

VibeCheck (Family Brainstormer)

An S5 Diagnostic Protocol for Family Vacation Planning

This protocol is a diagnostic tool designed to "research" your family's planning style. Its purpose is to guide your family through a 5-step process to identify the root cause of "Vacation Planning Friction."

By collecting and analyzing *data* on your family's preferences, you will move from vague feelings ("Planning is always stressful") to a clear, actionable insight ("Our core friction point is 'Budget,' but we are all aligned on 'Adventure.'").

Phase 1: The Research Protocol

This phase formally defines the single problem we are investigating.

- **Central Problem Entity:** Vacation Planning Friction
- **Problem Statement:** The family experiences significant stress, mismatched expectations, or arguments during the vacation *planning phase*, which negatively impacts excitement for the trip and the final vacation's success.
- **Primary Objective:** To identify and rank the primary misalignments in Planning Styles, Budget Expectations, and Activity Preferences among family members.
- **Secondary Objective:** To quantify the "Vibe" (level of excitement vs. anxiety) each family member feels about different parts of the planning process.

Phase 2: Variable Identification (The "Vibe" Matrix)

This is the most critical step. We must isolate the "suspects" (the planning topics) from the "controls" (the rules for taking the test).

Independent Variables (The Suspects)

These are the key factors we will measure for each family member.

1. **Planning Style Vibe:**
 - **What we're tracking:** The preference for detailed, pre-planned itineraries vs. spontaneous, go-with-the-flow discovery.
 - **Mechanism:** A mismatch here is the most common source of friction. One person's "relaxing" (no plans) is another person's "stressful" (no structure).
2. **Vacation Pace Vibe:**
 - **What we're tracking:** The preference for high-energy, "see-everything" adventure vs. slow-paced, "do-nothing" relaxation.
 - **Mechanism:** Mismatched pace expectations lead to one person feeling "bored" while another feels "exhausted" and "overwhelmed."
3. **Budget "Philosophy" Vibe:**
 - **What we're tracking:** The emotional priority of cost vs. convenience. Is the goal to

find the *best deal* (even if it's inconvenient) or to have the *best experience* (even if it costs more)?

- **Mechanism:** Conflicts here are rarely about the dollar amount and more about the *value* of money (Thrifty vs. Splurge-for-Comfort).

4. **Social Vibe:**

- **What we're tracking:** The preference for "all-family-all-the-time" togetherness vs. a "mix-and-match" approach with solo time or split activities.
- **Mechanism:** Expecting 100% togetherness can create pressure and resentment, while too much separation can make it feel like "not a family trip."

Confounding Variables (The Controls)

These rules are **MANDATORY** to ensure the data is clean.

1. **No "Cross-Talk":** Each family member *must* complete the Phase 3 Log independently and privately *before* the Phase 4 Analysis meeting. Do not discuss your answers. This prevents one person's opinion from influencing another's data.
2. **No "Right Answers":** This is not a test. It's a data-collection log. The goal is 100% honesty. There are no "wrong" or "bad" preferences.
3. **The "Mindset" Control:** Fill this out when you are calm and not in the middle of a stressful planning session or argument.

Phase 3: The Quantitative Data Log (The VibeCheck Survey)

This log is the core of the diagnostic. Each family member (over age 10, or as appropriate) must copy this table and fill it out privately.

Instructions: Rate each statement on the "Energy Scale" from -5 to +5.

- **-5 (Drains Energy):** "This idea makes me feel stressed, anxious, or angry."
- **0 (Neutral):** "I have no strong feelings either way."
- **+5 (Gives Energy):** "This idea makes me feel excited, happy, and relaxed."

| VibeCheck Survey Item | Family Member Name: _____ |

|| Energy Score (-5 to +5) |

| A. Planning Style Vibe | |

| 1. "Creating a detailed, hour-by-hour itinerary before we go." | |

| 2. "Booking only the main flight/hotel and figuring out the rest when we get there." | |

| 3. "Spending hours researching the 'perfect' restaurant or activity." | |

| 4. "Just picking a place from a 'best-of' list and moving on." | |

| B. Vacation Pace Vibe | |

| 5. "The idea of a vacation with 'no plans' and just relaxing by a pool/beach." | |

| 6. "The idea of a vacation packed with activities, tours, and sightseeing from 9 AM to 9 PM." |

|

| 7. "Waking up early (7 AM) on vacation to get a head start on the day." | |

| 8. "Sleeping in (10 AM) and having a slow, leisurely breakfast." | |

| C. Budget Philosophy Vibe | |

- | 9. "Saving money, even if it means a longer layover or a less-convenient hotel." | |
- | 10. "Spending extra for 'convenience' (e.g., non-stop flights, hotel in the city center)." | |
- | 11. "Setting a very clear, strict budget for 'food and fun' per day." | |
- | 12. "Not worrying about a daily budget; just being 'reasonable' and enjoying things." | |
- | D. Social Vibe | |
- | 13. "The expectation that we will do all activities and eat all meals together." | |
- | 14. "The idea that people can split up (e.g., kids do one thing, parents do another)." | |
- | 15. "Having 'mandatory' family time but also 'scheduled' free time for yourself." | |

Phase 4: Quantitative Analysis & Insight Generation

Set a specific time for this. This is the "Family Brainstormer" meeting.

Step 1: Create the Master Alignment Chart.

On a big piece of paper (or a shared spreadsheet), create a master chart. List all 15 survey items down the side. Create columns for each family member.

- **[Family Member 1]**
- **[Family Member 2]**
- **[Family Member 3]**
- **[Family Member 4]**
- **GAP (Range)**

Step 2: Transfer the Data.

Go through the survey one item at a time. Have each family member share their score for that item. Write all scores on the master chart.

Step 3: Calculate the "Friction Score" (The Gap).

In the final "GAP" column, find the range between the highest score and the lowest score for that single item.

- *Example:* For Item #1, if Dad is +4, Mom is -3, and Kid is 0, the highest is +4 and the lowest is -3. The "Gap" (range) is 7.
- *Example:* For Item #5, if everyone is between +3 and +5, the "Gap" is only 2.

Step 4: Identify Your "Vibe Zones."

Now, look at the "GAP" column.

- **Mark the 3 items with the HIGHEST Gaps (e.g., > 6).** These are your **"Red Zones" (High Friction Points)**. This is the root cause of your planning stress.
- **Mark the 3 items with the LOWEST Gaps (e.g., < 3).** These are your **"Green Zones" (High Alignment Points)**. This is your family's "planning superpower."

Step 5: Synthesize Your Findings (The Insight Statement).

As a group, complete this sentence:

"Our family's planning data shows that our biggest friction points (Red Zones) are nearly always about __ and __. However, we are all strongly aligned (Green Zones) on __ and __."

Phase 5: The A/B Test Protocol (The Family Vacation Charter)

You have completed the diagnosis. This phase is the *treatment plan*. You will now create a

"hypothesis" for a better planning process.

Hypothesis Structure:

"Our hypothesis is that by

\$\$Action to address a Red Zone\$\$

and

\$\$Action to lean into a Green Zone\$\$

, we can achieve

\$\$Measurable Outcome\$\$

."

Example Charter Based on Analysis:

- **Data:** Our "Red Zone" was Item #9 (Saving Money vs. Convenience) and our "Green Zone" was Item #6 (Packed Itinerary).
- **Hypothesis:** "My hypothesis is that by **(1)** *setting a clear 'Convenience Budget' upfront* (to address the budget Red Zone) and **(2)** *letting each person plan one 'action-packed' day* (to lean into our adventure Green Zone), we can plan our next trip with **(3)** *50% less arguing and 20% more excitement.*"

Your Family's New Charter (Action Plan):

Based on your Red and Green Zones, write 3-5 "rules" for your family's next planning session.

1. (Rule for Red Zone #1): _____
2. (Rule for Red Zone #2): _____
3. (Rule for Green Zone #1): _____