

# 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 off 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. How do you make pancakes or scrambled eggs?
2. If you saw a 50p coin on the floor, you know it's not yours a) at home b) on the street c) at someone's house ( delete as appropriate) What would you do?
3. What is your best season and why?
4. Guess the definition- What is a: cassette recorder:: floppy disk :: Walkman
5. What's a good friend do? How is your good friend? Do they do that?
6. ....

## First Course -Recommended family game

### Hue Knew?



#### What we like it

- ✓ Fun way to play with colours
- ✓ Word recognition
- ✓ Team game or individual fun
- ✓ Played at different levels so great for multi aged families
- ✓ Competition

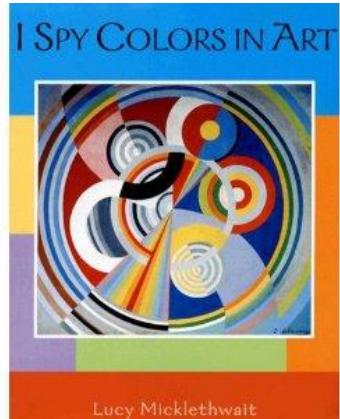
Aim: Matching colour with colour name and colour pawn. All the pawns are in the centre. The Hue Knew card is revealed. Race to match the right colour pawn to the right named and coloured word. The trick is the ORANGE may be orange in name but the colour is brown. The BROWN maybe brown. So you're looking not just at the word or just the colour of the word.

Tricky!

There are lots of variations and adaptations to this game.

### Buy it

## Second course -Book recommendation



Play I spy with colours in various paintings (turn taking-conversation- observation- new words)

[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.

Parents: Apple Juice radio highlights books and film of interest to parents and children. Host by a husband and wife team they give reviews, interviews and comment on the literary scene. They have a large archive of shows. [Apple Juice Radio](#)

## Dessert Course- Music to listen to via Internet radio:

### Listen: [AfroCubism](#)

Genre: Afro cubism (No.1 : [Mali Cuba](#) is our favourite one)

### Watch: [Youtube video](#) ( 5mins 5 sec)

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://busybrissymum.blogspot.com/>
- <http://earlyliteracycounts.blogspot.com/>
- <http://teachingheartmom.blogspot.com/>
- <http://mommymoment.ca>
- <http://amylane.wordpress.com>
- <http://handmadebeginnings.blogspot.com/>
- <http://chasingthesseasons.blogspot.com>
- <http://www.happybrownhouse.com>
- <http://www.readysetread2me.blogspot.com/>
- <http://codenamemama.com>
- <http://www.twigandtoadstool.blogspot.com>

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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!



[Raising Playful Tots](#)