

How to Start Planning Your Family Reunion

PEOPLE STILL WANT TO STAY IN TOUCH WITH THE COUSINS, AUNTS, UNCLES AND SIBLINGS ON THE FAMILY TREE, IF JUST TO SEE HOW THE NEWEST ONES ARE DOING.

If you are the person in charge of your family's reunion, here are some steps you can take to assist you when you get to work planning it.

Having a family reunion takes time, commitment and planning.

- 1. GUEST LIST**
 - a. Will this be a reunion of simply one set of grandparents, their children and grandchildren?
 - b. Will this be every individual and their families sharing an ancestry dating back several generations?
- 2. ENLIST VOLUNTEERS**
 - a. Seek out individuals to oversee different aspects of the event
 - i. Accommodations and travel plans
 - ii. Activities
 - iii. Food
 - b. Decide how often to meet
 - c. To ensure that everyone has an enjoyable time at the reunion
- 3. SELECT A DATE AND A LOCATION**
 - a. Perhaps take a poll of family members to determine the level of interest in attending a reunion and also date and location preferences. Give specific choices for them to select from in order to build a consensus.
- 4. PLAN A BUDGET**
 - a. Determine the level of expenditures
 - b. The larger the cost – the longer amount of time you may need to allow everyone to save up for the reunion
 - c. Take in to consideration expenditures such as mailing invitations, long distance phone calls, name tags, etc. so that you can include that in your costs to attend.
 - d. Some families host fund-raisers to pay for the miscellaneous expenses – they might organize a white-elephant auction for the group or a bake sale.
- 5. DETERMINE THE LENGTH OF THE EVENT AND THE LOCATION**
 - a. It can be as simple as a one day event at someone's home; a weekend; or even an entire week
- 6. PLANNING TO FEED EVERYONE WILL BE ONE OF THE MOST FUN AND CHALLENGING JOBS TO ACCOMPLISH**

- a. Are you going to have an organized potluck? If so, ask them to bring their recipe along for the food they bring and have someone prepare a “reunion” cookbook after the event.
- b. Meet at a restaurant
- c. Have a caterer handle all the meal details

Communicating with Family Members

Communication with family members helps to generate information and maintain interest during the months of planning for the reunion.

1. *Gather your family members*

Compile the names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses of as many family members as you can find through your family network. Note how each person is related to the family.

2. *Send a notice*

- a. The first communication may just be a notice that the family reunion is being planned and an opportunity to invite suggestions.
- b. As soon as the location, date and facility have been determined and confirmed send another notice, including the cost.
- c. This should go out at least 4-6 months before the reunion.

3. *Select a location, date and facility for your reunion*

If the facility has some particularly attractive features, include this information to keep family members interested.

4. *Plan activities*

- a. You may want to send out a survey soliciting the kinds of activities family members would like to have
- b. Send a survey also to gather information about each person to be included in the directory

5. *Invite the family*

- a. Send an invitation to all family members
- b. Include a deadline date for registration and payment
- c. Be prepared to send a follow-up letter closer to the due date
- d. Set up a phone chain to contact family members who have not responded

Don't forget to include directions to the event – a map is also a helpful tool.

Selecting the Right Facility and Food

The search for the right facility and food may be directed by family finances and expenses, but often the family reunion is perceived of as a time for a vacation and family members want to enjoy a nice setting.

Eating is an important component of any reunion! The choice of facility sometimes dictates the food arrangements. Some require that you use their food service, others offer a meal plan, and still others may suggest a caterer for you to work with.

Activities, Tours and More – What to do!

Family members look forward to having fun together, and the range of possible activities is limitless.

1. The more that they are involved in coordinating the activities, the more likely their participation will be.
2. Use the interests and abilities of family members to organize such activities as talent shows, music, family history and storytelling, sports, arts and crafts, sing-alongs, and recognition times.
3. Remember to include activities for all ages, including the youth and the elderly.

Financial considerations

Family reunions do cost money, but with careful planning every family can afford to have one. The cost of organizing includes expenses such as postage, copies being made, stationary and phone calls. These costs may be passed on to family members as part of their registration fee. Deposits may be required for some of the sites, souvenirs and the like. An option for offsetting these costs might be a fundraising event or a bake sale.

1. Ask family members to donate items for a silent auction
2. Sell goods and services such as: homemade crafts, baked goods, jams and preserves, babysitting services, a free dental check-up (if you have a dentist in the family), a massage (if you have someone in the family able to do this.)
3. Sell t-shirts, hats, or other keepsakes. To minimize costs, take orders before the reunion.
4. Auction off a family quilt (Each member prepares one square with a design significant to their family.) This would require plenty of time to accomplish.
5. Create a family cookbook, memory book, book of family genealogy, oral history tape with interviews in advance and sell it at the reunion.

A WEEKEND EVENT

It makes sense that if you have selected a hotel, college, or resort for the lodging of your out of town relatives, it could also be the central location for the reunion.

Friday: The day that out of town guests normally start to arrive.

Check-in Table: have a centrally located welcome or check-in table at the reunion site. Family members can register, pick up their reunion t-shirts, and get their information packets.

- Weekend Agenda
- Tourist information
- T-shirts
- Maps/Directions to where events will be held
- Name Tags
- Family Newsletter
- Important Notes

Friday Night Get Together: Many people attending the reunion are probably tired out from travelling.

- So have a low key, meet and greet party to make introductions when necessary, allow people to relax, and get ready for a weekend of extreme fun and joy.
- Have some food and drink
- Keep it simple

Saturday: Saturday traditionally is a picnic day with lots of opportunities for activities and visiting.

Banquet or Dinner: Lots of details are necessary for planning this event.

Wherever it is held, you will need to meet with the planner to make sure that all the details are taken care of. Possible banquet activities include:

- Cocktails/Punch
- Dinner
- Introductions
- Announcements
- Talent Show
- Awards
- Music and Dancing

Sunday:

Worship Service and Brunch: It is always nice to end a weekend family reunion with a church service and a tasty brunch. It is an appropriate ending to a nice weekend and allows for everyone to say their good-byes.

Planning Checklist

- Coordinator(s) identified
- Location selected
- Family members notified
- Directions prepared
- Date of reunion set
- Reservations made/fees paid
- Supplies purchased
- Prizes acquired
- Cleaning supplies ready (for picnic tables and benches, etc.)

Budget		
	Projected Need	Actual Amount Spent
Food	\$ _____	\$ _____
Rental Fees	\$ _____	\$ _____
Gifts/Games	\$ _____	\$ _____
Paper/Plastic Ware	\$ _____	\$ _____
Postage	\$ _____	\$ _____
Miscellaneous	\$ _____	\$ _____
Balance available for next year's reunion:		\$ _____

Family Reunion Planner

Date of Reunion _____ Time _____
 Location of Reunion _____

Lead Coordinator:
 Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Phone _____ Email _____

Games/Activities Coordinator:
 Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Phone _____ Email _____

Food & Facilities Coordinator:
 Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Phone _____ Email _____

Fundraising Coordinator:
 Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Phone _____ Email _____

Review Check List

- Organize the Reunion Committee
- Select the Reunion Chairman
- Create a reunion planning binder to hold your information
- Mail a survey to family members for opinions and ideas
- Select the type of reunion you will have
- Select a date and duration for the reunion
- Organize sub-committees
- Compile a list of family members
- Find addresses of relatives
- Choose a location
- Reserve the location
- Locate lodging for out of town guests
- Create a budget
- Plan any fundraising activities
- Create invitations
- Mail invitations
- Select a liaison from each branch of the family for communications
- Find out any special talents of family members
- Assign duties to family members
- Compile historical information about your family
- Plan activities
- Plan games
- Plan entertainment
- Plan menu
- Develop a schedule for the reunion
- Send out a reminder
- Get tables, chairs, grills and other items
- Get equipment needed for games or activities
- Buy decorations
- Buy or prepare awards, certificates, and prizes
- Buy paper plates, napkins and plastic silverware
- Compile grocery list
- Check out the reunion site
- Set up tables and chairs
- Decorate
- Prepare name tags
- Prepare food
- Make sure video camera battery is charged and the camera is ready to go
- Hold reunion
- Have welcoming committee greet attendees
- Get acquainted activities
- Take lots of pictures
- Collect updated information from family members before they leave
- Ask guests to evaluate the reunion

Family Activities

1. Memory T-shirts (Each family branch have a different color)
2. Photo Swap
3. Family Scavenger Hunt
4. Family Tree Wall Chart
5. Heritage Cookbook
6. Story time
7. Tour into the Past – perhaps visit where the family used to live, go to church
8. Family history skits and re-enactments
9. Memorabilia Table



FAMILY DATA SHEET



Father (full name):

Event	Date	Place of event (City, County, State, Country)
Birth		
Marriage		
Death		

Prior Spouse(s):

Mother (full maiden name):

Event	Date	Place of event (City, County, State, Country)
Birth		
Marriage		
Death		

Prior Spouse(s):

Children (of this marriage)

Given name	Event	Date	Place of event (City, County, State, Country)
	Birth		
	Marriage		
	Death		
	Spouse's name		
	Birth		
	Marriage		
	Death		
	Spouse's name		
	Birth		
	Marriage		
	Death		
	Spouse's name		
	Birth		
	Marriage		
	Death		
	Spouse's name		