



Big or Small, Here's How to Have a Great Family Reunion

A family reunion is a wonderful opportunity to renew lost contacts, introduce new members of the family, and celebrate your history. If you're thinking it would be nice to have a family reunion, big or small, here's some advice from experts on how to have a highly successful one.

Planning is crucial. And the more elaborate your reunion is in terms of number of participants, distances traveled, and the length of the gathering, the more time you should allow for planning the event. It may take you over a year to plan your family's first reunion. If your reunion is large, consider organizing a reunion committee, with a secretary for mailings, a treasurer and a social-events planner.

Reunions may be one-time gatherings, or held at regular intervals, depending on the finances, distance and interest of your group. If you're holding regular reunions, it will be easier to plan them if you find a format that works for your group and simply duplicate it each time.

Take care with the costs of the event, especially if family members are incurring travel expenses from a distance. You don't want to make the reunion prohibitively expensive. Plan your budget in detail, and don't forget to ask for advance payment from those attending so you can make necessary deposits for advance booking of accommodations, entertainment, catering, or the purchase of materials. Visit potential reunion sites such as hotels, resorts, inns or country clubs, and reserve your site early.

Choosing food that can be served to everyone can be tricky – taking into consideration medical requirements, religious restrictions, or just strong individual preferences. One thing you might consider is choosing menus that celebrate your heritage.

With large family reunions, activities like “guess the baby picture,” designed to break the ice, are very helpful. For a large and scattered family, name tags can be appropriate. When your group hits the road for activities -- for example, heading to an amusement park, giving everyone the same T-shirt is fun and a good way to keep the connections going during the outing.

For a reunion that extends more than a day, it's useful to have planned activities. Your group can visit a historical site, head to the beach for a clam bake, play at a picnic in the park, or even go bowling, fishing or horseback riding! You could award prizes for the youngest and oldest family member to attend, the person who traveled the farthest, etc.

Think about keepsakes for after the event. Will you assemble a scrapbook of pictures from the reunion for everyone, take videos and make copies, or create a website? How about a family heritage cookbook? Any of these activities will require prior planning and a coordinator who will manage the photo-taking and/or gathering of information, as well as the production of the scrapbook, cookbook, or other memento, and sending copies to family members.

A number of Internet sites are available to help you plan your family reunion, including free newsletters and ideas for interesting places and activities. Two of them are:

- <http://family-reunion.com/>
- http://genealogy.about.com/od/family_reunions/a/planning.htm

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