GoalTodo

Keep a weekly date night: one evening, phones away, every week

Keep a weekly date night

13 weeks · Mon, Nov 30 → Sun, Feb 28

Week by week

Tick a box each time you do a session.

Nov 30–Dec 6
Week 1

Your first date night, at home

Start

- [ ] Ask your partner for one evening this week, just the two of you, and agree a start time
  5 min
- [ ] Date night at home: share a simple meal or a pot of tea, phones in another room, and talk about anything but chores
  1 to 2 hours

Done when: You've spent one evening together this week, just the two of you, with your phones out of the room

Sticking point: No evening looks free. Take the hour you can get, such as after the children are in bed or before a late shift. A short date this week beats a perfect one next month.

Dec 7–13
Week 2

Pick your night and take turns

Set up

- [ ] Choose a fixed night for date night, and a backup night for weeks it can't happen. Put both in your calendars as repeating events
  15 min
- [ ] Agree whose turn it is to plan: one of you this week, the other next week, and so on
  2 min
- [ ] Plan this week's date: pick the idea, check the time with your partner and sort anything it needs, such as food, tickets or a sitter
  15 min
- [ ] Date night, planned by whoever's turn it is
  1 to 2 hours

Done when: Your night and backup night are in both your calendars, you know whose turn it is next week, and you've had this week's date

Sticking point: Shifts change every week. Choose the night each Sunday instead, and treat that choice as fixed once it's made.

Dec 14–20
Week 3

Phones away, properly

Set up

- [ ] Plan this week's date: pick the idea, check the time with your partner and sort anything it needs, such as food, tickets or a sitter
  15 min
- [ ] When the date starts, both phones go on silent and out of sight, in another room or a drawer, until it ends
- [ ] If someone may need to reach you, such as a sitter or a relative you care for, keep one phone face down with only their calls allowed through
- [ ] Date night, planned by whoever's turn it is
  1 to 2 hours

Done when: You had a whole date night with both phones out of sight, apart from any call you'd agreed to take

Sticking point: You reach for your phone without thinking. That's habit, not need. If it's in another room, the reach comes to nothing and passes.

Dec 21–27
Week 4

Talk, not just do

Connect

- [ ] Plan this week's date: pick the idea, check the time with your partner and sort anything it needs, such as food, tickets or a sitter
  15 min
- [ ] When the date starts, both phones go on silent and out of sight, in another room or a drawer, until it ends
- [ ] During the date, take turns asking each other a question that isn't about work, chores, money or the children (there are ideas in the guide)
  20 min
- [ ] Each tell the other one thing you appreciated about them this week
  2 min
- [ ] Date night, planned by whoever's turn it is
  1 to 2 hours

Done when: You've had four date nights in four weeks and spent part of this one really talking. That's a month of them, the second step on your board

Sticking point: The talk drifts into a problem, a bill or a row. Park it: write it down and agree another time for it this week. Date night is for enjoying each other.

Dec 28–Jan 3
Week 5

Something neither of you has done

Explore

- [ ] Whoever's planning suggests two or three new things, and you choose one together that you both want to try
  10 min
- [ ] When the date starts, both phones go on silent and out of sight, in another room or a drawer, until it ends
- [ ] Date night: the new thing you chose together
  1 to 2 hours

Done when: You tried something new together that you'd both agreed to

Sticking point: One of you loves the idea and the other is going along to be kind. Pick again. A date only one of you wants does less for you both.

Jan 4–10
Week 6

A cheap night out nearby

Explore

- [ ] Plan a night out within walking distance or a short trip away, free or cheap: a free event, a walk to a new spot or a hot drink somewhere you haven't been
  15 min
- [ ] When the date starts, both phones go on silent and out of sight, in another room or a drawer, until it ends
- [ ] Date night, planned by whoever's turn it is
  1 to 2 hours

Done when: You've been out together this week, close to home, for little or nothing

Sticking point: Going out means a sitter you can't get. Swap babysitting with another family or a friend, or try the ideas for young children in the guide, such as a lunch date.

Jan 11–17
Week 7

Get moving together

Explore

- [ ] Plan an active date at a pace that suits the less keen of you: a long walk, a bike ride, a swim or dancing in the kitchen
  15 min
- [ ] When the date starts, both phones go on silent and out of sight, in another room or a drawer, until it ends
- [ ] Date night, on the move
  1 hour or more

Done when: You did something active together and both of you enjoyed it, or at least laughed about it

Sticking point: One of you is much fitter. Choose something where that doesn't matter, such as a walk with a view at the end, or something you're both new at.

Jan 18–24
Week 8

Plan B for the busy weeks

Protect

- [ ] Agree what happens when your night falls through: move it to the backup night, or swap it for a 30-minute date at home that week
  10 min
- [ ] Plan this week's date: pick the idea, check the time with your partner and sort anything it needs, such as food, tickets or a sitter
  15 min
- [ ] When the date starts, both phones go on silent and out of sight, in another room or a drawer, until it ends
- [ ] Date night, planned by whoever's turn it is
  1 to 2 hours

Done when: You both know your plan B, and you've had this week's date

Sticking point: Date night is the first thing dropped when work or family gets busy. With a plan B agreed, a hard week means a shorter date, not none.

Jan 25–31
Week 9

Learn something together

Explore

- [ ] Pick a skill you'd both like to learn and find a free lesson: a dance, a dish, a few words of a language, or knots, cards or map reading
  15 min
- [ ] When the date starts, both phones go on silent and out of sight, in another room or a drawer, until it ends
- [ ] Date night: learn it together, and laugh at the first attempts
  1 to 2 hours

Done when: You've both had a go at something new and can show what you learned

Sticking point: It turns into one of you teaching and the other getting told off. Choose something neither of you knows, so you're beginners together.

Feb 1–7
Week 10

A date for almost nothing

Protect

- [ ] Agree a usual date night budget together, including a zero option for tight weeks
  10 min
- [ ] Plan this week's date from the "when money is tight" list in the guide
  15 min
- [ ] When the date starts, both phones go on silent and out of sight, in another room or a drawer, until it ends
- [ ] Date night, planned by whoever's turn it is
  1 to 2 hours

Done when: You've agreed what date night usually costs, and this week's cost nothing or next to it

Sticking point: Free feels like second best. It isn't: what matters is time that's really for the two of you, not what it costs.

Feb 8–14
Week 11

Dream together

Connect

- [ ] Plan this week's date: pick the idea, check the time with your partner and sort anything it needs, such as food, tickets or a sitter
  15 min
- [ ] When the date starts, both phones go on silent and out of sight, in another room or a drawer, until it ends
- [ ] Each write a list of things you'd like to do together: this month, this year and one day. No talking while you write, then swap and talk them through
  15 min to write
- [ ] Date night, planned by whoever's turn it is
  1 to 2 hours

Done when: You each have a list, you've shared them, and you've picked one thing from them for a date soon

Sticking point: Your lists look very different. That's useful, not a problem: it's a list of dates you'd never have thought of.

Feb 15–21
Week 12

What's working

Review

- [ ] Plan this week's date: pick the idea, check the time with your partner and sort anything it needs, such as food, tickets or a sitter
  15 min
- [ ] When the date starts, both phones go on silent and out of sight, in another room or a drawer, until it ends
- [ ] At the end of the date, each say which date night you liked most so far, and one thing you'd change: the night, the length, the planning or the cost
  15 min
- [ ] Date night, planned by whoever's turn it is
  1 to 2 hours

Done when: You've each named a favourite date and agreed one change for the next three months

Sticking point: One of you has been doing more of the planning. Say so kindly, and reset the turns.

Feb 22–28
Week 13

Three months of date nights

Keep going

- [ ] Plan a favourite: repeat the date you both liked most, or one from your dream lists
  15 min
- [ ] When the date starts, both phones go on silent and out of sight, in another room or a drawer, until it ends
- [ ] Date night, planned by whoever's turn it is
  1 to 2 hours
- [ ] Write down whose turn it is for each of the next four weeks, with a first idea for each
  10 min

Done when: You've kept date night going for three months, with a missed week or two at most. That's the third step on your board

Sticking point: The newness has worn off and it can start to feel like a chore. Go back to something neither of you has done, or a date from your dream lists.

Milestones

Sun, Dec 6	Your first date night
Sun, Dec 27	A month of date nights
Sun, Feb 28	Three months of date nights
Sun, May 30	Six months of date nights

How the plan works

One evening a week that's just for the two of you. You choose a fixed night, take turns planning, and put your phones away while you're together. A date doesn't have to cost anything or happen away from home: a meal and a real conversation after the children are in bed counts.

Each week adds one thing. First a date at home, then a fixed night and a planning rota, then phones away, then time to really talk. After that you try new things, get out, get moving, learn together and agree what happens in a busy week. Below there are 52 date night ideas to choose from, most free or cheap and at home or nearby.

Why weekly? In a 2022 US survey of 2,000 married people, husbands and wives with regular date nights, once or twice a month or more, were more likely to say they were very happy in their marriages, and reported better communication and more commitment. Only 48% had dates that often. A UK study of almost 10,000 mothers found that married couples who went out about once a month were the least likely to split up, more so than couples who went out once a week. For unmarried couples living together, date nights made no difference. So once a week isn't a magic number. It's easy to remember, and it leaves room for the weeks life gets in the way.

These surveys mostly asked married couples. The plan doesn't need a marriage: it's for any couple, married or not, living together or apart.

The milestones count from the first day of week 1: your first date night is in week 1, a month of them is week 4, three months is week 13, and six months comes about three months after the plan ends.

Which level to pick

- We don't have a date night yet: you rarely spend an evening that's just for the two of you, or you never have on a regular basis. 13 weeks, to three months of date nights.
- We've had them, but they slipped: you used to have date nights, and they faded. 8 weeks: you start by working out what stopped them, then rebuild the routine more quickly.

If you're not sure, pick the first level. Agree on it together: this is a plan for two.

Before you start

Date night is for a relationship where you both feel safe. If your relationship has fear, control or abuse in it, date nights aren't the fix, and it's not your fault. Domestic abuse isn't always physical: it can also mean being cut off from friends and family, having your money controlled, your phone checked or being put down again and again. Free, confidential help is there, 24 hours a day:

- US: the National Domestic Violence Hotline (https://www.thehotline.org/), 800-799-7233, or text START to 88788
- UK: the National Domestic Abuse Helpline, 0808 2000 247, and the other services on GOV.UK's domestic abuse help page (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-abuse-how-to-get-help)
- Australia: 1800RESPECT, 1800 737 732

If you're in danger now, call your emergency number: 911 in the US, 999 in the UK, 000 in Australia. If your phone or browsing might be checked, use a phone or computer that's safer.

If things are hard but safe, a date night can help, but it can't carry a problem you can't talk about. If you keep going over the same old ground, or every date turns into an argument, see a couples counsellor early. In the UK, Relate offers counselling; in Australia, Relationships Australia (1300 364 277).

Agree the plan together. Date night works when you both want it. If one of you isn't keen, start with week 1 and see how it feels.

Choosing your night and taking turns

Pick a fixed night, and a backup. A night that repeats every week, already in both calendars, is easier to keep than one you negotiate each time. Booking it in is part of making your relationship a priority. Choose

the evening you're both least tired and least likely to be called away, and a second evening for weeks the first one won't work.

If your weeks change, with shifts, travel or shared care of children, choose the night every Sunday instead. Once it's chosen, treat it as fixed.

Take turns planning. One of you plans this week, the other next week. The planner picks the idea, checks the time and sorts anything it needs. The other just turns up. That way neither of you carries it all, and you each get surprised half the time.

Agree what it usually costs, including a free option for tight weeks. A date doesn't need to cost money to count.

Agree a plan B. If the night falls through, move it to your backup night, or have a 30-minute date at home that week instead: a cup of tea, phones away, one question each.

Protecting it

Phones away. When the date starts, both phones go on silent and out of sight, in another room or a drawer, until it ends. Put down your phone, turn off the TV and talk. If someone may need to reach you, such as a sitter or a relative you care for, keep one phone face down with only their calls allowed through. If you're also working on the Spend less time on my phone plan, this fits with it: silent and out of reach while you're with people.

Treat it like any other appointment. If something else wants the evening, the answer is "I've got plans", because you have. If date night really has to move, move it to the backup night rather than dropping it.

Leave the hard topics for another time. Bills, chores and the things you disagree about need talking about, but not on date night. Fun together helps hold a couple together, and a "deep and meaningful" talk about problems can easily turn into an argument that leaves you both feeling worse. If one comes up, write it down and agree a time for it that week.

Talking, not just doing

A date isn't just an activity side by side. Spend part of each one really talking: listening without distraction and staying curious about each other's lives. Quiet dates, such as a walk or a meal at home, can be the most satisfying when you really talk.

Some questions to take turns with:

- What was the best part of your week, and why?
- What's something you've been thinking about lately that I don't know about?
- What's something you'd like to try this year?
- What's a memory of us that makes you smile?
- What did you want to be when you were ten?
- Where would you go if we had a free week and no limits?
- What's one thing I could do that would make your week easier?
- What are you looking forward to?

End with each of you saying one thing you appreciated about the other this week.

52 date night ideas

Most are free or cheap, and at home or nearby. Whoever's planning can pick one, or you can work through the list together. Trying new things together can help keep a relationship fresh, but check you both want to do it: a date that's really only for one of you does less for you both.

At home

1. Cook a dish from a country neither of you has been to.
2. Lay the table properly, light candles and eat slowly, even if it's a simple meal.

3. Have a picnic on a blanket on the living-room floor.

4. Play a board game or card game for two.

5. Blindfold taste test: each picks treats for the other to guess.

6. Sing along to old favourites, as badly as you like.

7. Hold your own school dance: each makes a secret playlist of songs from your teens, then dress up and dance.

8. Plan a dream trip in detail: one of you picks where to stay, the other what to do.

9. Watch a film the planner chooses, with a break halfway to talk about it.

10. Look through old photos and tell each other the stories behind them.

11. Write each other a short letter and read them aloud.

12. Work on a jigsaw puzzle together over a pot of tea.

Out and nearby 13. Walk a part of your town you've never walked, and stop for a hot drink. 14. Go to a free museum or gallery, and each choose your favourite piece. 15. Watch the sunset, or the sunrise, from the best view nearby. 16. Find a local open-mic or live music night. 17. Visit a market together and cook what you buy. 18. Go to a free talk or event at the library or community centre. 19. Have a breakfast date instead of a dinner one. 20. Be tourists in your own town: go where visitors go. 21. Revisit the place you first met, or had your first date.

Active 22. A bike ride with a picnic at the end. 23. A walk on a trail or in a park you haven't been to. 24. Go for a swim together. 25. Play tennis or badminton on a free public court. 26. Go ice skating or roller skating. 27. Kick a ball about or throw a ball in the park. 28. Do a stretching or yoga session together at home. 29. A walk-and-talk: the planner picks the route, you both pick the topics.

Learning together 30. Learn a dance from a free online lesson. 31. Learn to cook one new dish properly. 32. Learn a few phrases of a language for a place you'd like to visit. 33. Take a free class at the library or community centre. 34. Learn to read a map and use a compass, then try it on a walk. 35. Learn a card game or a card trick. 36. Plant a window box or a pot of herbs. 37. Teach each other something you're good at.

When money is tight 38. Write your lists of things to do together: this month, this year and one day. 39. Cook a meal from what's already in the cupboard, as a challenge. 40. Go to a free outdoor concert, festival or fireworks. 41. Take a flask of tea to a view and watch the light change. 42. Read a book aloud to each other, a chapter each date. 43. Volunteer together for an evening. 44. Recreate your first date for less. 45. Question night: work through the questions above, and add your own.

When you have young children, or no childcare 46. Have an at-home date after the children are in bed: anything from the first list. 47. Have a lunch date while the children are at school, nursery or with family. 48. Swap babysitting with another family or a friend: you take theirs one week, they take yours the next. 49. Ask a family member or friend for one regular evening a month. 50. Have an early coffee date before the children wake. 51. Picnic in the garden or on the balcony with the baby monitor on. 52. Take a long walk with the pram or buggy while the baby sleeps.

What you need

- A shared calendar, or the calendars you already use, with your night and backup night as repeating events.
- A list of ideas: this one, plus your own as you think of them.
- A place for the phones outside the room you're in: a drawer, a shelf or a basket.
- Childcare, if you have young children: a babysitting swap, a family member, or dates after bedtime.
- An agreed usual cost for date night, which can be nothing.

Common mistakes

- Waiting for a free evening to turn up. It rarely does. Book it in.
- Saving it for big, expensive nights. They're hard to afford every week. Most dates can be simple and close to home.

- One person doing all the planning. Take turns, so it's shared.
- Doing the same thing every week. Routine is fine, but try something new now and then.
- Choosing something only one of you wants. Check you're both keen first.
- Phones on the table. Out of sight, on silent, until the date ends.
- Using date night for problems. Talk about them another time.
- Giving up after a missed week. One missed week is just one week. Have the next one.

Keeping it up to six months

After the last week there are no new tasks. Keep four things going:

- Your night, every week, with a backup night for weeks it won't work.
- Taking turns, with the next four weeks' planners written down.
- Phones away, every date.
- A look back every month or so: your favourite date lately, and one thing to change.

When it starts to feel like a routine, go back to the idea list or your dream lists and try something new. Six months of date nights comes about three months after the plan ends.

If you miss a week, have the next one. You don't need to make up for it with a bigger date. If date night keeps falling apart, or one of you no longer wants it, talk about why. If you can't sort it out between you, a couples counsellor can help.

If you fall behind

Missed 1 week: Missed a week? Have the next one as planned. Don't make up for it with a double date or a big night. If the coming week looks full too, have a 30-minute date at home: a cup of tea, phones away, a question each.

Missed 2 weeks: Take 10 minutes to talk about what got in the way, without blame. If your fixed night keeps clashing, move to your backup night or choose a new one. Make the next date the simplest you can, at home, then carry on from the week you stopped on.

Missed 3 weeks: Repeat the week you stopped on, and go back over week 2 of your level: check your night still works for you both, and that the planning turns are fair.

Missed 4 or more weeks: Start again at week 1 of "We've had them, but they slipped". If date night keeps stopping because one of you doesn't want it, or dates keep turning into arguments, see a couples counsellor. Getting help early is easier than waiting.

Sources

National Marriage Project, University of Virginia
`https://nationalmarriageproject.org/2023-date-night-opportunity`
“Husbands and wives who have frequent date nights were significantly more likely to report being “very happy” in their marriages, compared to those who did not.”

National Marriage Project, University of Virginia
`https://nationalmarriageproject.org/2023-date-night-opportunity`
“48% had date nights “one or twice a month” or more frequently than that.”

National Marriage Project, University of Virginia
`https://nationalmarriageproject.org/2023-date-night-opportunity`

“Husbands and wives who had regular date nights reported better communication, more commitment, and greater sexual satisfaction.”

SMART Couples, University of Florida IFAS Extension
`https://smartcouples.ifas.ufl.edu/married/having-fun-and-staying-close/can-date-night-keep-your-marriage-together/`
“Researchers at the Marriage Foundation and the University of Lincoln recently followed almost 10,000 married and cohabiting moms over a period of eleven years to find out more about these questions.”

SMART Couples, University of Florida IFAS Extension
`https://smartcouples.ifas.ufl.edu/married/having-fun-and-staying-close/can-date-night-keep-your-marriage-together/`
“Although this study did find that date nights had an effect on relationships, the reality is that how often we go to “dinner and a movie” definitely isn’t the most important thing when it comes to couple longevity.”

SMART Couples, University of Florida IFAS Extension
`https://smartcouples.ifas.ufl.edu/married/having-fun-and-staying-close/can-date-night-keep-your-marriage-together/`
“But once a month will probably be just fine.”

SMART Couples, University of Florida IFAS Extension
`https://smartcouples.ifas.ufl.edu/dating/having-fun-and-staying-close/making-date-night-count`
“Meanwhile, people who “mixed it up” with new and different activities with their partners were happier.”

SMART Couples, University of Florida IFAS Extension
`https://smartcouples.ifas.ufl.edu/dating/having-fun-and-staying-close/making-date-night-count`
“Another recent study looking at how couples spent their free time found that this kind of “date” doesn’t help so much if one member has been dragged along, or if both people know that an activity is really only “for” one of them.”

SMART Couples, University of Florida IFAS Extension
`https://smartcouples.ifas.ufl.edu/dating/having-fun-and-staying-close/making-date-night-count`
“No-frills activities like these can be really satisfying, especially when we feel close to our loved ones and share meaningful conversation.”

SMART Couples, University of Florida IFAS Extension
`https://smartcouples.ifas.ufl.edu/parentscoparents/making-time-for-each-other/8-fun-fresh--creative-at-home-dates-for-parents/`
“Of course, we all need to get out of the house with our partners every so often. But for most people, this is going to be less frequent while we have children at home.”

SMART Couples, University of Florida IFAS Extension
`https://smartcouples.ifas.ufl.edu/parentscoparents/making-time-for-each-other/8-fun-fresh--creative-at-home-dates-for-parents/`
“Learning a new skill is a great way to introduce some novelty, excitement, and growth into your relationship, a practice known to strengthen couple bonds.”

Better Health Channel, Victorian Government
`https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/relationships-tips-for-success`
“Regular ‘deposits in your relationship bank account’ will help protect your relationship and make it stronger.”

Better Health Channel, Victorian Government
`https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/relationships-tips-for-success`
“Doing fun activities together is very important, as often ‘deep and meaningful’ conversations about couple issues can turn into disagreements which leave you both feeling worse, not better.”

Better Health Channel, Victorian Government
https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/relationships-tips-for-success
"If there is something in your relationship that is difficult or painful to talk to each other about, consider seeing a counsellor."

Relationships Australia WA
https://relationshipswa.org.au/tip-sheets/recharge-your-relationship
"So put down your phone, turn off the TV and make time to actually talk with each other."

Relationships Australia WA
https://relationshipswa.org.au/tip-sheets/recharge-your-relationship
"This involves listening without distraction, being interested and curious about what is happening in your partner's daily life, and trying to empathise with what they are going through."

Relationships Australia WA
https://relationshipswa.org.au/tip-sheets/recharge-your-relationship
"If you feel there's any sign of trouble in your relationship, seek help early."

GOV.UK, Home Office
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-abuse-how-to-get-help
"If you're experiencing domestic abuse and feel frightened of, or controlled by, a partner, an ex-partner or family member, it's important to remember that it's not your fault and there is no shame in seeking help."

GOV.UK, Home Office
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-abuse-how-to-get-help
"Domestic abuse is not always physical violence."

GOV.UK, Home Office
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-abuse-how-to-get-help
"If you are worried that a friend, neighbour or loved one is a victim of domestic abuse, you can call the National Domestic Abuse Helpline for free and confidential advice, 24 hours a day on 0808 2000 247."

National Domestic Violence Hotline
https://www.thehotline.org/
"Please contact 911 if you feel like you are in immediate danger or a life-threatening situation."

National Domestic Violence Hotline
https://www.thehotline.org/
"If you're concerned your internet usage might be monitored, call us at 800.799.SAFE (7233)."

SMART Couples, University of Florida IFAS Extension
https://smartcouples.ifas.ufl.edu/married/having-fun-and-staying-close/can-date-night-keep-your-marriage-together/
"This interesting finding, however, only applied to married couples."

SMART Couples, University of Florida IFAS Extension
https://smartcouples.ifas.ufl.edu/married/having-fun-and-staying-close/can-date-night-keep-your-marriage-together/
"When it came to men and women who were cohabiting, date nights, whether common or rare, seemed to make no difference at all."

This plan online	https://goaltodo.com/weekly-date-night
Reach it with others on Welang	https://welang.com/goals/weekly-date-night
Reach it on your own in HourLife	https://www.hourlife.com