



**STRUGGLING TO SQUEEZE MORE THAN A “FINE” OUT OF YOUR CHILD AT THE DINNER TABLE?
HELLOFRESH AND A LEADING UK PSYCHOLOGIST HAVE THE ANSWER WITH THEIR TABLE TALKS GAMES
& TIPS**



If you are among the one in five (20 percent) parents of school age children who say their kid is uncommunicative when they come home from school and are worried about them talking to them less (28 percent), fear not as developmental cognitive neuroscientist and psychologist, Professor Sam Wass has revealed the most effective ways to engage your children this Back-To-School period.

Professor Wass, who has teamed up with [HelloFresh](#), shared his top tips after new research found that **nine in ten (88 percent) parents say it drives them mad when they just get one-word answers from their children, with ‘ok’ (43 percent), ‘it was alright’ (43 percent), ‘fine’ (40 percent) and ‘yeah, alright’ (21 percent) the standard responses when asked ‘how was school?’.**

68 percent say that questions such as 'how was your day' just fall completely flat.

Four in ten (37 percent) believe they struggle to get their child to engage because they are glued to their phone, while a third (34 percent) put the lack of communication down to the fact that their kids are tired.

Despite this, **almost half (48 percent) say asking a specific question helps extract more information about their kids’ day at school**, with the best questions according to Professor Wass being ones which build on things that you know that your child is excited about already, such as **“What did your friends think of your new pencil case?”**

Other questions Professor Wass suggests posing include:

- *How was (friend’s name) today, what happened to them at school?*
- *Did anyone say anything about your new hair style? Or pencil case, or rucksack, or shoes – anything that your child’s excited about will work!*
- *How was history today? (Or whatever their favourite subject is)*
- *What was the favourite or most interesting thing you learned at school today?*
- *What was the best thing that happened to you today?*
- *What was the hardest thing that you had to do today?*



Professor Wass adds: “When everyone is tired at the end of their day, it’s all too easy to fall into a one-way flow of questions from the adults, which are met with one-word answers from the kids. Dinner time conversation can be challenging – but one that it helps to remember is that it’s not always about which questions you ask, but how you ask them. Consider asking questions after you’ve been playing games together during meal prep or at the dinner table. Starting with an external stimulus that gets the conversation flowing will make your children much more talkative afterwards.”

A third (31 percent) use information gleaned from other mums and dads to spark a conversation, while one in four (26 percent) find that distracting their children by making dinner together and then approaching the subject encourages them to open up.

In fact, family dinners are a key focal point for parents with seven in ten (67 percent) admitting that sitting down with everyone is important to them and that they the best chance to catch up and talk as a family (73 percent).

Even though they are a good place to chat, two thirds (66 percent) say their teens are uncommunicative over the dinner table, with 13 years old the age that they are the LEAST engaged.

It’s no surprise that 86 percent would love to inject some more energy, fun and engagement into their family dinner times.

But it’s not just awkward silences that make family dinners difficult, everyone wants to eat something different (39 percent), having no idea what to cook (35 percent) or buy (27 percent), not having the time to cook new recipes (27 percent) or pre-plan meals (26 percent) also make them tricky.

So much so that 84 percent simply wish they were easier all round.

The stress is so high that two thirds (67 percent) of mums and dads turn the telly on as a distraction, with British families having an average of three TV dinners a week.

Psychologist Professor Wass added, “*The start of a new school year can be a tough transition period for parents. You’re used to knowing everything that goes on with your kids, and then it’s a struggle to get more than a couple of words out of them!*”

“Family mealtimes have been a powerful way to foster connection for centuries, and It’s a good way to engage with your kids. That’s why I partnered with HelloFresh to develop these top tips for parents and the Table Talks games. You’ll be amazed how playing them together can help to encourage children to open up about how their day – so that you can provide the support for your kids that you want to.”

The study also found that half (51 percent) of parents are secretly dreading getting back to the weekly routine of cooking dinner every night, now the kids are back at school.

Eight in ten (79 percent) rely on a handful of 'go to' recipes, week in and week out with spaghetti bolognese (51 percent), roast chicken (47 percent), sausage and mash (35 percent), noodles (33 percent) and pasta bake (31 percent) the top go-to dishes, along with curry (30 percent), fajitas (28 percent), filled jacket potatoes (26 percent) and stir fry (23 percent).



79 percent go a step further and admit they are stuck in a dinner rut - not knowing what to cook for the family every night.

A global survey* by recipe box service HelloFresh unveiled insights into how parents feel around the Back-to-School period.

- More than two thirds of parents feel that **meal planning adds to their mental load at the start of the school**
- Nearly 3/4 of all parents say there's up to **additional five tasks related to dinner preparation**
- Over a third of parents (34%) find meal planning and preparation the most mentally taxing around back to school season, closely followed by homework supervision (31%) and coordination of childcare (24%)

Mimi Morley, Senior Recipe Development Manager at HelloFresh said: *"We know parents are juggling a lot, especially during the Back-to-School period, with 6 in 10 saying they complete up to 20 parenting related tasks per day*. Family mealtimes are an important moment for connection, but that can be even more challenging at this busy period. That's why we're excited to be launching our Table Talks activities with Professor Sam Wass, designed to give families more opportunities for meaningful and precious connections over mealtimes, while our brand new Back-to-School recipe range takes the 'mental load' out of meal planning and prep for parents. Our meal kits are packed full of delicious dinnertime delights, while the wider range includes breakfast and lunchtime options that help make every mealtime stress-free."*

PSYCHOLOGIST PROFESSOR WASS SHARES 5 WAYS TO ENGAGE YOUR KIDS AND TEENS, IN ORDER TO GET MORE THAN "OK" OR "FINE" OUT OF THEM:

Psychologist Professor Wass noted, "Many parents want to support their kids, but it can be hard to get the conversation to flow. Here are some tips for how to encourage your children to open up to you when asking about their day at school."

1. Play helps to encourage conversation and engagement. The presence of an outside stimulus can help to facilitate conversation; and, when they're used to talking, then it's easier to move onto more challenging questions, such as things that they found hard about their day.

The below Table Talks games created with HelloFresh will help to encourage conversation around the dinner table.

Name that Food

- In this game, the youngest member of the family is in charge. Everybody else – elder siblings, and parents – tie a school tie or eye mask across their eyes – and the youngest member of the family takes an edible raw vegetable like carrot, cucumber, salad leaves or a side dish like coleslaw and feeds it to the other family members, who have to guess what it is

What was your weird



- As you're sat around the dinner table, everyone has to 'make a picture out of their food' of something relative to their day. Ask prompting questions like:
 - *'Who was your favourite, or your least favourite, person who you met at school today' Can you draw their portrait?*
 - *What did you learn at school today - can you make a picture about it with your food?*

Food match

- While parents are prepping the family meal, they take their HelloFresh box and put it on the table, using 3-5 included ingredients and line it up in a particular order, and put the same number of ingredients on the top of the box
- Kids must guess the exact order of the food items behind the box

Gratitude/Challenge Jar

- Just before everyone sits down to enjoy their meal sat, get a masonry jar or similar, a pen, and small squares of paper, and ask everyone - parents and kids - to write a challenge and a gratitude moment they experienced today. Each family member takes it in turns to pick a note out from the jar, and reads it aloud
2. To help start the conversation initially, ask specific questions to start the conversation flowing – focusing on things that you know that they're excited about already, so they're likely to want to talk about. For example:
 - How was (friend's name) today, what happened to them at school?
 - What did your friends think of your hair style? (Or pencil case, or rucksack, or shoes – anything that your child's excited about will work!)
 3. If you ask questions that shows you listened last time that they talked, that will help encourage and build dialogue, as well as show you care. For example:
 - 'What did (*schoolfriend*) do today then after nobody wanted to sit next to her at lunch yesterday?'
 4. Once they're talking, then use open-ended questions to keep them talking. When in full flow, then open-ended questions are a great way to keep the conversation flowing.
 - 'Wow! That sounds cool! So, what happened next?'
 5. Summarise the conversation, using similar vocabulary to theirs. For example:
 - "OK, so (*schoolfriend*) has been funny with you all day, but you're not sure whether it's because of X, or Y.'



NOTES TO EDITORS

This research of 2,000 parents of children aged between 13 and 18 years old was commissioned by HelloFresh and conducted by Perspectus Global during August 2024.

*research taken from the HelloFresh Global Survey 2024. The research was conducted by Censuswide with 14,686 General Respondents across the UK, Germany, France, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Australia, Netherlands, Ireland, Spain, Italy, New Zealand, and Belgium between 19.07.2024 - 29.07.2024. Censuswide abide by and employ members of the Market Research Society which is based on the ESOMAR principles and are members of The British Polling Council.

The full Back-to-School menu:

W/C 2nd September:

- *Parma Ham and Parmesan Filled Pasta with Creamy Mushroom Sauce*
- *Peri Peri Glazed Chicken Burger and Spiced Halloumi Fries with Zesty Corn Slaw and Sweet Chilli Sauce*
- *Kids pancake animals*
- *Kids pick n mix lunch*
- *Chocolate Millionaire's Ice Cream Sundae*
- *Hot choc & cookie dippers*
- *4 Day Breakfast Plan | Apple & Blueberry Granola & Oats | Serves 2*
- *Pink Berry Breakfast Parfait*

W/C 9th September:

- *Lemon Chicken Noodles with Roasted Sesame Seeds and Green Beans*
- *Dan Dan Style Pork Noodles and Glazed Veggie Gyoza with Smacked Cucumber Salad*
- *Kids' Veg Lunchbox Fillers with Veg Batons + apple juice*
- *Kid's Tortilla Cups*
- *Nutty Apricot Muffins*
- *Kids Cauli-Tots*
- *Milk Chocolate & Speculoos Tiffin*
- *Kid's Tuna & Sweetcorn Pasta Bake*

W/C 16th September:

- *Quick Bangers and Garlic Mash with Roasted Veg and Red Wine Jus*
- *Mumbai Street Style Lamb Keema Pav with Pickled Onion, Chips and Baby Leaf Salad*
- *Blueberry Crumble Breakfast Muffins | Makes 9 muffins*
- *Mac 'n' Cheese Side Dish*
- *Giant Speculoos Filled Cookie*

W/C 23rd September:

- *BBQ Beef Quesadillas with Baby Leaf Salad*
- *Honey Butter Gochujang Chicken with Charred Corn Slaw and Cheesy Chips*

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For further information, please contact the HelloFresh PR team at W communications:
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About HelloFresh

The HelloFresh Group is a global food solutions group and the world's leading meal kit provider. The HelloFresh Group consists of eight brands that provide customers with high quality food and recipes for different meal occasions. The Company was founded in Berlin in November 2011 and operates in the UK, USA, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Australia, Austria, Switzerland, Canada, New Zealand, Sweden, France, Denmark, Norway, Italy, Ireland and Spain. In Q2 2024 HelloFresh Group delivered over 243 million meals globally. HelloFresh SE went public on the Frankfurt Stock Exchange in November 2017 and is currently traded on the MDAX (Mid-Cap German Stock Market Index). The HelloFresh Group has offices in London, Berlin, Saarbrücken, New York, Chicago, Boulder, Amsterdam, Sydney, Toronto, Auckland, Paris, Copenhagen, Milan, Dublin and Barcelona.