

Family

The family is an old and fundamental social institution based on kinship. People are related to one another through ancestry, marriage or social agreement, which means that people are related either by marriage or by biological ties. The ways of forming a family are different in each culture. Families can be formed according to descent systems (we recognize matrilineal, patrilineal, and bilateral descent systems), authority (matriarchal, patriarchal, egalitarian families).

The size of a family unit varies according to the relationship and possible life circumstances. The most common forms of a family are nuclear (husband, wife and children) or extended (a nuclear family plus other relatives who are in touch and often visit each other). In the case of divorce or death, children are brought up in a single-parent family. Divorced or widowed parents may get married again and form a reconstituted or blended family.

To start a family is a responsible decision and is worth considering. Young couples have to cope with many changes resulting from such a way of life. Once a couple gets married, the husband and wife have to deal with many things they had never thought about before. It is not only the cost of living which, compared to wages, can be quite expensive but also looking for a place to live, judging a career promotion or having a baby, changing habits, etc. Many couples want to succeed in their careers first and then start a family. If they have a new-born baby, the mother can quit work to take care of the baby, or she can go back to work and leave her baby at a day-care centre or with an au-pair. Many times grandparents are very helpful. There is some financial support from the government, but it is not sufficient. That's why it is becoming more common for young people to get married after setting out on their careers and then limit themselves to having one or two children.

Families in the past used to be much bigger with many children and separate parent roles. The father was supposed to earn money and teach the children to be responsible and courageous. The mother didn't go outside the home to work; she used to run the household and take care of the children

and their education. She taught them to be sensitive, patient, friendly and thoughtful.

In modern families husband and wife share power and authority, and both parents and children share certain goals and values, household duties, leisure time activities, etc. All the family members take an active part in mixing business and pleasure, helping with shopping, tidying up, cooking and supporting each other. Nowadays women are more independent; parents share power and duties equally. Both of them try to build their career and support the family financially. On the other hand, they devote more time to work than to raising their children. There is a lack of respect towards parents who have lost some of their authority. There is also less communication within the family due to computers and the Internet. Bad relationships often result in frequent arguments.

Family life has changed a lot in recent years, and this is a good topic worth discussing!

Answer the questions:

1. What comes to mind when you hear the word “family”?
2. There has been much talk recently of increased social problems due to family breakdowns. Is this true in your country?
3. Is “blood thicker than water” regarding your family?
4. Are we all in one big happy family?
5. What would the world be like without families?
6. Do your parents sometimes get on your nerves? Why?
7. What bad habits do you have that make your parents angry?
8. Bring a photograph of your family and some members of your family. Tell your classmates as much as you can about the people in the photo.