

## **Assigned Parking**

Every family has expectations, with many things as unwritten rules. For instance, I park in the garage, so the teen drivers know not to block mom's car. We also have the rule of "no toys at the dinner table." This rule was established early in the toddler days to keep stuffed animals and trucks away from food. This rule now applies to phones and electronic devices at the table.

Our family has modified expectations over the years. Early family meals focused on manners and trying new foods. (Yes, my husband has learned to try new foods.) We've had mornings where everyone was expected at the breakfast table by 7 a.m. We now share cooking, table preparation and cleaning duties.

I had shared about our daily meal routines with an acquaintance. The person responded - "You eat dinner together? At a table?"

When a family sits down together for meal time, it helps them share about daily life. Eating together can promote more sensible eating habits, which can help weight management.

As your family gathers during the holidays, I challenge you to create assigned parking (aka a drop-off basket/box) for electronic devices. Yes, these devices connect us with others, but they can detract from our face-to-face relationships.

There is no wiser investment than spending quality time with family and friends. It develops the sense of belonging and helps us feel emotionally closer to each other.

This year, you might not be able to be physically present with friends and family. Schedule a time to connect, rather than randomly calling and possibly interrupting. This will create an opportunity for quality interaction rather than distracted conversations.

*Source: Why the Family Meal is Important from [standfordchildrens.org](http://standfordchildrens.org)*

## **K-State Research and Extension Cowley County Events**

December 24-January 1 - Extension Office Closed

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K-State Research and Extension is a short name for the Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, a program designed to generate and distribute useful knowledge for the well-being of Kansans. Supported by county, state, federal and private funds, the program has county Extension offices, experiment fields, area Extension offices and regional research centers statewide. Its headquarters is on the K-State campus in Manhattan.