical development and limit your athletic abilities.
- Lead to the physical and emotional abuse of other family members.

Teens consume and abuse alcohol more than any other drug. Alcohol is a drug—a dangerous one—and its use by minors is illegal.



Drugs and alcohol affect different people in different ways. Having a drink may make one person happy and energetic or funny, while another person may become verbally abusive or physically aggressive. It is easy to identify a heroin addict or a drunken driver as someone with a substance-abuse problem, but substance abuse is not always so extreme. As a matter of fact, it often is very subtle.

Here are some signs to help you recognize a substance abuser.

Smokers can find it extremely difficult to stop. Tobacco contains nicotine, a highly addictive drug. Many smokers who want to break their addiction must try repeatedly—and suffer the pains of withdrawal each time—before they can stop for good.

- Physical changes such as dilated pupils, flushed skin, and a tired, sloppy, or disheveled appearance
- Behavioral changes such as moodiness, irritability, unreasonable bursts of temper, or wanting to be alone much of the time
- A change in friends
- A change in study habits often accompanied by falling grades or truancy
- Irregular eating habits
- Memory lapses and blackouts
- Evidence of drug paraphernalia
- Loss of interest in activities previously enjoyed
- Changes in sleep patterns

If someone you know is using drugs, talk to a respected adult to get help. There are many resources available to help with these kinds of situations. Al-Anon, for example, helps those who are dealing with an alcoholic family member or friend.

Tobacco: It's Poison

Cigarettes can contain dozens of dangerous and cancer-causing chemicals, including arsenic (used in pesticides and weed killers), benzene (a toxic solvent), formaldehyde (used to embalm corpses), and polonium 210 (a highly radioactive element). The blood carries the poisons from smoking to all parts of the body. These poisons damage internal organs from the brain to the bladder.

Scientists now know that smoking causes cancers of the mouth, the larynx (voice box), the lungs, and the kidneys. It can also cause a type of leukemia—a cancer of the blood. You might have heard that smoking causes heart disease, but did you know that it raises the risk for stroke and damages the body's ability to fight infection? Smokers are at high risk of dying from any number of tobacco-related diseases.

Secondhand smoke is exhaled by smokers or given off by burning tobacco and is inhaled by people nearby. It contains dangerously high levels of many of the poisons and cancer-causing chemicals found in cigarettes, including ammonia and carbon monoxide. Breathing in other people's smoke can cause lung cancer and heart disease. Secondhand smoke is especially hazardous for babies and young children. It increases their risk of asthma, chest infections, and even sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)—the death of an apparently healthy baby, usually while the child is sleeping. If there are smokers in your family, encourage them to stop, for their own sake and for the health of other family members.

Using e-cigs, or *vaping*, can cause severe and life-threatening diseases. As of February 2020, there have been 2,758 cases with 64 confirmed deaths linked to vaping.

What is Bad About Vaping?

E-cigarettes are electronic devices that simulate tobacco smoking. Instead of smoke, the user inhales a chemical vapor. This is often called “vaping.” This vapor can contain chemicals such as propylene glycol, glycerin, nicotine, and other toxicants and carcinogens.

Both the American Heart Association and the Mayo Clinic have found nicotine is a dangerous and highly addictive chemical. It can cause an increase in blood pressure, heart rate, flow of blood to the heart, and a narrowing of the arteries (vessels that carry blood). Nicotine might also contribute to the hardening of the arterial walls, which can lead to a heart attack.

Use of e-cigarettes can lead to tobacco smoking and be more addictive than tobacco. Researchers have found that using e-cigarettes may lead to inflammation of the lungs. Vaping-associated lung injury (VALI) describes various diseases from the use of e-cigs that can be severe and life-threatening.

How Bad is Marijuana?

Another substance is marijuana (“weed” or “pot”). It is a psychoactive drug that comes from the cannabis plant. Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is the main psychoactive component of cannabis. It can be consumed by smoking, vaping or eating.

Cannabis is mostly used recreationally or as a medicine, although it might also be used for spiritual purposes. It is the most commonly used illegal drug in the world. Even in areas where it is use has been legalized, use by minors is still illegal.

The American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry notes that this substance is especially harmful to children and teenagers for its adverse effects to the developing brain.



Family Matters

All families have ups and downs, but strong families know the importance of sticking together—especially during the tough times. Family members need to learn how to support one another and keep family goals in mind.

Crises Within the Family

Crises are experiences or events that cause major changes in someone's life and may leave the persons affected unable to function normally. Even if just one person is directly affected, a crisis can affect all members of the family. The crisis may cause additional stress when

- There are a number of other stressful events occurring at the same time.
- A number of family members are involved in the crisis.
- The family has difficulties identifying, relating to, and handling the event.
- The resources available to the family for dealing with the crisis are limited or not easily accessible.

Crises can affect a family adversely and often are unexpected. It is important to understand the situation and help your family seek solutions. The family meeting and problem-solving process might be very useful at this time. A Scout can also be useful in these situations by knowing where to get help or find support from family, friends, or community resources.

Examples of crises can include a death, a damaging storm, or a burglary. Other stressful events that can affect an entire family include moving to a new house or state, the loss of a parent's job, or unexpected events such as a divorce or serious illness.

Some resources that may be useful in dealing with a family crisis would include therapists, psychologists, and family counselors.

Some young people spend more time playing computer games than taking part in outdoor or more active forms of recreation. Another negative development is the temptation to investigate forbidden web-sites or become acquainted with unprincipled or dangerous people.

The Effect of Technology on Your Family

A unique cause of stress in today's family is the impact of technology. Technology can help make life easier. For example, you might use the family computer for schoolwork or to keep in touch with friends and relatives. Your grandparents may be thrilled to get emails from you on a consistent basis. But bear in mind that spending a lot of time on the computer can take time away from other important activities.



Cell Phone Dos and Don'ts

If you have a cell phone, use it wisely and respectfully. Do not use the phone while you are driving, and *never* text while driving. Keep your mind on the road and your hands on the steering wheel. Car crashes are the leading cause of death among American teens, and you don't want to contribute to that statistic.

When you are out shopping or dining in a restaurant, be considerate of others. Turn off your cell phone, or set it to silent or vibrate mode. When you are talking or eating with others, don't interrupt the conversation or the meal by answering your phone.

If you must use your phone in a public place, respect other people's personal space and your own privacy. Keep the conversation quiet and short. If you can, step away from others.

At school, follow the rules for cell phones. You may be permitted to use a cell phone during breaks and after school, but never during class. As the rules direct, turn off your phone or set it to silent or vibrate only. Be responsible when using your cell phone for taking photos. Be sure you have the person's permission.

Keeping these guidelines in mind will help you avoid some of the pitfalls of technology.

It is disruptive and discourteous to talk on the phone while the family is watching TV. If an incoming call is not an emergency, wait and deal with it later.

Etiquette and Good Manners

Good manners matter, and the best place to practice basic courtesies is at home. Wherever you are, treat others as you would like to be treated, and follow these tips to help keep the peace. Remember, *a Scout is courteous*.

- Say “please” and “thank you.” Show your appreciation for others.
- Listen quietly and thoughtfully to others. Do not interrupt while someone is speaking.
- Avoid raised voices, name-calling, and back talk.
- Be kind. Teasing goes too far when it causes pain or embarrassment. Bullying is *never* acceptable.
- Think before you speak. If you are about to say something hurtful, sarcastic, or smart-mouthed, stop and consider: How do you feel when someone speaks to you that way?
- If you share a bedroom, share the responsibility of keeping it neat and clean.
- If someone's door is closed, knock and wait for permission before entering.
- Wash your hands before eating. At the table, don't burp, slurp, or grab. Ask for an item to be passed to you; don't stretch across other people to reach for it. Chew with your mouth closed.

Being courteous makes life more pleasant—both in families and in the larger community. Keep in mind that people are more likely to want to be around and work with others who are courteous.

Respect differences. Do not belittle people because of their looks, abilities, achievements, opinions, or personal tastes and styles.

- Don't spend more than your fair share of time in the bathroom. Clean up after yourself by doing things such as hanging up your towels and putting away your dirty clothes where they belong.
- Don't play your music so loudly that it disturbs others.
- When you say "I'm sorry," be sincere. Mean it.

When you follow the basic rules of etiquette and good manners, you cut down on daily irritations and help to avoid hurt feelings. You also learn how to talk in a respectful and confident way. Good social skills will serve you well throughout your life.

Etiquette Outside the Home

Good manners are not complicated; kindness and common sense will see you through most situations. However, in any confusing situation, let your good intentions be known. Show your good will and, if you are not sure how to behave, ask for help. People will appreciate your thoughtful efforts to be courteous.

- When you meet someone, it is always appropriate to smile and say hello.
- If you meet someone from a foreign country, find out how the person prefers to be addressed. Americans tend to call everybody by their first name, but in many cultures such casualness is offensive. Show respect by using the person's title (*Mr.*, *Mrs.*, *Dr.*, etc.) and last name.
- Be hands-off—don't touch until you know what is expected or acceptable. In some cultures, people greet each other or show affection publicly with a hug or a kiss. Other traditions may forbid touching. Similarly, ask before you touch or move a person's wheelchair, cane, or other personal equipment. If a person with a disability appears to need help, offer before you give it. If the person accepts your offer of help, wait for instructions or ask how you can help.
- If the person offers a preferred pronoun, be sure to use it when interacting with them.

These few examples cannot cover every situation you may encounter. But they can help you see why it is always good to follow the Scout Law: *A Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent.*

Etiquette Around the Globe

If you will be traveling to another country, you may want to research beforehand what is considered polite behavior there. In some cultures, touching someone on the head, showing the sole of your foot or shoe, and eating with your left hand are considered unlucky, disrespectful, or unclean. Pointing with your finger is considered rude nearly everywhere. Various hand signs or signals may be acceptable in some countries and forbidden in others.

Youth and Gambling

Problem gambling can result in increased delinquency, poor academic performance, higher rates of truancy and dropout, disrupted relationships, even drug and alcohol abuse.

Saving and Avoiding Debt

One of the most important lessons to learn early about managing money is how much is OK to borrow when making a big purchase such as a car, house, business start-up or a college education. Borrowing too much will have serious consequences later when you try to provide financial security for your own family. Whenever you borrow money from the bank, have a clear idea of how you are going to pay it back.

Avoid having a mountain of debt after you leave home. Look for ways to earn money with part-time jobs, saving a portion of your earnings. You might consider working for a year or two before starting college. In some cases, your parents and extended family might be able to provide financial assistance. Start early to prepare to earn scholarships and government grants (money for college that does not require repayment).

Have your parent or guardian fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) each year for federal student aid. Many non-federal scholarships also require this.

The National Eagle Scout Association and many other organizations award scholarships every year to Eagle Scouts who have excelled in school, Scouting activities, and community service, and who demonstrate they understand the fundamentals of service to community and service to Scouting.

Respect property, personal space, and privacy. Ask before borrowing anything that belongs to a family member.

Return the item in the same or better condition. Stay out of backpacks, wallets, mail, diaries, dresser drawers, or anyplace else that is the personal domain of a family member.



Understanding the Growing-Up Process

During this time of your life, your body will change more rapidly than it ever will again. This stage of life, between childhood and adulthood, is called *adolescence*. It is an exciting time, yet it can be frustrating, too. One minute someone may tell you that you are too old to do something, and the next minute they may say that you are too young for something else.

This time of your life is called *puberty*. Your *hormones* (chemical substances in your body that control growth, development, and reproduction) reach a very high level. This phase will start at different times for each person, and, on average, will last about three years. At times you may sometimes feel like you are on an emotional roller coaster. Your feelings will vary from highs to lows within minutes. Don't worry. This is a normal part of growing up.

You also will experience intellectual changes. You will learn how to solve more complex problems, face more choices, and make more difficult decisions. The choices that you make are important because they will lead to actions that affect your life and the lives of other family members. With every choice you make there is a consequence. Using the problem-solving process can help you make wise decisions.



Suppose you want to decide whether to try out for the high school swim team. Here is how you could use the problem-solving process to help you make a decision.

Identify the problem. Should I try out for the swim team?

Identify the options. I could try out for the team. I could not try out for the team.

Evaluate the options. In this case, it is helpful to make a list of pros and cons, also known as *consequences*.

Pros

- I would get exercise on a regular basis.
- It would be fun.
- I would be part of a team and learn the value of teamwork.
- I would win the respect and admiration of my family and friends.
- I probably would make new friends.
- It would improve my self-discipline.
- It would be an activity I could list on college applications.

Cons

- It would be an additional expense for my family.
- I would have less time for family and friends.
- I would have less time for homework and other school activities.
- I would have less time for household chores.
- I might get injured.
- There could be a lot of pressure to perform well.
- I might feel embarrassed if I do not perform well.
- I would be disappointed if I did not make the team.

Choose the best option. As you evaluate the pros and cons, the right choice probably will become clear.

Make a plan. If you choose to try out for the swim team, decide which steps you need to take and what resources are needed to participate. Put this plan in writing and share it with your family.

Considering all the consequences, options, pros, and cons helps you see the big picture. It gives you a good foundation for making wise decisions.

Friendships

During this time in your life, you also will change and grow socially. Friendships are important and will enrich your life. A good friend is one who accepts you for who you are and seems to bring out the best in you.



Making new friends and getting along as part of a group is a wonderful experience. Some of these friendships will last a lifetime.

This is a time in your life when you will begin to consider dating. One of the first steps in dating is going out together in groups. This can be a lot of fun and helps build an understanding of how to get along better with others and to develop social skills. Do not let anyone pressure you into being paired off with someone. There will be plenty of time for this when you are ready.

Dating someone might help you

- Understand different points of view.
- Develop social skills and friendships.
- Develop the positive aspects of your personality.
- Identify those traits you would like in your future spouse.



Abstinence & Responsible Sexual Behavior

These days, sexual situations appear on television and in the movies, on the internet, in music, and in advertising. These messages could lead you to believe that the decision to engage in sexual activities is no more important or serious than deciding what to wear. This could not be further from the truth.

Successful relationships are based upon foundations of trust and devotion to one another. Sexual activity can lead to a relationship based upon physical attraction and not the deeper feelings that can bring fulfilling happiness.

As you grow older, you will look back on decisions you made and activities you engaged in during your lifetime. Strive to make decisions you will always be proud of.







Your Future Family

Many factors help couples determine their readiness for marriage and family life. Some of these factors are listed below, but one of the most important things to remember is that marriage is a long-term commitment. Strong marriages form a solid foundation for a strong family.

The ideal situation is to find someone with whom you agree on important issues such as religion and ethics.

Other factors to consider:

- **Age**
- **Social experience**
- **Emotional maturity**
- **Financial security**
- **Education**
- **Long-term goals**



Issues to Deal With in Advance

Insisting on doing things the way your family always did them is bound to cause problems. As you establish your family and set your own pattern as a married couple, you will need to compromise. Imagine two people trying to build a house together with two different sets of blueprints. In a marriage you will need to formulate a plan that you create together as a team.



Trying to make someone change after marriage does not work. If there are things that irritate you about the person you want to marry, these sources of irritation may deepen after you are married. Do not marry someone with the idea that this person will change later. It is not likely to happen.

You must study, practice, and take a test before you can receive a driver's license. Unfortunately, the same does not apply to getting married and having children—yet these are two of the most important things you will ever accomplish. Marriage and parenting are not easy. There are challenges, but there are great rewards.

It is important to talk openly and honestly before marriage. Waiting until you are married to bring up issues, such as not wanting to have children or wanting to move to another state, may leave you wondering why you married this particular person. People often are on their best behavior when dating. Some people want to avoid conflicts, so they do not speak their minds. This is not being totally honest. It is better to be realistic and get important issues out in the open before you commit to marriage.



A good way to help prepare for your future role as a parent is to babysit young children. Check with your city or local American Red Cross for classes on babysitting.

Parenting

Being a parent is one of the most exciting things you will ever do. You will have joys, laughter, and sometimes worry and sadness. All this is part of the important role you will play in helping to shape another person's life.

Having children is a lifelong responsibility. Children are wonderful and can make life more rewarding. For example, the first time your child smiles at you or has his or her first day of school, you will feel great pleasure. By the same token, children are hard work. They are your responsibility every day, all day. If you are tired, sick, in a bad mood, or out of money, they will still need you to love them and take care of their needs. The factors that help determine readiness for parenting are similar to those for marriage. In addition, you and your spouse will need to

- Want a child.
- Be in good health.
- Be emotionally mature.
- Be partners in a strong marriage.
- Have enough time, space, and money to raise a child.

Addressing all these factors will give you both a strong foundation for starting a family.

Research shows that children with involved fathers do much better in life. They have better self-esteem and fewer problems in school. They also are less likely to engage in substance abuse, crime, and violence.

Being an Effective Parent

As a parent, you will play an important role in your child's life. You will be your child's role model. You will be the example for your child of what parents are like.

To be an effective parent, you must have a good relationship with your spouse, be ready to parent, and really want to have children. You will need to be involved in your child's life and concerned with his or her physical, emotional, social, and moral well-being.

Responsibilities of Parenthood

There are many responsibilities that you will need to share with your spouse when you become a parent. Learning about them will better prepare you for this important role. See if you can think of other things to add to this list.

Taking care of physical needs. Children need food, clothing, and shelter. As a parent you will need to make sure that your children have enough nutritious, properly prepared food. For example, hamburger that is not cooked thoroughly may pose an extreme danger to young children. You also will need to be sure that your children's clothing is adequate for your climate.

Providing love and emotional support. Your children will need to know your love for them is unconditional. You should never say anything like, "If you don't behave, I won't love you anymore." There are ways to discipline children without threatening to withdraw your love. Children need to know that you always love them even if you do not like their behavior.

Offering guidance and discipline.

Every child needs guidance and discipline. Children want and need limits to help make them feel safe and secure. Think of it as letting a child play in a backyard with a fence. The child can play freely in the yard but it is protected by the fence. When you set limits for your children, you are protecting them and giving them freedom at the same time. It will be up to you as a parent to guide your children by setting limits and teaching them right from wrong.



Providing protection. It will be your role as a parent or guardian to be sure that your children are safe and protected from dangerous situations. You must know where they are at all times and that they will be safe in your home, car, and other places where they are under your care.

Providing economic support. As a parent or guardian, you will be responsible for the financial support of your children. Children cost money—lots of it. Just think of how much your parents paid for your last pair of sneakers or your music lessons. Parents sometimes have to give up things they want to provide for their children's needs.

Taking care of health-care needs. It will be important that you can assure the health of each family member with adequate medical insurance and periodic visits to the doctor. You also will need to make sure your home provides a sanitary and healthful environment.

Sharing resources such as time, talent, and ideas.

Your children will need your time and attention. You may find yourself doing everything from helping build cars for a pinewood derby to helping with math homework.

Parents or guardians need to understand, acknowledge, and support their children's feelings. For example, if your child is upset, it is better to say, "I know you are feeling sad right now about your broken toy," as opposed to saying, "Don't cry about such a silly thing."



Teaching independence and responsibility. Just as you are now learning to prepare for the future by sharing household responsibilities, you will someday do the same for your children. You will find that children as young as age 2 or 3 can begin to learn to help around the house. You also will need to let them try things on their own without interfering. This will build their confidence. Can you remember what it was like when you learned to tie your shoes? You probably were happiest when you could try it yourself and learn from your mistakes.

Teaching social skills. You will serve as a role model by teaching children how to get along in society through appropriate behavior. Children need to be taught things such as how to behave around other people, how to develop good manners, and how to treat others with respect. They will follow your example. If you are polite, they will follow your lead. If you are thoughtless and rude, more than likely they will develop the same behavior.

Providing educational and recreational experiences. As a parent or guardian, you will need to provide an environment that will stimulate your child intellectually. This means reading and playing games with your child as well as providing books and educational toys. You also will need to show an interest and become involved in your child's education and recreation. A first step in becoming involved could be to check on the quality of the school your child will attend. Volunteering to help with school-sponsored events and activities is a great way for parents or guardians to begin.



Playing sports with your children, for example, or taking them on vacations or weekend outings are all part of being an effective parent.



Teaching values. Parents or guardians pass beliefs and values that are important to their family on to their children. Think about the beliefs that are important to you that you would want to pass along to your children.

Nurturing spiritual well-being. Children usually receive their religious training and principles to live by through the family's faith-based organization. Involvement in a faith-based organization promotes spiritual well-being and plays a major role in keeping a family strong.

As a parent, you will set the example for how your children's faith is practiced in your family.

Preserving cultural traditions.

Every family passes on those traditions that will help preserve the culture and heritage of the family. For example, as a parent you will probably want to celebrate certain holidays the same way your family did.

Your children will remember more about the time you spent with them than they will about how much money you spent on them.



Which family customs will you want to carry on in your future family?



Family Life Resources

Scouting Literature

American Cultures, American Heritage, Citizenship in the Community, Citizenship in the Nation, Citizenship in the World, Communication, Cooking, Crime Prevention, Disabilities Awareness, Genealogy, and Personal Management merit badge pamphlets

With your parent or guardian's permission, visit Scouting America's official retail site, scoutshop.org, for a complete list of merit badge pamphlets and other helpful Scouting materials and supplies.

Books

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Organizations

American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences

1410 King Street, 2nd Floor
Alexandria, VA 22314
Toll-free telephone: 800-424-8080
aafcs.org

American Red Cross

431 18th Street NW
Washington, DC 20006
Telephone: 800-RED-CROSS
redcross.org

American Red Cross

431 18th Street NW
Washington, DC 20006
Telephone: 202-303-4498
redcross.org

Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America

13241 Woodland Park Road, Suite 100
Herndon, Virginia 20171
Telephone: 703-476-4900
fcclainc.org

National Council on Family Relations

661 LaSalle Street, Suite 200
Saint Paul, MN 55114
Telephone: 888-781-9331
ncfr.org

Other Websites

Bright Horizons Family Solutions

brighthorizons.com/resources

KidsHelpLine

kidshelpline.com.au/

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Dan Bryant — page 13

Daniel Giles — pages 11, 19 (*washing dishes*)

Brian Payne — cover (*boy brushing dog*) and pages 15 (*car washing*), 19 (*dog*), 23

Randy Piland — page 24



