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March 2017

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HOW TO **ROCK** FAMILY FUN NIGHT WITH TWEENS AND TEENS

By Lisa A. Beach



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When your kids were younger, family fun took center stage, whether that meant a riveting game of Chutes and Ladders or a backyard light saber duel. But now that the kids are older, how do you get your tweens and teens to want to hang out with "the folks?"

Besides creating great memories, family fun nights with tweens and teens also means parents worry less about where the kids are going, who they're with and what they're doing. To

make "hanging with the family" something tweens and teens look forward to, try these ideas to jumpstart your family fun night.

Family Dinner

A fun family dinner can be as simple as ordering a pizza or take-out barbecue and eating out on the back porch for a change of scenery.

But to up the fun factor, try these mouthwatering ideas:

- Declare a "kids in the kitchen" night where your tweens and teens get to be in charge

from start to finish. Let them create the menu, shop for the ingredients and cook the meal – with parents on clean-up duty.

- Try to recreate a dish from your favorite restaurant at home, either by trial-and-error cooking or some culinary sleuthing online for copycat recipes.
- Pick a different ethnic food to cook together, such as Mexican or Greek cuisine, as a fun way to explore other cultures.

- Engage in a friendly competition, with each family member making a different course (i.e., entrée, dessert, etc.). Afterwards, everyone talks about which creation wins top honors.
- Take your kids to farmer's markets, food festivals or similar events to help them select some never-tried-before produce. It gives them a hands-on experience and encourages them to try new foods.

Movie Night

Everyone loves to watch a great flick. But what can take the movie-watching experience from good to great? Consider upgrading your home theater environment to create a space where kids want to stay home. Depending on your budget, you could hang fun movie posters, build a new DVD case and install dimmable lighting (less expensive options) or install surround sound, get a larger TV or even buy custom leather seats (higher ticket options).

You want to feel like you're front and center, explains David Pidgeon, CEO of Dallas-based Starpower, the largest seller of projectors in the U.S. "With a 120-

inch screen, you actually feel like you're at the movies, giving you the complete theater experience but without the crowds and sticky floors," says Pidgeon.

The key is to create a media room that brings everyone together. "Don't make it the parents' room that the kids get to use," he says. "Make it fun for the whole family." Creating a fun media room yields a great side benefit, too. "I want our home

From Betsy McMenamin
(three kids age 14-22)

Pandemic is awesome! You don't play in teams – all players work together collectively. You either all win or you all lose.

From Suzan Dees
(two kids age 13 & 21):

I brought out an old favorite game, "Scattergories," and my kids loved it! It was so much fun to see what they came up with.

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to be the place that our kids want to hang out with us and their friends," says Pidgeon, a father of three teenagers. "When you provide a fun atmosphere at home, the kids gather there and you worry less about where they're going."

Game Night

Get your game on! Goodbye "Chutes and Ladders" and hello strategy games, cooperative games and party games good for a crowd! Play something fun that engages kids and stimulates their minds. Need a few ideas? Take your cue from these moms:

Other family games perfect for tweens and teens: "Apples to Apples," "Reverse Charades," "Clue," "Spontaneous" and "Settlers of Catan."

Whether you're whipping up tamales in the kitchen, watching your favorite thriller on the big screen or playing a board game, you can bring your family together – even the tweens and teens – for a night of fun.

Lisa Beach is a freelance writer, humorist and recovering homeschool mom who lived to write about it. Check out her writer's website at LisaBeachWrites.com and visit her humor blog at TweeniorMoments.com.



10:30 a.m.
JCPenney Court

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The first 60 club members receive a FREE giveaway and craft.

MARCH 9 - OH SUSANNAH!

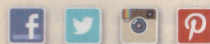
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