

Making Family Home Evening Fun

In this document we have included an introduction to why Family Home Evening is important, general guidelines and tips, ideas for a variety of age groups, and links to online resources. We have also included a pdf file with over 150 full FHE lesson outlines (they even includes refreshment recipes) that used to be available for free from Deseret Book. We hope that this information will inspire you to continue your efforts in holding weekly family home evenings and help you make them more successful, meaningful, fulfilling, and most important, fun!

Why is Family Home Evening Important?

“We cannot afford to neglect this heaven-inspired program. It can bring spiritual growth to each member of the family, helping him or her to withstand the temptations, which are everywhere. The lessons learned in the home are those that last the longest.” - President Thomas S. Monson, *Constant Truths for Changing Times*, General Conference, April 2005.

“Regular participation in family home evening will develop increased personal worth, family unity, love for our fellowmen, and love for our Father in heaven. It is our promise that great blessings will come to all who conscientiously plan and hold weekly family home evenings.” - *Family Home Evening: Happiness through Faith in Jesus Christ* (1976), 3.

General Suggestions to Make Family Home Evening More Successful

- Start and End with a prayer. This invites the Spirit, increases love and teaches your family how to pray. Let little kids say the prayer, this will get them involved and help them practice.
- Learn from the scriptures and the words of the latter-day prophets to help your family live the gospel. Use the children’s version of the scriptures for young children.
- Add Music, such as hymns and Primary songs, to create an atmosphere of love, peace and joy. Make it fun by playing games, acting out scripture stories, and making treats. Keep the atmosphere light and loving
- Be consistent. Monday nights are set aside by the Church for family home evening. If that does not work, find a night that does. Do not worry about the length of your family evening or if it contains a song, lesson, prayer, activity, refreshments, etc. The most important principle is to consistently set aside time to be spent together as a family.
- Add variety. Help a neighbor in need, hold a lesson at the park, or go for a walk as a family. If you are having a hard time coming up with an idea each week, it might help to assign each week of the month a different theme. For example, every first Monday of the month you could discuss missionary work using *Preach My Gospel*, every second Monday of the month you could do a service project, and every third Monday of the month you could do an outing outside the home, and every fourth Monday you could talk about Family History, etc.
- Make sure each member of the family participates in some way, even if it’s small, in planning and executing Family Home Evening. Older children and teenagers can handle big responsibility and toddlers can help pick the song, help make the treat, or go get the scriptures.
- Use part of FHE as a time to go over your calendar for the week and include each family members activities and appointments, this will make everyone feel important and get everyone on the same page about what the week will be like.

FHE Ideas: Ages 0-4

Advice (adapted from the CTR and Sunbeam Primary Manuals)

- This age group has very short attention spans. The lesson should be much shorter than the activity. They also need to move frequently so incorporate lots of movement into the lessons, songs, and activities.
- Children learn well through repetition, so you may want to use the same activity, song, story, or scripture more than once during a lesson or in subsequent lessons.
- Tips for Each Age Group:
 - 0-2 Year Olds – Unless they are sleeping, have them attend FHE with the rest of the family. Just being together as a family watching everyone else is important. They can be involved in simple tasks and activities. If they don't have older siblings play with them on the floor as a family and sing fun songs.
 - 3 Year Olds
 - Appropriate Lesson Topics might include:
 - Recent experiences in the children's lives, such as a new baby in the home or a family outing
 - Special holidays
 - Weather/Observations of Nature/The Creation
 - Social skills such as listening, sharing, using good manners, being kind
 - 4 year Olds
 - Since their experience has been mainly in the home, they talk mostly about home and family. They love lessons and activities that focus on the family.
 - They live completely in the here and now. Yesterday and tomorrow mean little.
 - They like to listen to stories and nursery rhymes.
 - They want to hear favorite stories over and over again without the slightest change. After hearing the story, they like to dramatize the characters.
 - They can learn to pray with a little help.

Outline for General Lesson Structure (adapted from Behold Your Little Ones Nursery Manual)

- Hear about the doctrine.
- See a visual related to the doctrine.
- Sing (or hear a song) about the doctrine.
- Do a physical activity related to the doctrine.
- Verbalize something about the doctrine.

Ideas for Lessons and Activities

- Read a chapter from the Children's Versions of the Scriptures and watch the accompanying video on Lds.org (<https://www.lds.org/media-library/video/animated-scripture-stories-playlists>)
- Point at pictures in the Friend Magazine and talk about them.
- Play a simple card game (we like Whac-A-Mole)
- Fold paper airplanes and have throwing contests
- Work on jumping, hopping, coloring, letters, etc., or whatever skill they are currently learning

FHE Ideas: Ages 5-11

Advice (adapted from the CTR Primary Manuals)

- Tips for Each Age Group
 - 5 year olds
 - Their small-muscle coordination now permits them to paste, cut out pictures, and color predrawn pictures.
 - They are serious when they ask, “What is that for?” or “How does this work?” They want and should receive thoughtful, honest answers, in language and detail that they can understand.
 - They are delighted when you ask them to help with the lesson by holding a picture or something else.
 - They love to hear and tell stories, and they ask for the same story over and over again. Repetition is their main way of learning.
 - They have an attention span from ten to twelve minutes.
 - Since Heavenly Father is very real to them, they are very interested in him and ask many questions about him. They enjoy praying and may be able to pray without help.
 - 6 year olds
 - They enjoy whole body movements, such as climbing trees, performing on playground equipment, or running races.
 - They like games and friendly competition.
 - They still like to hear stories, dramatize them, and pretend. Many like to dress in grown-up clothes.
 - 7 year olds
 - Their attention spans are growing; children this age can complete a project if it interests them, even though it takes from twenty to twenty-five minutes. They still need to have a change in activity in most lessons.
 - They are looking forward to baptism so lessons on this topic are good for them.
 - They can pray alone and often expect an immediate answer to their prayers.
 - 8-11 year olds
 - Tell the scripture accounts in your own words. Try to help the children visualize the events and the people in them. Help the children understand that the people you are talking about really lived and that the events actually happened.
 - They like to dramatize events (such as scripture stories and situations) and dress up.
 - Give the children a simple pretest, such as a true-false or short-answer quiz, before teaching a principle or scripture account. Explain to the class that you want to find out how much they know about the principle or account. Give them the same test after the lesson so they can see what they have learned.
 - Ask questions and give scripture references so they can find answers in the scriptures.
 - Ask questions that cannot be answered with “yes” or “no” but require thought and discussion. Questions that begin with why, how, who, what, when, and where are usually more effective.

Ideas for Lessons and Activities

- Have children talk about their favorite scripture stories.
- Conduct a scripture search by giving the children clues to an important scripture reference they have already marked. Let them work together in pairs or small groups to locate the correct passage of scripture. Invite the children to mark (in their own scriptures) scripture references for future study.
- Together help memorize a scripture or an Article of Faith.
- Make and play your own commandments matching game <http://lets-get-together.com/2014/05/12/50-family-home-evenings-with-little-kiddos/>
- Make a handprint family tree <http://www.goodshomedesign.com/diy-family-handprint-tree/>

FHE Ideas: Ages 12-18

Advice

- This age is ready for more meat. They may not remember many of the activities but there can be a real gospel discussion with depth. There will be moments that the spirit will reinforce the ideas and gospel principles they already know or are being taught at church. Those will be the moments that have an impact.
- Do not make it so complicated that it overwhelms you or likely it will be easier not to do. Keep it simple, there doesn't need to be a dessert to qualify it as a Family Home Evening. Most important is consistency.
- Plan Ahead and Seek Guidance, as much as possible before the Family Home Evening. Ask for direction in the lesson in specific reference to the needs and demands of each child, also ask for the spirit to reach the heart of each child during those lessons.

Ideas from the Family Home Evening Resource Book

- Have a family testimony meeting. Share personal experiences that have helped you grow or increased your testimony. A family needs to hear each other bear their testimonies.
- Provide your teenagers with meaningful opportunities to share in planning home evenings. (This means that his suggestions be given as much careful consideration as any family member's suggestions. It also means that as a parent you may need to be more receptive to trying new ideas for home evenings.)
- Select projects and activities the whole family can take part in. (All children need to learn to serve others, and teenagers can be particularly receptive to the joy of helping others. Teenagers, especially, need worthwhile and active participation in any project or activity. You may need to give them more responsibility than in the past.)
- Let your teenager lead home evening discussion as he wishes; don't expect or try to force him to do it your way.
- Provide opportunities for your teenagers to ask questions and challenge ideas. (Accept his questions as seriously as you would an adult's. And invite him to join you in finding any answers you may need to seek.)
- Don't be defensive about questions and comments; he may be seeking security in your strength, not challenging you.
- Encourage discussion of problems important to your teenager. (Ask his help in choosing discussion topics, particularly as you plan them.)
- Although teenagers may challenge adult authority, they like and expect parents to be strong in their convictions, especially in matters of morality.
- A teenager's rejection of authority is usually only temporary. Don't force him to participate in home evening but be sure he attends.
- Base communication on mutual respect.
- Teenagers respond to genuine emotional warmth and understanding.
- Be well prepared and let your teenagers' interest help determine the length of discussions.
- Keep your teenager involved in home evenings by consistently holding them.

Resources and Online Links for FHE Lessons and Activities

Church Published Materials (all available for free to print or view on lds.org)

Family Home Evening Resource Book lds.org/manual/family-home-evening-resource-book

Church Published Magazines (New Era, Friend, Ensign, Liahona) www.lds.org/magazine

Behold Your Little Ones Nursery Manual www.lds.org/manual/behold-your-little-ones-nursery-manual

Lessons are just as meaningful for the older children as for the younger. Teens like reliving their Primary years, relearning basic principles, and seeing the enthusiasm of their younger siblings.

Teaching No Greater Call www.lds.org/manual/teaching-no-greater-call-a-resource-guide-for-gospel-teaching

Manual has suggestions on how to understand, work with, and teach every age (from nursery to age 11).

For Strength of Youth Pamphlet or **True to the Faith**

Read one section and discuss. www.lds.org/youth/for-the-strength-of-youth and www.lds.org/manual/true-to-the-faith

Gospel Art Book

Contains numerous gospel pictures that can be used for lessons.

https://www.lds.org/bc/content/shared/content/english/pdf/language-materials/06048_eng.pdf

Videos (short and long) <https://www.lds.org/media-library/video> and <http://www.mormonchannel.org/video>

Other Resource Materials and Websites

livecrafteat.com

ldslane.net

fhelessons.com

ayearoffhe.blogspot.com

emmasplacetobe.blogspot.com

lifeisfantasmic.blogspot.com

fhelessons.wordpress.com

sofiasprimaryideas.blogspot.com

ptskjohnson.blogspot.com

jonlund.com

ambermaybe.com

confessionsofaslackermom.com

preparednotscared.blogspot.com

ptskjohnson.blogspot.com

teachldschildren.com

foodstorageandbeyond.com

cookandcraftmecrazy.blogspot.com

<http://www.sugardoodle.net> ("Other" tab, select "Family Home Evening Index")

<http://www.theideadoorfiles.com> (Tab on the left side "Family Home Evening")

<https://fhelessons.wordpress.com> (Go to "Lessons" tab, select "Kids, Teens, or Adults")

<http://www.funtasticfamilyhomeevenings.com> (Go to "FHE Lessons" tab)

pinterest.com (Search FHE ideas or activities for kids)

Living Scripture Videos/DVDs