

[Family Reunions: Jump Start your Family History Memories](#)

Now is the perfect time to start planning a family reunion for this summer! Family reunions can be a “golden” opportunity to establish relationships with extended family members that can be the catalyst for stimulating conversations and networking with others in your pursuits for obtaining more family memories than you can imagine. The value of establishing personal relationships “eye-to-eye” should never be underestimated. Subsequent follow ups can be done remotely with emails, phone and/or video conversations, snail-mail, social media, etc. but getting started is critical because windows of opportunities are not always available and eventually close. Family reunions have a powerful potential to link distant relatives together. This is the perfect environment to initiate sharing family memories to literally “network and connect the dots together?”

Essential tips for Successful Family Reunions

Whether you’re expecting a dozen cousins or several hundred relatives, planning a meaningful, memorable and fun family reunion is a challenge. It takes time, organizational skills and a sense of humor. Below are 10 essential steps which will help make your reunion a success—and keep you sane.

1. Make a plan.

Start by picking a date and location. Professional planner Bill Gunkel of [Reunions Unlimited](#) recommends you begin planning at least 12 months ahead.

2. Recruit and delegate.

No one person can manage all aspects of a family reunion. Surround yourself with capable and enthusiastic committee members.

Sample Reunion Jobs

- **Finance director:** handles the reunion checking account, maintains the budget, makes purchases
- **Lodging liaison:** finds accommodations and negotiates group discounts
- **Food director:** works with the caterer or handles the potluck
- **Correspondence officer:** communicates with family members
- **Entertainment director:** organizes activities for a variety of ages
- **Reservations officer:** tracks who’s coming
- **Mementos procurement:** gathers mementos for display
- **Welcome committee:** makes name tags, agendas and signage; mans registration; helps people mingle

4. Build a budget.

Cost can be a big factor in attendance, says Katy Anderson, owner of Reunion Masters in San Jose, Calif. “Keep your costs down or try to give the family plenty of lead time to budget.” She recommends 12 to 18 months.

5. Prepare a back-up plan.

If your reunion will be outside, reserve a pavilion that can accommodate all the attendees in case of unexpected weather.

6. Get the word out.

Send invitations as early as possible. If you wish to mail them you might opt for a simple flyer, a card or postcard, or an elaborate family newsletter.

7. Offer something for everyone.

Offer a range of activities to meet varied ages and interests. You also can have optional outings such as golf, mall trips or excursions to historical sites.

8. Start with a bang.

Linda Johnson Hoffman, author of [*The Reunion Planner*](#) (Goodman Lauren Publishing), suggests icebreakers to kick off the reunion.

Sample Icebreaker Activities

- Have a welcoming committee greet arriving guests.
- Create a blank family tree and have each member fill in his information.
- Provide an agenda of activities so no one gets left out
- Create welcome banners

9. Share your family's story.

No matter how different your relatives are, your family heritage is one thing you all have in common.

10. Maintain the momentum.

After the reunion, plan to keep in touch until the next one. Family newsletters and websites are great for this.

Closing Comments

“If a picture is worth a thousand words, then a video is worth a thousand pictures.” Taking that analogy even further, “live” meetings with extended family members in person can even be more dynamic than pictures and/or videos! Following up initial family reunion meetings which can be continued with social media. Family reunion pursuits will yield major information from these personal first-hand experiences. For more insight about these ten tips essential steps in hosting a successful family reunion, click [here](#) for the complete article originally published in **Family Tree** magazine by Mary Snyder entitled: “*10 Steps for Organizing a Family Reunion with Success.*”