

RESEARCH FILE 001

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A Family That Plays Together Stays Together: Is It True?

Families who play together do report being closer, by a small margin, and nobody has shown that the playing is what caused it. Whether play keeps a family together has never been tested at all.

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The short answer

- **Families who play together say they are closer.** Across 23 studies the link is real and small. Researchers have found it in the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Turkey and Russia.
- **Nobody has shown that the play causes the closeness.** Almost every study is a survey taken once. A family that already gets along will choose to spend time together, and a survey cannot tell that apart from play making them close.
- **"Stays together" has not been tested for families.** We found no study that follows family play forward to see whether parents stay married or grown children stay in touch.
- **For couples there is a signal, and it is prediction only.** In one Dutch study of 4,255 couples, those with a more shared lifestyle were less likely to split up. The authors say unhappy couples may simply stop doing things together.
- **The ordinary kind of play shows the strongest link.** Board games, the yard, the driveway: everyday time at home is tied to closeness more consistently than trips and vacations are.
- **Enjoying it matters more than the hours.** And it is not the same experience for everyone. Mothers and teenagers report enjoying family leisure less than fathers do.
- **The saying is older than most people think.** It was in American newspapers by 1926, about twenty years before the better-known line about families that pray together.

Where did the saying come from?

Almost every page that mentions the origin says "plays together" is a pun on "The family that prays together stays together." In the one newspaper archive we searched, the order is the other way around. The play version is in print first.

We searched the Library of Congress newspaper archive, Chronicling America, for the phrase. One caution, stated once: the quotes below come from the Library's machine-read text of each page. We have not viewed the page images, and machine reading makes mistakes, so treat the exact wording as provisional.

- **1926.** On April 30, The Bismarck Tribune in North Dakota reported that the parent-teacher association in the town of Braddock "believes firmly in the slogan" that "Families who play together, stay together" (Bismarck Tribune page). This is the earliest real match in the archive.
- **1928.** On August 23, The Searcy News in Arkansas ran a syndicated parenting column compiled by the editors of Children, The Magazine for Parents. It said families with regular home play evenings will tell you that "the family that plays together, stays together" (Searcy News page).
- **1930.** On July 25, the Lynwood Press in California ran a classified ad for Lawn Links backyard golf sets using the line "The family that plays together stays together" (Lynwoo d Press page). It is the earliest use in selling that we found.
- **1943.** On October 24, the Evening Star in Washington, D.C. reported that many city recreation departments were training parents to organize family games "under the slogan" of the same words (Evening Star page).
- **1947 to 1948.** The prayer version arrives. A 2020 article by John Burger reports that the copywriter Al Scalpone wrote "The Family That Prays Together Stays Together" in 1947 for the Family Theater radio series, and that the credit rests on Scalpone's own statement in 2000 and on a biography (Aleteia). We saw no document from 1947. In the newspaper archive, the earliest exact match for the prayer wording is a radio listing dated June 23, 1948 (The Theocrat page).

So in this archive, "plays" is in print about twenty years before "prays."

Between 1926 and 1945 the play wording shows up again and again as a working slogan of parent-teacher associations, in Braddock, San Antonio, El Centro and Lynwood. It was offered as an answer to real worries. In 1938 a school principal in El Centro, California gave a talk under that title, said the American home was "disintegrating because of depression and divorce," and proposed playing together as a remedy (Imperial Valley Press page). The 1943 article was about wartime teenagers and delinquency.

What is unknown

- **The first use.** 1926 is the earliest match in one free archive. It is not proof of first use. The 1926 article already calls the line a "slogan," so earlier uses probably exist. Paid newspaper archives and book archives were not searched.

- **Who coined it.** No source we opened names anyone.
- **Whether the prayer slogan was adapted from the play slogan.** The dates make it possible. No source we opened says so.
- **Where the 1928 column got it.** We saw the newspaper column, not the magazine behind it.

What has "plays together" meant in research?

Researchers do not study "play" in the playground sense. They study **family leisure**: free time that family members spend doing something together. That covers a board game, a walk, a movie on the couch, a camping trip.

The most used framework comes from Ramon Zabriskie and Bryan McCormick in 2001 (Family Relations). It sorts family leisure into two kinds.

- **Core leisure** is the everyday kind. The paper defines it as "the common, everyday, low-cost, relatively accessible, and often home-based activities that many families do frequently." Their examples: watching television together, playing board games, playing in the yard, shooting baskets in the driveway, gardening.
- **Balance leisure** is the special kind: activities that are "less common and less frequent" and so bring something new. Their examples: family vacations, camping, fishing, a trip to a theme park, a sporting event, the bowling alley.

Two outcome words come up constantly. **Cohesion** means how emotionally close family members feel. **Adaptability** means how well the family adjusts when things change.

The original idea was tidy: everyday leisure builds closeness, special leisure builds flexibility. The first half has held up better than the second. A 2017 review of the framework by Townsend and colleagues (Leisure Sciences) found that the two kinds of leisure "did not always follow the suggested paths in the model," and that in a number of studies everyday leisure was "either the only or the stronger predictor" of how well the family functioned.

In nearly all of these studies, a parent or a teenager filled in one questionnaire, once, rating both how much the family does together and how the family is doing.

Do families who play together say they are closer?

Yes. This is the best supported part of the saying.

The best single number comes from a 2017 meta-analysis by Camilla Hodge and colleagues (Journal of Family Theory and Review). A meta-analysis pools the results of many studies into one estimate. This one pooled 23 articles reporting data from parents or adolescents.

It found that families with more shared leisure had higher family quality of life, with r = .27. Here is what that means in plain words. The letter r is a correlation: a number from 0 to 1 that says how closely two things move together. Zero means no link. One means they move in lockstep. An r of .27 means that knowing how much a family plays together tells you about 7% of what there is to know about how that family rates its life together. The other 93% is everything else. The authors' own label is "small but significant." A real link, and a small one.

The second number is more interesting. For how *satisfied* families were with their leisure, the link was r = .41, or about 17% shared. How a family feels about its time together is tied to family satisfaction more strongly than how much time it logs.

Single studies say the same thing.

- In a survey of 898 US families by Agate and colleagues in 2009 (Journal of Leisure Resea rch), the amount of leisure explained 6.3 percentage points of parents' satisfaction with family life. Satisfaction with that leisure explained 28.0 points.
- In a study of 3,979 families across five countries by Hodge and colleagues in 2018 (Leisu re Sciences), the link was "consistent across all five countries."
- In 1,502 people in 751 UK families, Melton and Zabriskie in 2016 (World Leisure Journal) found the best predictors of happiness were "quality family leisure time spent in familiar activities inside the home."

Some cautions belong right beside those numbers.

The larger number is partly an echo. "I am satisfied with our family leisure" and "I am satisfied with our family life" are two similar judgments made by the same person in the same sitting. Someone with a warm view of their family will rate both highly.

Parents and children do not see the same thing. In a 2003 study of 179 families by Zabriskie and McCormick (Journal of Leisure Research), family leisure was the strongest predictor of family satisfaction for parents. For the children it was not a significant predictor.

The measuring tool has known problems. A 2016 paper from inside the research group, by Melton, Ellis and Zabriskie (Leisure Sciences), tested the standard questionnaire on 884 UK parents and children. With the usual scoring, the links ran from r = .22 to r = .34. With a scoring method that estimates actual time, they fell to between r = .07 and r = .23.

Most of the evidence comes from one research group. In the meta-analysis, 18 of the 23 studies used the same framework and the same questionnaire. That does not make the findings wrong. It means one result has been reproduced many times with the same method by overlapping authors, and rarely tested by an independent group with a different one.

Families can be close without much shared leisure. In a 2009 study of 70 urban Turkish families by Aslan (Journal of Leisure Research), family leisure was low and satisfaction with family life was "comparatively high."

> **Grade for this question: well supported, as a link in what people report about themselves. Small in size.**

Does playing together cause closeness?

This is a different question, and the answer changes.

To show cause you need an experiment, ideally a randomized trial: families are assigned by chance to do something or not, and then compared. Or you need to follow the same families for years. The family leisure field has very little of either. A 2015 review by Hodge and colleagues (Journal of Leisure Research) counted 181 family leisure articles in four journals from 1990 to 2012. Twelve followed families over time. One was an experiment.

That one experiment, by Wells, Widmer and McCoy in 2004 (Family Relations), involved 34 families with at-risk teenagers. Families who did challenge-based recreation came away more confident that they could resolve conflict. That is a belief measured soon after, in a small sample. It is not closeness and it is not lasting.

The researchers say so themselves. "Causal inferences cannot be made with confidence in the absence of experimentation," wrote Melton and colleagues in 2016.

Where cause has been tested: coached play with young children

There is real experimental evidence that play can build a relationship. It comes from a different place: programs in which trained staff teach parents a specific, responsive way of playing with a young child.

- **Parenting programs for children under 3.** A 2021 meta-analysis by Joshua Jeong and colleagues (PLoS Medicine) pooled 102 randomized trials in 33 countries. Many of the programs centered on early play and responsive care. Parent-child interaction improved by 0.39 standard deviations, and attachment by 0.29. A standard deviation is a yardstick for how spread out scores are; around 0.4 is usually read as a moderate change. The authors report that results varied widely from trial to trial and that more follow-up is needed to know whether the gains last.
- **Play therapy.** A 2015 meta-analysis by Lin and Bratton (Journal of Counseling and Devel opment) pooled 52 controlled studies of child-centered play therapy. The effect on caregiver-child relationship stress was .59, and studies with full parent involvement did better (.59) than studies with partial or none (.33).

These are structured programs, usually 10 to 20 coached sessions, usually for young children, often for families referred because something was already hard. None of them is ordinary family game night.

And there is one direct warning about carrying the result over to ordinary families. A 2019 analysis of 154 randomized trials by Leijten and colleagues (Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry) found that relationship-building techniques went with stronger effects in families already in treatment and weaker effects in prevention programs for ordinary-risk families. It also found that "no techniques were associated with stronger longer-term effects."

The one randomized test of simply doing more together

For couples, somebody ran the plain version of the experiment. In 1993 Reissman, Aron and Bergen (Journal of Social and Personal Relationships) randomly assigned 53 married couples, for 10 weeks at 1.5 hours a week, to activities they had rated as exciting, activities they had rated as pleasant, or no special activity.

Comparing both activity groups with the control group, the difference in marital satisfaction "was not significant and had a small effect size." The authors concluded that the idea "that any kind of activity enhances marital satisfaction was not supported." Couples doing exciting activities did end up more satisfied than couples doing pleasant ones, with a moderate effect.

Later experiments disagree. In 2013 Coulter and Malouff (Couple and Family Psychology) randomly assigned 101 couples and found that 90 minutes a week of shared exciting activities for 4 weeks raised relationship satisfaction. In 2025 Balzarini, Sharma and Muise (Behavioral Sciences) ran two preregistered experiments with 93 and 142 couples and found no difference in relationship satisfaction.

> **Grade for this question: suggestive. Shown for coached programs with young children. Not shown for ordinary family play.**

Does it predict staying together?

This is the half of the saying that gets the least attention, and it is the half the saying is named for.

For families: not tested

We found no study that follows ordinary family play or family leisure forward to see whether the parents later divorce. We found none that measures family play during childhood and then checks whether the grown children stay in contact.

The nearest evidence is a step removed.

- A long-running study of almost 1,000 children born in Dunedin, New Zealand, reported by Belsky and colleagues in 2001 (Developmental Psychology), found that a supportive family climate in childhood predicted closer ties with parents at age 26. The links were "modest in magnitude," and the study measured family climate in general, not play.
- A 2020 Dutch study of 5,107 adults by Ivanova and Kalmijn (Journal of Family Psychology) found that people who recalled a parent doing more activities with them in youth felt closer to that parent as adults. The link was stronger for stepparents than for biological parents. It rests on memory, and adults who feel close today may simply remember more.

For couples: a real signal, as prediction only

The best study is by van Houdt and Poortman in 2018 (Demographic Research). It followed 4,255 Dutch couples, married and living together, over four survey rounds. It scored each couple on a "joint lifestyle": doing leisure activities together, sharing friends, visiting friends together, visiting family together.

The result was a hazard ratio of 0.579. A hazard ratio compares how fast something happens in one group against another. Here it means that each one-point step up on the joint lifestyle scale went with roughly 42% lower risk of splitting up. The size was the same for married and unmarried couples.

That is prediction, and the authors insist on the difference. "The present study is not aimed at strong causal inferences," they write. Couples heading for separation "might feel unsatisfied with their relationship and therefore withdraw from spending leisure time together." Part of the link was explained by how good the relationship already was.

An older US study, by Hill in 1988 (Journal of Family Issues), pointed the same way. Its abstract adds a twist worth keeping: "because couples with children have less shared leisure time, children can contribute to marital break-up as well as help prevent it."

No experiment has ever tested whether changing a couple's shared leisure changes whether they separate.

Other couple studies are quoted in this debate. None measures staying together.

- Despite its title, the 2023 study "Do couples who play together stay together?" by Totenhagen and colleagues (Family Process) measured satisfaction and commitment in 1,382 newly married US couples. It did not measure divorce. It found that for lower-income couples under financial strain, more shared leisure went with worse outcomes.
- Crawford and colleagues followed married couples for over a decade and reported in 2002 (Journal of Marriage and Family) that the link between companionship and satisfaction "is less robust than previously believed." Leisure that husbands liked and wives disliked was "both a cause and a consequence of wives' dissatisfaction."
- Girme and colleagues in 2014 (Personal Relationships) found shared activities sustained relationship quality "only when partners are responsive and want to share relationship activities."

> **Grade for this question: not shown for families. Suggestive for couples, as prediction only.**

Why might the link not be cause?

There are ordinary reasons a real link can exist without play doing the work. One was covered above: the same person rates both things. Here are two more.

The arrow may run backward. A family that is already close will choose to spend time together and will rate that time highly. A family in conflict will avoid it. This worry is not new. In 1984 the review by Holman and Epperson (Journal of Leisure Research) concluded that leisure "appears to be both affected by, and to affect, marriage and family factors."

Families who play more differ in other ways. They differ in income, education, free time and beliefs. In a 2007 study by Agate and colleagues (Marriage and Family Review), both religiosity and family leisure were tied to family functioning, and for parents "family religiosity was the strongest predictor."

What happened when family dinner was tested hard

Family leisure has never had a strict test. Family dinner has, and it is the closest comparison there is: a shared family routine with a strong reputation.

In 2012 Kelly Musick and Ann Meier (Journal of Marriage and Family) used a national US study of 17,977 adolescents followed over three survey rounds. First they looked at the simple link between family dinners and teenage well-being. Then they tightened the analysis.

- Once they accounted for the quality of family relationships, the link with depressive symptoms shrank by 61%. For substance use it shrank by 56%, and for delinquency by an estimated 49%.
- Next they compared each teenager with their own earlier self, a method that cancels out everything about a family that does not change. More family dinners still went with fewer depressive symptoms. They found "no evidence of a causal effect of family dinners on delinquency."
- Then they looked at the same people as young adults. The dinner links "did not persist into adulthood."

The authors' summary is that the large effects reported in earlier research "are due mostly to unobserved factors," and that even what remained "may be upwardly biased by reverse causation."

Two more studies fill in the picture. Meier and Musick in 2014 (Journal of Marriage and Family) found that family dinners "have little benefit when parent-child relationships are weak" but go with fewer depressive symptoms and less delinquency when family relationships are strong. And Miller, Waldfogel and Han in 2012 (Child Development), following about 21,400 US children, found no significant relation between family meals and school or behavior outcomes once each child was compared with themselves over time.

The lesson for play: most of the raw link between a shared family routine and a good outcome was the family already being close. Nobody has checked whether the same is true of family play.

When does family play not feel like play?

The saying treats "the family" as one person having one experience. The research does not.

Somebody organizes it, and it is usually the mother. Susan Shaw studied 46 families with time diaries and interviews in 1992 (Leisure Sciences) and found that "family activities were often experienced as work or involved a work component," and that mothers were significantly more likely than fathers to experience family time as work. Craig and Mullan, looking at four countries in 2012 (Leisure Studies), wrote that shared parent-child leisure "requires planning, organisation and maintenance, usually from the mother."

Parents often play for a purpose. In interviews with parents in 31 Ontario families, Shaw and Dawson in 2001 (Leisure Sciences) found that family leisure was "organized and facilitated by parents in order to achieve particular short- and long-term goals," including a stronger sense of family. In other words, parents already believe the saying and act on it. That shows belief. It does not test whether the closeness arrives.

The same game is three different experiences. Larson, Gillman and Richards in 1997 (Journal of Leisure Research) paged mothers, fathers and young adolescents in 55 families at random moments for a week and asked how they felt. "Mothers reported less positive affect than fathers." Adolescents felt less motivated and less happy than their parents during family leisure. The same evening can be a high point for one parent, a chore for the other, and an obligation for the 13-year-old.

Forced fun. We could find no research literature under that name. The idea behind it has support. In a two-year study of 192 families by Crouter and colleagues in 2004 (Journal of Marriage and Family), more family time predicted less risky behavior in firstborn teenagers, and the authors add that family time "is protective when chosen by family members but not when it represents a default use of time." The Crawford and Girme couple studies above say the same about partners: shared activity that one person does not want is not neutral.

Shaw put the general point in a 1997 paper (Journal of Leisure Research): "family activities may be leisure and work at the same time."

What actually seems to matter?

Three things come up repeatedly. We mark each one by how strong the evidence is.

The everyday, low-cost, at-home kind. Supported, as a link. Everyday leisure is the more consistent companion of family closeness. In a study of 144 families that included a child with a developmental disability, by Dodd and colleagues in 2009 (Journal of Leisure Research), everyday leisure was tied to family functioning and the special-outing kind showed "no relationship" with it at all. A study of fathers and adolescents in 647 US families, by Buswell and colleagues in 2012 (Leisure Sciences), found that satisfaction with everyday leisure that included the father was "the single strongest predictor" of family functioning. Its list of activities is as ordinary as it gets: eating dinner together, hobbies, informal sports, yard activities, watching television together, and "playing board games and video games together." No study isolates board game night by itself. The evidence for it is the evidence for everyday leisure in general.

Enjoying it. Supported, as a link. Satisfaction with family leisure beats amount of family leisure in the meta-analysis ($r = .41$ against $r = .27$) and in the large single studies. The same holds for couples: in 1,187 US couples, Ward and colleagues in 2014 (Journal of Leisure Research) found satisfaction with shared leisure "far more important" than the amount. Remember the echo problem, though. Part of this is one satisfied person giving two satisfied answers.

Everyone wanting to be there. Suggestive. This rests on a handful of studies: the two-year family study by Crouter, the long-term couple study by Crawford, the couple study by Girme. They agree with each other, and none of them is an experiment.

Our reading. Put together, the evidence points away from the big day out and toward something small, regular, cheap and wanted by the people in the room. That is our interpretation of a pattern of links. It is not a tested recipe. Nobody has assigned families to play more at home and measured what happened to them.

One more finding belongs here because it runs against instinct. More hours is not automatically better. Milkie and colleagues in 2015 (Journal of Marriage and Family) used time diaries for 1,605 children aged 3 to 11 and 778 adolescents and found that the amount of time mothers spent with them "did not matter for offspring behaviors, emotions, or academics." For adolescents, more engaged time with a mother was related to fewer delinquent behaviors, and engaged time with both parents together was related to better outcomes. That study measured children's outcomes, not family closeness.

How much do families actually play?

Less than the saying assumes, and much less once children start school.

The US Bureau of Labor Statistics runs the American Time Use Survey, which asks people to account for a full day. Its 2025 annual averages (Bureau of Labor Statistics) give time spent "playing/doing hobbies with children" as a main activity, for adults living in households with children under 18.

- All such households: 0.26 hours a day, about 16 minutes. Men 0.24 hours, women 0.29.
- Households whose youngest child is under 6: 0.57 hours a day, about 34 minutes.
- Households whose youngest child is 6 to 17: 0.06 hours a day, about 4 minutes.
- Weekends and holidays, all such households: 0.33 hours. Weekdays: 0.24.

Read these numbers carefully. They are averages across every adult in those households, including adults who did not play at all that day. They count play only when it was the person's main activity. They are not the number of minutes a parent plays on a day when they play.

Even so, the drop from about 34 minutes to about 4 minutes once the youngest child turns 6 is the most striking figure in the table.

This matters for the research too. Most play happens in families with young children. Most family leisure studies survey parents of 11 to 16 year olds.

So, is it true?

As a description, partly. Families who play together do tend to say they are closer, by a modest margin, and couples who share their free time are somewhat less likely to split up. As a promise, no. Much of that link probably runs the other way: people who already get along choose to spend time together, and people with more money and time can do more of it. Play can cause closeness when it is a specific, responsive kind of play that a parent has been coached in, and that evidence is for young children. Nobody has shown that ordinary family play keeps a family together, because nobody has tested it. The saying is a fair description of happy families and an unproven prescription for unhappy ones.

A version the evidence can carry:

> **Families that play together tend to be the closer ones, by a modest margin. Nobody has yet shown which came first, or whether it lasts.**

It will not fit on a pillow. It is true.

None of this is a reason to play less. A game is worth playing because it is a good half hour. It does not need to be an insurance policy.

What do we not know yet?

- **Whether ordinary family play causes closeness.** There is no adequately sized experiment and no strong long-term study of ordinary families.
- **Whether it lasts.** The one family routine tested for staying power, dinner, showed none into adulthood.
- **Whether it predicts staying together.** No study follows family play forward to divorce, estrangement, or contact between parents and grown children.
- **How it works, if it does.** Some survey models suggest families who play together communicate more, and that the communication is what goes with better functioning. In 2020 researchers in the field wrote that "little is known about the mechanisms" (Melton, Hodge and Duerden).
- **Whether it holds for young children's families.** That is where most play happens, and where the family leisure research is thinnest.
- **Whether it holds beyond the families studied.** A 2015 review found samples were mostly White, married and middle class. The five-country study covered only English-speaking, Western countries.
- **Whether it holds for step families.** People search for this. The only related finding we have is the Dutch study of remembered activities with stepparents.

How was this paper made?

This paper rests on three research files compiled on 2026-10-11. Every claim above traces to a source that was opened that day.

- **The origin file.** Newspaper pages from the Library of Congress archive, read as machine-read text with the page images not viewed, plus web pages opened directly. Each early match was opened, and the matches dated before 1926 turned out to be false matches.
- **The family leisure file.** 29 sources read in full, 20 read as abstract only, and 18 items listed as could not verify.
- **The staying together file.** 27 sources read in full, 38 read as abstract only, and about 25 items listed as not opened or seen only secondhand.

Some sources appear in both evidence files, so those counts overlap and should not be added together. This paper cites only some of them. Each entry in the reference list says whether we read the whole thing or only the abstract. Where we read only an abstract, we report only what the abstract says.

What we left out on purpose:

- **Polls run by companies that sell play.** Several widely repeated figures come from surveys by toy, game, theme park and travel companies. None has a comparison group. We do not use them as evidence.
- **The "96% of families who play games feel closer" figure.** We could not trace it to an original release, a sample size or a method.
- **Anything we could not open.** If a study is known to us only through someone else's description, it is not cited here as a finding.

Who made it: TeeterTop publishes play ideas for families, so we have an interest in the answer being yes. That is the reason the grades above are stated separately and plainly.

We will correct this paper. If you can show an earlier printed use of the saying, a study we missed, or a number we got wrong, tell us and we will fix it and say what changed.

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More on this saying

Shorter pages, each on one question.

Where the saying came from

- Who Said a Family That Plays Together Stays Together?
- Which Came First: Plays Together or Prays Together?
- What Does a Family That Plays Together Stays Together Mean?
- Why Did People Start Saying a Family That Plays Together Stays Together?
- Who Has Used the Saying to Sell Things?
- Is the Family That Plays Together Stays Together in the Bible?

What the evidence shows

- How Big Is the Link Between Family Play and Closeness?
- Game Night or Vacation: Which Goes With a Closer Family?
- Does It Matter How Much We Play, or How Much We Enjoy It?
- Do Parents and Kids Agree That Family Time Brings Them Closer?
- What Coached Play Programs Show That Game Night Does Not
- How Many Minutes a Day Do Parents Play With Their Kids?
- Couples Who Play Together: Do They Stay Together?

Where the evidence is thin or the saying fails

- Does Playing Together Keep a Family From Breaking Up?
- The Family Dinner Lesson: What Happened When a Family Routine Was Tested Hard
- Forced Family Fun: What If Someone Does Not Want to Be There?
- Who Does the Work of Family Fun?
- Do Close Families Play More, or Does Play Make Families Close?
- Can Togetherness Ever Hurt? When More Time Went With Worse Results
- Where Does "96% of Families Who Play Games Feel Closer" Come From?

Particular families and activities

- Does Family Game Night Bring a Family Closer?
- Do Video Games Count as Playing Together?
- Does It Hold for Step Families, Single Parents and Adoptive Families?
- Does It Hold Outside the United States?
- What Does a Father's Play Do?

Try it

The evidence favors the small, ordinary, at-home kind of play that everyone in the room actually wants. Here are places to start.

- For the youngest: toddler play
- Games for any age, with materials and steps: all play ideas
- Games from a box you already have: cardboard games
- For the yard, the park or the driveway: outdoor play

By TeeterTop editorial. Updated October 11, 2026.

TeeterTop

I'm still on top.

Ways to build, balance, and get moving, for families who want a reason to start playing.

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