

One-Question Dinner

One rotating question that gets real answers at the table

A good facilitator knows a single well-chosen question opens a room faster than an open-ended “so, how’s everyone doing.” Family dinner runs on the same principle and most of us skip it, defaulting to “how was school” and getting “fine” right back, every single night. One-Question Dinner swaps the vague opener for one specific, rotating question, asked out loud, answered by everyone including you. It takes a minute to set up and it’s the difference between dinner as fuel stop and dinner as the one part of the day everyone actually talks.

What you need: 1 minute, a list of questions (twenty are below), and everyone at the table, phones away.

The steps

1. **Pick tonight’s question before you sit down.** (15 seconds) Glance at the list, pick one, don’t overthink it.
2. **Ask it and answer it yourself first.** (30 seconds) Going first shows what a real answer sounds like and takes the pressure off whoever answers next.
3. **Go around the table, no skipping.** (varies) Everyone answers, even a one-word answer counts on a rough night.
4. **Don’t correct or lecture the answers.** (ongoing) The question’s job is to open the door, not to become a teaching moment. Save that for another time.
5. **Rotate to a new question tomorrow.** (10 seconds) Same question every night gets stale fast. Keep the list somewhere you’ll actually see it.

Twenty questions to rotate through

1. What made you laugh today?
2. What was the hardest part of today?
3. If today were a color, what color was it?
4. What's something you're looking forward to?
5. Who was kind to you today?
6. What's something you're proud of from this week?
7. What's a question you have that nobody answered today?
8. If you could redo one moment today, which one?
9. What's something new you learned?
10. What's a rule you'd change if you were in charge for a day?
11. What's something you're worried about right now?
12. Who do you want to hang out with more?
13. What's the best thing you ate today?
14. What's something you did for someone else today?
15. What's a question you want to ask me?
16. What's something that surprised you today?
17. If you had an extra hour today, what would you do with it?
18. What's something you're grateful for right now?
19. What's a small thing that annoyed you today?
20. What's one thing you want to do this weekend?

When it goes sideways

Someone answers “I don’t know” every time. Let it stand, don’t push. Consistency does the work here, not any single answer. It gets easier after a few weeks.

It turns into everyone talking over each other. Go around in order, one at a time, even if it feels stiff at first. The structure is what makes it work at a chaotic table.

You forget most nights and feel bad about it. Stick the question list on the fridge or a note on your phone. This is a habit built on ease, not willpower, so remove the friction instead of trying harder.

One question, answered honestly, does more for a family than an hour of “how was your day.”



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