

# Essential Tools for the Reunion Planner

Photo courtesy of Experience Columbus







**Home to nationally acclaimed attractions, historic neighborhoods, dozens of metroparks and a booming culinary scene, Columbus is a sure-to-please destination for your next family reunion.**

Contact us for assistance with finding hotels, local attractions, special events and more. We can't wait to help you plan your next reunion in Columbus!

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**Ask us about our annual Reunion Planning Seminar this fall!**



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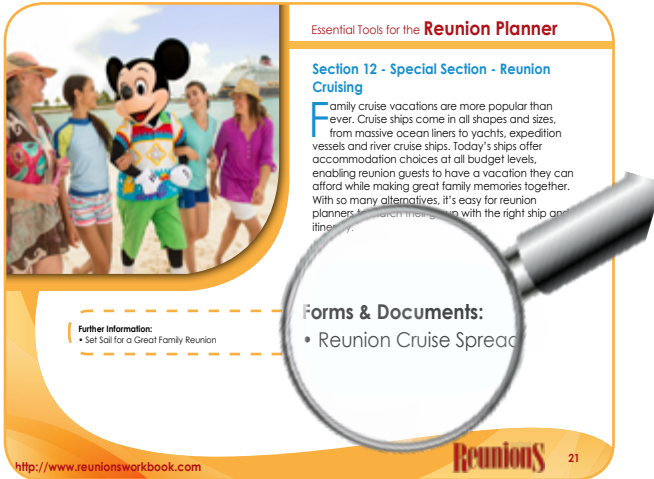
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# How to use this Whitepaper

**Further Information:**

- You're Not Alone: Forming a Reunion Committee
- You've Got This: Handling Reunion Stressors



### Forms & Documents:

- Committee Members & Responsibilities



Under Further Information, click on each link to read more about that section in our website.



Under Forms & Documents, click on each link to view the form and documents related to the section.

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Main Section

# Pre Reunion

## Section 1

# Establishing A Timetable For Your Reunion



## 12 Months prior

- Choose your reunion location, keeping in line with your budget and the geographical radius your reunion attendees may need to travel
- Reserve hotel room block
- Set your dates. Summer is often best because kids are out of school, but prices may be higher at popular destinations.

## Essential Tools for the Reunion Planner

## 24 Months prior

- 18-24 months in advance determine if there is enough interest in holding a reunion
- Talk to other reunion organizers about their experiences, positive and negative
- Attend a reunion organizing class, workshop or conference, often hosted by a Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB)
- Inquire with CVBs and hotels about familiarization (fam) trips to scout potential locations and facilities
- Start a mailing and email list of potential reunion attendees
- Form reunion committees; establish responsibilities and schedules
- Consider hiring professional reunion planner if your group is large, complex or recruiting committee members is proving difficult
- Develop budget so everyone on your guest list is able to participate
- Create bookkeeping system, keep copious records and notes of exact time and monetary expenditures

- Create a simple website, Facebook page, Twitter and Pinterest account
- Hire entertainment, secure caterer, photographer, videographer, printer
- Send save-the-date cards, first mailer or reunion website information. Include tentative plans, suggestions for tours, souvenirs, memory books, theme, approximate cost, memory book contributions, missing persons list.



## Essential Tools for the **Reunion Planner**

### **6-9** Months prior

- Visit hotel, meet with key sales and catering staff, and review pick-up on room blocks
- Begin souvenir directory/list of attendees/memory book
- Choose a reunion theme. Themes are great icebreakers for reunion members who do not know each other well and can also trigger ideas for activities, food and invitations.
- Send formal invites with full event details and any TBA info
- Keep your reunion website updated and post regularly to social media to build interest
- Schedule events and activities – establish your program, confirm any speakers
- Plan reunion activities for adults and children, awards ceremony, tours, entertainment, games for kids
- Distribute order forms for family memorabilia like T-shirts, mugs, hats and keepsakes
- Send second mailer: registration form, cost and updated list of missing persons (along with souvenir ordering information above)

### **4** Months prior

- Contact missing persons and send "time is running out" card
- Email your reunion announcement to media sources for press coverage
- Reserve rental equipment such as tents, chairs, porta-toilets
- With your theme nailed down, select and order decorations, signs, banners
- Choose menus for group events
- Confirm reservations with entertainment, photographer, caterers
- Calculate rental needs like tents, chairs, tables, coolers
- Submit personalized souvenir order (T-shirts, mugs, caps)

### 1-2 Months prior

- Complete directory of participants/memory book; deliver to printer
- Send out follow-up email reminder, mail to those who don't use email
- Keep social media updated with attendees, comments and photos
- Create checklist of reunion day tasks and assign tasks to reunion day volunteers
- Secure non-perishable items like name tags, raffle tickets, craft supplies
- Check with committee chairs to confirm plans, arrangements, progress report
- Reconfirm all meeting, sleeping and eating arrangements
- Have contracts handy for rental equipment, displays, caterers
- Set up children's activities/games early so they can start/finish on time
- Manage details of volunteers, food, photographer, games, tours, entertainment, ceremonies
- Encourage participants to post photos and memories on social media
- Salute volunteers and committees
- Enjoy the day!

### 1 Week Prior

- Contact facility managers and department heads to obtain staff contacts for your reunion days
- Juggle last-minute logistical or transportation issues
- Review final details with reunion committees
- Assemble welcome packets, name tags and goodie bags
- Send one week out notice to all participants, tying up any loose ends and provide "in case of emergency" contact information to all attendees

### Reunion Day of Event

- Set up registration and decorations early (day before if possible)

### Post-Reunion Follow-up

- Reflect and evaluate – note what worked, what didn't
- Consider an evaluation form to get honest, not anecdotal feedback
- Complete event bookkeeping, settle all accounts
- Write thank you notes to volunteers, committees, hotel staff, caterers and entertainment who excelled
- Send follow-up mailing/e-newsletter to entire family, including those who could not attend
- Post reunion recap on social media, send to family members who could not attend
- Start planning your next reunion!





## Essential Tools for the **Reunion Planner**

### Section 2 - You're Not Alone: Forming a Reunion Committee

**C**ould you plan a big reunion on your own? Sure — if you quit your job, cancelled your social life, and left your family to fend for themselves for a few months. For most of us, this is as unappealing as it is impossible. That leaves forming a reunion committee.

A reunion committee's function is obvious: they research and decide on all things reunion-related, from pre-event fundraising to post-event cleanup. However, deciding how many committees you need, who should be on them and how to manage them can be a tricky business. For more detailed information on committee planning, see our article at the link below.

#### **Further Information:**

- Roadmap For Your Reunion
- You're Not Alone: Forming a Reunion Committee
- You've Got This: Handling Reunion Stressors

#### **Forms & Documents:**

- Committee Members & Responsibilities



## Essential Tools for the **Reunion Planner**

### Section 3 - Reunion Meal Planning

**F**ood, glorious food! What could be more essential to any reunion? And what could bring more headaches? Between accommodating vegans, Paleos, gluten-frees and sodium-restricteds, you also have to come up with food that appeals to toddlers, teenagers and adults. What could possibly be stressful about that?

No worries. The resources below will help walk you through the meal planning process, starting with figuring just how many meals you'll need to plan.

#### **Further Information:**

- Reunion Meal Planning for Pros

#### **Forms & Documents:**

- [perfectpotluck.com](http://perfectpotluck.com)
- [thingtobring.com](http://thingtobring.com)
- Food Allergies chart



### Section 4 - Solving the Puzzle of Reunion Invitations

In the scheme of reunion planning — the food! the location! the date! the activities! — invitations may seem like an afterthought. After all, it's just the final step, right? Put the time, date and place on a postcard and let it do its stuff. But the truth is that skimping on your invitation prep process can mean fewer attendees. And this process starts well before you even begin comparing invitation design templates. The below resources will help show you how to manage the entire invitation process, from the very beginning until the very end.

#### Further Information:

- Solving the Puzzle of Reunion Invitations
- [www.evite.com](http://www.evite.com)
- [www.greenvelope.com](http://www.greenvelope.com)





### Section 5 - Turn on the Fun with Reunion Activities

Activities are easy, right? We can leave them for further down the list, along with photos and reunion mementos.

Yes. And also no. You can't let activities spring spontaneously from the bored minds of your guests. Trust us, these activities are never the bringers of good memories.

So after all the talking and ice-breaking is done, don't condemn reunion attendees to uncomfortable silences and another repeat of "Did I Ever Tell You Kids About the Time I...". Plan in some fun!

#### Further Information:

- Have A Rollicking Good Time With A Theme Park Reunion
- Turn on the Fun with Reunion Activities
- Find The Perfect Game For Any Reunion
- 20 Ways to Liven Up Your Reunion Scavenger Hunt

#### Forms & Documents:

- Activity Planning Sheet
- Scavenger Hunt Sample



## Section 6 - Budgeting and Fundraising

**I**f money weren't an object, we would see our reunion buddies every month. We'd go to some exotic location, catch up, hang out for a week or so....

Back in the real world, however, money is very much an object. Nearly everyone has finite disposable income, and all reunions have budgetary limitations. Even if you sell tickets to your reunion or ask for donations from attendees, you may not get the money you need. Or suppose you need some startup funds to rent a hall, organize some catering, and hire a band. How are you going to pay for it?

Once the money starts to flow in, how do you manage it all? Keeping track of balances, deposits, payments and pending expenses can be more menacing than you may expect. Here are a few resources to help you get the money you need and manage it all.

### **Further Information:**

- 18 Ways to Raise Funds for Your Reunion
- Tips to Create a Smart Reunion Budget

### **Forms & Documents:**

- Budgeting Spreadsheet



## Essential Tools for the **Reunion Planner**

### Section 7 - Accommodations Negotiations and Site InSpections

**W**hen planning a reunion, negotiating with hotels can be an intimidating and challenging task if you don't know what to ask for or how to ask for it. By researching properties well in advance, you'll have a better understanding of how to approach the process, specific items to request and what can be bargained in your contract.

#### **Further Information:**

- 7 Things Every Reunion Planner Should Negotiate with Hotels
- 5 Strengths to Leverage for Hotel Negotiation

#### **Forms & Documents:**

- Site Inspection Checklist





## Section 8 - Vendors and Supplies

**I**f you're working with vendors and suppliers for a reunion, you must make sure you get the best deal possible for your group. It takes some practice, but following these negotiation tips will help you get what you need for your reunion.

### Further Information:

- Tips Every Reunion Planner Should Use When Negotiating with Vendors

### Forms & Documents:

- Supplies Checklist
- Vendor Checklist

Main Section

# During Reunion

### Section 9 - The Day Arrives: Setup and Preparation

You've spent the last 18-24 months planning every detail of your reunion. And now you've arrived at the longest day: the day before the guests arrive.

#### Further Information:

- Countdown to Reunion: The Last 24 Hours

#### Forms & Documents:

- Reunion Sign-in Sheet



### Section 10 - Memories, History and Posterity

A family reunion can be an absolute whirlwind of catching up with relatives you haven't seen in years while sharing funny stories and heartfelt memories. We relish the laughter, tears, hugs and surprises...then poof—the reunion is over and it's time for everyone to go their separate ways.

It's funny how family reunions are months, even years, in the making, then come to an end far more quickly than we would like. The memories then fade away as we sink back into our daily routines. Fortunately, there are easy ways to hold onto the good times for years to come. From collecting life stories to creating social media groups to sharing photos during and after the family reunion, there's a lot that you can do to preserve the memories of a family gathering.

#### Further Information:

- 6 Great Tips for Preserving Your Reunion Memories
- Personalizing Your Reunion with Keepsakes
- Find Your Family History

#### Forms & Documents:

- Family Interview Questions



Main Section

# Post Reunion



Thank  
you

## Section 11 – Wrap up and Evaluation

**I**t's not over till it's over. The success of your reunion includes some final steps that tidy things up and sets your next event on the proper trajectory.

Even after the family reunion is over, there are still many tasks for reunion organizers- to consider. These include evaluation forms, thank you notes, returning borrowed equipment and paying bills.

### Further Information:

- Wrap Up and Evaluate

### Forms & Documents:

- Post-Reunion Diagnostic Chart
- Post-Reunion Evaluation
- Thank You Notes to Attendees, Committee Members and Volunteers



# Reunions<sup>workbook</sup>

**T**he best things in life aren't things—they're the people we call family and the memories we make with them. With an estimated quarter-million reunions held in the United States annually, more and more families understand the importance of reconnecting.

Reunions Workbook aims to make this task easier. With free planning resources, expert advice and inspirational features, this year's Reunions Workbook is our most comprehensive edition yet.

*Visit [ReunionsWorkbook.com](http://ReunionsWorkbook.com) and take advantage of our free resources to get started planning your event.*

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## Destination Advice

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Practical tips to help you find the best location and accommodations to host your reunion. Site Inspections offer an inside look at popular reunion destinations.



## Planning Advice

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Best practices for reunion preparation from experts in the field. From invitations to food to time-tables, our experts have provided a solid foundation for you to start your planning.



## Budget Advice

.....

How-tos on managing your budget, raising funds for your reunion and negotiating prices for accommodations.



## Entertainment Ideas

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Themes, games, family trivia, scavenger hunts and other reunion activity ideas are waiting between the covers of Reunions Workbook.