

PLAYFUL FAMILY "DINNIGHT" FOR THE UNDER 5S

With [Melitsa Avila](#)



Monthly ideas to encourage playful moments during dinner and family night

"Dinnight"

Family dinner + Family night = Family Dinnight (Yep! I did make up that word)

Let's face it dinner isn't always fun with the under 5s. By the time everyone is sitting ready to eat there might be a lot of tension around. Dinnertimes have changed a lot since having children. Dinner used to be a long leisurely affair with conversation and laughter. It can be again.

Right now there are many of us who eat dinner with the children alone while our partner is not yet home or alone as single parents. We eat with our children or they eat and we eat when our partner gets home or just later so we can eat what we want. We cook two or more meals. All of this takes time and so much energy. It's hard to see how dinner can be anything but busy chaos full of strong emotions.

You've planned to have a family night but well it's just not happening or consistently so you are looking for some suggestions for your multi-aged family.

How to use these suggestions?

Whether you eat family meals together every night or once a week try some of the conversation starters or bring your own. It might take their mind of that Pak Choi you slipped onto their plate.

Quick: Print the questions and leave in the centre of the table

5-10mins more: Print and cut out each question. Fold and place in a clear vase in the centre of the table.

10-15mins: Print and laminate a set of questions to use for the week/month. Use a dry erase marker to add questions.



Family dinner is a good time **to reconnect, share and become 'our' family** by learning the customs. For our family our focus is on manners, taking turns, and responding appropriately.

We can't say we get it right all the time. But we can say we try and have a lot of fun along the way.

I had a little fun with the dinner courses but we all love having dessert first so take these in whatever order that suits your family.

Melitsa Avila



Appetizers- Conversation starters

Bring your own list of questions to the table that reflects your age/stage.

Stuck? Try these questions to get the conversation going

1. What is your favourite book, comic or magazine?
2. If you could choose what to do all day what would we all do?
3. Which gift from Christmas do you play with the most?
4. If you could call one person on the telephone who would it be and what might you say?
5. If you could be a character from one of your books who would you be?
6.



First Course -Recommended family game

Zingo!



What we like it

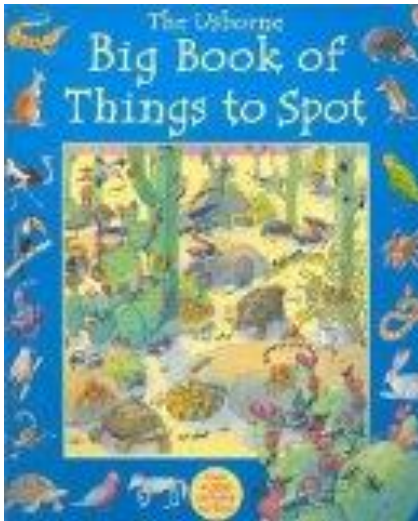
- ✓ Bingo for early readers
- ✓ Language and vocabulary builders
- ✓ Competition
- ✓ Pictures and words to aid play
- ✓ Easy rules
- ✓ Container to keep all the pieces together.

Aim: Played the same as bingo. Each person has a card. There are two levels, one on either side. We play it with three people a dealer and two players. Dealer works the machine so two tiles come out. Players call out if it is their tile and place on top of their space. First person to fill the line or the whole square wins.



[Buy it](#)

Second course -Book recommendation



Find objects in the pictures (turn taking- observation- new words)

See [my review on the Play-Activities blog](#).

[Buy it](#)



Salad course -Podcast recommendation for kids or parents

Listen on the go with your mp3, in your car, at the gym, computer or through your mobile phone. Most of us have part of the school run and *our* time when you want to grab an audio.

Kids: Educational resources for children aged 3 to 5 primarily for use in nursery and school, featuring songs, stories and movement activities inspired by popular themes: [Playtime](#)

Dessert Course- Music to listen to via Internet radio:

<http://www.live365.com/index.live>:

Genre: Indo-Caribbean Radio Net

Description: Caribbean, Indian, Hindi

Grab a world map or globe. Guess where in the world? Try and identify instruments (from as broad as string, wind, electric, voice etc to cello, saxophone or guiro!) Ask the children how it makes them feel or to move to the music.



Cheese course-Blogs to visit :(via [RPTI](#))

Plan your next play activities for the month by visiting these play blogs for inspiration

- <http://www.prayingforparker.com>
- <http://www.homegrownfamilies.blogspot.com>
- <http://ozmummy.blogspot.com/>
- <http://www.amazingmess.com>
- <http://jtlam.wordpress.com/>
- <http://chapterforty.blogspot.com>
- <http://ittybittylove.blogspot.com/>
- <http://best-toys-for-toddler.blogspot.com/>
- <http://letkidsplay.blogspot.com/>
- <http://www.simplemessyfun.com/>

Feel free to copy and share this download. It's free.



Melitsa Avila is a military wife and busy mum to three young boys. She's a former primary school teacher. She started Play-Activities.com, a free play activity weekly email for children under 5 after having her first child.



She's passionate about empowering parents to engage in practical play activities that cover all the developmental areas at home without having to buy special onetime use products, flashcards or electronic equipment; just like it used to be.

Melitsa is an advocate for keeping the under 5s playing creatively using everyday materials mums will find in their homes using educational and fun activities. It's amazing how everyday objects such as a: wide open space, pine cone, marching song, colorful scarf, yarn, pudding, cereal boxes and paper can be put to so many playful age appropriate experiences....you'll be amazed too!

