

1. Everyone gets a say.
2. Start by sharing the best thing that happened to you all week.
3. Meetings should be brief, with a brisk and businesslike pace.
4. Go over the week's events with the family calendar on the table.
5. Take turns being the leader.
6. State problems without blaming, then brainstorm together.
7. Take five minutes to discuss big-picture questions, such as "Where should we go for summer vacation? Is it time to get a dog?"
8. End with a fun activity or dessert treat.
9. Keep next week's agenda on the refrigerator so anyone can add to it.
10. Use questions that encourage discussion: "Why do you think it is important to...", "How do you feel when...", etc.
11. Think about key issues you want to discuss beforehand. Do research on topics such as drugs or sexuality, if necessary. Be prepared with written notes to make sure certain issues are covered and to keep the talk on track.
12. Use resource materials. Find a video, book or article that can be used during the huddle to facilitate the discussion and educate all.
13. Remind everyone of the family agreements, such as speaking respectfully, complimenting others, not interrupting others, not making fun of others' ideas, no name-calling, etc.

(Excerpted from *The Book of New Family Traditions*, Meg Cox; also from Familyfirst.net)

