

How to Create Clear Family Expectations

A checklist and planning worksheet for routines, responsibilities, respect, technology, and consequences.

Clear expectations reduce repeated arguments because family members know what is expected, why it matters, and what will happen when agreements are not followed.

Check the Areas Your Family Needs to Clarify

- ☐ Morning and bedtime routines
- ☐ School, homework, or work responsibilities
- ☐ Household chores and shared spaces
- ☐ Phones, gaming, social media, and screen time
- ☐ Curfews, transportation, and checking in
- ☐ Privacy, bedrooms, and personal belongings
- ☐ Respectful communication and conflict
- ☐ Family time, meals, and participation
- ☐ Money, spending, and privileges
- ☐ Guests, friends, dating, and social activities

A Clear Expectation Should Be

- ☐ Specific: everyone can describe what the expectation looks like.
- ☐ Realistic: it fits the person's age, abilities, and schedule.
- ☐ Connected to a reason: safety, health, respect, responsibility, or family functioning.
- ☐ Consistent: caregivers can follow through without changing the rule daily.
- ☐ Reviewable: the family knows when the agreement will be reconsidered.

Create One Family Expectation

The area we are addressing is:

The specific expectation is:

Why this expectation matters:

When and where it applies:

What support or reminder may be needed:

What happens when it is followed:

What happens when it is not followed:

When we will review the agreement:

Family Agreement Checklist

- ☐ Everyone had a chance to ask questions.
- ☐ The expectation is written in language everyone understands.
- ☐ The consequence is related, reasonable, and known in advance.
- ☐ The plan does not depend on yelling, shaming, or repeated threats.
- ☐ Caregivers agree on how they will respond.
- ☐ There is a clear path to regain privileges or rebuild trust.
- ☐ We chose a date to review what is and is not working.

Common Problems to Avoid

- Using vague expectations such as “be respectful” without defining the behavior
- Creating rules during an argument
- Having too many new expectations at once
- Changing the consequence depending on the caregiver’s mood
- Expecting immediate perfection
- Continuing a plan that clearly is not working without reviewing it

Family agreement language

“Our expectation is _____. It matters because _____. If it is followed, _____. If it is not followed, _____. We will review this agreement on _____.”