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FAMILY MEETINGS: AGGRAVATING BUT EFFECTIVE

When the kids are little, your house should be a dictatorship, and when they are 17 it should be almost, but not quite, a democracy. The [1-2-3 Magic](#) is a program that doesn't give the kids much say in the discipline. That's the way it should be for the welfare of the children as well as the parents.

Somewhere along the line, however, as the kids get older, you want to begin the evolution toward a more democratic way of conducting business around the house. A good time to start is when the kids are in the primary grades in school. Don't try this when the children are three or four years old, because it will probably just aggravate you and confuse them.



There are several reasons why the Family Meeting is a good idea. As the kids get older—and hopefully more rational—it is more appropriate that they have a bigger voice in the issues that affect them. Kids also will often cooperate better when they have a say in what's going on. And finally, children need this kind of training for a later time when they have their own families.

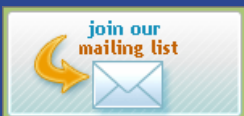
The Family Meeting is a good way to start giving the kids more of a voice in household operations. You can use it to discuss not only discipline, but also such communal issues as laundry, allowances, bedtimes, renting movies, vacations, food, fights, etc.

The meetings will be more democratic, but you will still—if necessary—have the final say. You'll be doing more talking, but only at the meeting itself. The No-Talking rule will still apply when a rule is being enforced.

The Family Meeting can take place as often as you wish: once every week or two is ideal. You can also call special meetings whenever a unique or urgent problem comes up. Kids can request a meeting themselves.

IT'S NOT ALWAYS EASY!

Sitting through these meetings is not always easy; it's a good idea to keep them under an hour so you don't go crazy. Many parents have agreed that the Family Meeting is one of the most aggravating AND effective things you can do with your kids. It sounds contradictory, but if you can get through the process, people do have a greater tendency to follow through with the agreed-upon solutions. It's also nice that everyone has a chance to be heard and to learn some negotiation skills—an excellent preparation for marriage! Learn more: [HOW TO RUN A FAMILY MEETING](#)



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QUICK TIP: ACTIVE LISTENING

You are a **good active listener** if, while your child is talking you are sincerely trying to understand what he is saying.

You are a **bad active listener** if, while your child is talking, you are preparing your rebuttal.

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