

# FAMILY REUNION PLANNING GUIDE

PLANNING TIPS FOR THE  
PERFECT FAMILY REUNION



Gathered  
Again

LAURA PHELPS

# **The Official Family Reunion Planning Guide**

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### **Introduction**

Next to a wedding—or perhaps rivaling the wedding—a family reunion is THE party. And unlike weddings, a family reunion can be a spontaneous decision that arises from cousins having fun at a wedding or just bumping into each other somewhere. Because of this spontaneity, people tend to dismiss the importance of organizing the reunion and simply expect people to be invited, turn up and fill the house.

A family reunion can actually be the best party you ever attend. Weddings are different. The bride and groom are the only ones who know everyone. When you attend weddings, you usually have to bring a date or come with mutual friends to avoid the dreaded wallflower or table decoration dilemma. Brides and grooms shouldn't be blamed—they're too busy and you only go there to witness and share their joy. Whether or not you have fun, date or none, is on you.

But family reunions are different. You share a bloodline, so there's a certain sense of obligation to think of everyone you're inviting. Your cousin just had a new baby, and your sister would be glad to be rid of her brood for a few hours—better set up a crèche at the reunion and take names of voluntary babysitters. Your uncle has just gotten on the bandwagon—better not serve any alcoholic drinks at all, then. What about that great aunt who has developed a skin condition that turns her into a lobster if she's exposed to the sun? Should you schedule the reunion in the winter at a ski lodge so she won't feel left out?

See, at a wedding or birthday party, you send the save-the-dates, send the invites, make sure there are vegetarian and vegan options in the menu, and you're set.

Family reunions are much more complex and complicated. But don't run away and throw your ebook reader at the wall yet. This book is here to make it all look easy! If you get it right, the rewards of a finely and expertly executed family reunion are great and will be the talk of the family for decades.

So better not mess it up, eh?

This book seeks to save you money, time and spleen. It's divided into that immortal bulletin point you'll easily remember: *What's 'its, Why's 'its, Who's 'its, When's 'its, Where's 'its and How's 'its.* ☺

## **Chapter 1: WHAT'S'ITS**

A family reunion can include just your parents, your siblings and their children, and you and your children. Or it can encompass your paternal grandmother's and grandfather's families. So that would be something like a Smith-Jones reunion. It can be tiny you can fit it in your house, or get really huge you'll have to book blocks of room at the hotel, as well as the hotel's grounds and dining rooms.

The expenses can be astronomical. The purpose of this book is to save you a lot of costs—party planners included. Party planners are for weddings and posh corporate parties where the main people would have better things to do with their time, such as tasting wedding cakes or hob-nobbing with their clients so that they'll recoup the money they're about to spend on the party. A family reunion, on the other hand, is a family project. That's what it is before it becomes a 'party'.

*What's 'its* you should be thinking of from the beginning—and yes, I understand that some of them answer to when and where rather than what, but you'll thank me for getting them on your list NOW:

THE DATE/or DURATION of the reunion

- \* food and drink
- \* budget
- \* venue
- \* accommodations

\* entertainment/games, for both young and old

\* child care

If your reunion will be small, all these aren't daunting. But if it's a 'big 'un' that stars your grandma, her siblings and cousins and includes your parents and their cousins and their children and their children's children, you're in big trouble if you're not a millionaire. With probability on my side, I'm sure you're not a millionaire. So you're going to ask for help. That's how you save money. REUNIONS ARE A GROUP EFFORT, NOT A SOLO FLIGHT.

Patience. You're going to need lots of it. Of course, unless you're a lucky pip who happens to belong to those families with no rude or selfish streaks in any of its members.

And speaking of patience, you will need partners. This inner circle can buck each other up when the going gets tough. You're going to make this happen, YEAH! You'll need someone to whom you can vent about the uncooperative or pushy persons... ☺

### **SHOUT IT FROM THE ROOFTOPS**

So you definitely have a 'what' and what is it? A family reunion!

You tell the family then! You probably already have help in this. Family reunions are often born out of at least two to three evil—I mean great minds thinking alike. So starting with the three of you, spread the trouble. Call everyone. Use SMS and emails and social networks to get the word out.

There are a lot of phone applications now that lets you call or text other people for free using the Internet. Make use of it and save money!

Save money on Internet & mobile data further by using free Wi-Fi. It's everywhere!

A big, nice family reunion can take up to two—TWO—years—yes, YEARS—in the making and announcing—that is if you want those who live far away and lead rather hectic lives to squeeze it in to their schedules.

This is important. Give ample notice so the people you call don't panic and whine that they might not make it, and instead get excited with you.

Also, giving them this huge prep window gets them more willing to participate and contribute in making it happen. If they feel rushed, they might back out or be grudging about it. So give people ample of time. Don't give them room to grumble. Don't invite grumblers.

Just kidding.

Not having a definite date yet doesn't mean you should sound vague. Let them know that this is definitely happening and they better be in on it or they'll miss out.

Let your enthusiasm shine through your announcement, whether you're calling or texting or emailing. Enthusiasm is catching! So is doubt. So be excited!

Remember the list I gave you above? Answer those necessities through a survey. This is the point of planning this: getting the family together. So what does everyone think? Don't just shove your own plans down their throats. When and where and how does everyone think this can happen? This is what saves you money. Everyone pitches in!

In that initial survey, ask for:

Dates/duration. Let them choose: a week, a weekend or just one whole day? Spring, summer, fall or winter? More on this later in the *Whens 'it's* chapter.

And see why you should give ample notice? Everyone can ask for a vacation to coincide with the reunion, and not use up their sick days when they're hung over.

Nothing big at first, see? You just sound them out. The 'when' question always gets answers because people always know when they'll be free. Or rather, when they'll be tied up. Heh.

### **EXPERT TIP**

Get the family matriarch or patriarch (or both) in on it before you announce it. Every family has one. The grandma or the grandpa, or even the great-aunt who raised practically everybody. Now, when you send the announcement/survey, name-drop!

Shamelessly say that Auntie Minnie wants this. Or that it's a semi-surprise for Gammy. She knows this is in the works, but she doesn't know just how great it will be.

Send the announcement/survey in a group message via Facebook. Facebook has this annoying feature now where you can see who has seen the message. There is no escape. Once you open it, people will know you have opened it and not replied. So you are always obligated to reply (unless the message is a 'Hey' from a stranger or a stalker). You can tell who hasn't replied and you can poke them in the message thread just as shamelessly as they ignored your message.

Not everyone is on Facebook? Chances are, those who aren't on Facebook are the ones sure to come anyway. So don't worry about them. Call them on the phone instead. Again, the shamelessness can be at work here and tell this family member that everyone else has gotten their voice in.

After you've got the WHAT & WHEN established, make another survey for:

### *Food and Drink Suggestions*

Someone might know a good caterer, who can give you a big discount, or should you have a cookout and everyone can pitch in with baked goods and groceries? This can be fun! You don't need to cook elaborate gourmet dishes. A barbecue can be awesome. The men can man the grills and the women can gossip over the salads and dressings. Or let's trash that gender stereotype and let the men do the salads while the women roast whole pigs and chickens. More on this in the *How's its* chapter.

### *Venue Suggestions*

No need to elaborate. More on this will be covered in the *Where's its* chapter.

### *The Budget*

How much is everyone willing to spend? A reunion should cost only a little because the costs should be shared and spread wide. Does someone need help flying in and out? Family members who have bigger incomes can be asked to sponsor this one or that one, especially when this family member is single with no kids. \*wink\*



## *The Committees*

Committees are good. This way, the duties and responsibilities are spread out and no one gets the brunt of the stress of it all. More on committees in the *Who's its* chapter.

## *The Points of Contact*

Whether or not you have committees, establish a representative for each family, the person who will get the rooftop announcements and updates and plans. More on this in the *Who's its* chapter.

## **EGGS IN YOUR BASKET**

Money. Wonderful family reunions take money. Thankfully, unlike weddings, most reunions are budgeted by the whole family. More affluent families even assign each what's it item on individual families. Or individuals, period. Like, Jane foots the hotel bills, Bruce takes care of the catering, and the John MacAllisters see to the entertainment and décor.



But we've already assumed you're not of that sort. Or else you wouldn't be in need of this book, right?



Asking for money can be easy if every family member has gainful employment. But let's face it, regular jobs give incomes that are already allotted for every family's needs. An extra expense will take several months' preparation and adjustment, or it might mean dipping into savings. Some people will be all right with that, some won't be. Again, this is the beauty of having plenty of time for the funds to come in and pile up.

Remember the survey? According to the consensus, start canvassing the costs so you'll know how much money you'll need. Compile the following information:

### *Venue fees*

If any. Even if you'll have it at Gammy's acre backyard, you'll need tents and marquees.

### *Entertainment Expenses*

We're not talking about live bands, but sure, if you want one! But what about a karaoke machine? That's simple and cheap enough. And fun! You'll beat each other's scores. Or one of you probably already has a Magic Sing or something. The kids will need something to occupy them, though. Try to tire them out with good old-fashioned games—this is especially necessary so they'll sleep early and the adults can drink and be merry.

This one should have the smallest fraction of the budget. Family reunions are for reconnecting and long, long gossips and catching up. No need to be distracted by singers or acrobats, except perhaps on the first or last day. Let the family members do the singing and the swinging. Why pay when you have it right at home?

### *Food Expenses*

Should be easy to compute. Just multiply your own family's food budget with how many families are coming and how many days you'll all be together. How much could every person eat? Should the reunion be the start of their diet?

### *Accommodations*

Where is everyone sleeping? Are you going to pitch tents in Gammy's acreage? You'll still need air mattresses and sleeping bags. Make it everyone's duty to pitch in for those sleeping bags. If you'll be at a hotel, way early reservations will save you big bucks. Rates are usually

on the websites. If you ask nicely, the receptionist will tell you when there's a promo coming up. Snap it up.

### *Travel Expenses*

Those coming from far away can shoulder their own tickets or get help from everyone. Imagine taking a family of five on a plane or road trip. That's a bit painful in the pocket.

Families with accommodations and travel expenses to think about can simply be let off the overall budget business. This will entice them to come. They can just contribute any way they want by perhaps bringing cookies or cakes or sacks for the sack race. Compromise!

### *Raising the Funds*

Now that you have a ballpark figure of how much the reunion will cost, it's time to let everyone know about it, and see if you can come up with the money between all of you. Include the kids and teens! Assign them an amount of money they'll have to raise themselves. This fundraising can be a pre-party itself! But let the kids settle it.

This can be their bonding moment so there would be no awkwardness in the reunion. The Internet can bridge gaps amazingly. Setup Skype chats between the kids so they can talk about what they can do to raise funds even while still miles away from each other. They can sell things on eBay or offer to do chores/small jobs for the neighbors. Of course, make sure all this effort will be rewarding for the kids later (their favorite foods should be on the menu, not to mention activities and games)!

The adults can do bake sales and garage/yard sales. Family friends and neighbors who pitch in can be invited! Ask for item donations. Some families are particularly close to their old neighborhoods. A family doing a reunion will be an interest to the rest of the neighbors—they'll want to see what's happened to these people they grew up with or watched grow up. It can be a beautiful community event. I'm getting wistful just thinking about it.

Set up a PayPal account and shamelessly ask people for money. If a family member is skilled in writing, write about the reunion in blogs or social network statuses. You'll be amazed how much more generous people are online. Even complete strangers send up to ten dollars for nice causes.

This PayPal account can also easily be the dumping ground for the rest of the family's contributions. Every deposit will be credited to a name, so it will be easy to keep track of who's already pitched in and who still needs a poke.

Another upside of planning ahead is you have plenty of time to come up with the money! Contributions can be done in monthly increments. There's a goal but there's no hurry. But be sure to give deadlines so that reservations, bulk orders and dates can be settled.

## **Chapter 2: WHY'S 'ITS**

Perhaps we should have tackled this before the what's'its, but the why's and wherefores can be pretty obvious. Why do people have reunions?

Well, some do it for completely selfish reasons like showing off or impressing someone. Showing off applies mostly to wealthier families, though. The family who hosts the reunion usually foots the bill, and the other family members just need to show up. Sometimes, people do reunions when one family member is about to get engaged or married. In this case, impressiveness becomes a goal. Fathers are especially anxious that their daughters present to the world that she comes from a good family so she'd be treated well by her groom's.

Sometimes, there's a rivalry going on. This happens when the reunion is a tradition that gets hosted alternately among the family members. Again, the bill is shouldered by one family instead of many. Things can get interesting as the one-upping occurs.

And then perhaps there's the new house and lot that just needs christening with noise and messes. Who better to produce the noise and mess than your own blood? This 'house blessing' tends to be smaller and only includes closest family: parents, siblings and perhaps grandparents and aunts, uncles and cousins.

And then there's the best reason of all: to reconnect.

## *Why Reunions Exist*

Until these recent decades, families usually stayed together or don't go away too far. Whole towns can be composed of people who are related to each other by blood or by marriage. They can visit each other whenever they wanted or simply meet accidentally or on purpose at the market on Saturdays or at the church on Sundays. Reunions are newfangled things compared to weddings and wakes, when the whole clan usually comes together, because Christmases and other holidays are for intimate family only.

But now children move away, across the country or even abroad. Whole families move states or migrate to other countries for better jobs. The Internet makes distance small, but there's no comparison to actually being able to embrace your daughter or your cousin. Sometimes, chatting can actually increase the wish to be with that person. Sit down at airports sometimes. The hugs and kisses aren't any less passionate just because these people have been Skyping or keeping up with each other via Twitter or Facebook. Thus, reunions are only next to weddings when it comes to big bashes. In fact, brides usually become Godzilla when their wedding days are turned into reunions where they have to invite Uncle So-and-So because Mama haven't seen him in decades.

So take the pressure away from the bride and just plan your reunion!

## **Chapter 3: WHO'S 'ITS**

Who are coming? Who are you inviting?

Is this going to be a first-cousins only reunion? You know, one set of grandparents and their progeny? Or is it going to be a one set of great-grandparents and their progeny?

Some families grow up getting scolded just as much by their grandmother's nieces and nephews (their first cousins once removed) and learn delinquency with their second cousins (the children of their parents' first cousins), and then lose touch as they become legal and move away from home.

Some don't know at all that their grandfather has siblings until Pop-pop suddenly bumps into his brother at a farmer's market out-of-state. Reunions with relatives you've hardly known can be tricky and amazing at the same time. Sometimes, people even discover they're related to their city librarian!

Friendships are formed and new bonds are made. Our first cousins can get boring after a while. Second and third cousins are novel and they make reunions livelier than ever as stories that might already have been tired between closer family members are retold and received anew, with fresh reactions!

### *A GUIDE TO COUSINS*

How are we related again? This question makes me laugh and then make a face as I try to place a name to how I'm related to the person I'm talking to. Oh, I can simply say, "Our fathers are cousins." But then 'cousins' is such a broad term. Knowing the cousin degrees and removals can make a topic of conversation itself! You can't leave it all for Grandma to explain. Let her have fun playing mah-jong with her own cousins.

#### *The Cousin Degrees*

**First cousins** – these are the children of siblings. The children of your aunts and uncles are your first cousins. Your children will be first cousins with your siblings' children. First cousins share grandparents. Any grandchild of your grandparent is your first cousin.

**Second cousins** – these are the children of first cousins. If Megan's mom is first cousin to Michelle's mom, then Michelle and Megan are second cousins. Second cousins don't share grandparents. Your second cousin would be the great-niece or great-nephew of your grandparent. Any grandchild of your own great-aunts or great-uncles (the siblings of your grandparent) is your second cousin.

**Third cousins** – these are the children of second cousins or the grandchildren of two first cousins. Megan and Michelle are second cousins. Megan's son would be the third cousin of

Michelle's son. Third cousins share a great-great-grandparent. That is, you are third cousins with someone whose grandparent has the same grandparent as your own grandpa or grandma. Let's say Patrick is the grandfather of your grandma. Patrick is also the grandfather of Logan's grandpa. You and Logan are third cousins. Logan's mom or dad is second cousins with your mom or dad. And Logan's granddad or grandma is first cousins with your grandma or granddad.

That wasn't confusing at all, was it? I know, sorry. I needed to take an ice cream break after writing that.

### *What About "Removed" Family*

**First, second and third cousins** are children's blood relationships with each other (outside siblings). The 'removed' cousins refer to generation gaps, as in your blood relationship with someone's kid or someone's parent.

**First cousins once removed** – One generation apart. That is, the child of your first cousin is your first cousin once removed. Your mother's first cousin is also your first cousin once removed.

**First cousins twice removed** – Two generations apart. The grandchild of your first cousin is your first cousin twice removed. The first cousin of your grandma is your first cousin twice removed.

This applies to second and third cousins, too. Just count the generations, and that's how many times someone is 'removed' from you. It's kinda funny. ☺

#### **EXPERT TIP**

Teach the kids to call everyone a generation (or more) older as aunt or uncle. In the same way, think of your cousins' children as nieces and nephews instead of cousins with removals.

Reunions are often arranged by or for the old folks. They'll want their own generation there to brag and reminisce with. Your grandpa will want his siblings and his first cousins there. So the chances are big that you'll meet all degrees of cousins.

The more, the merrier. You will need a bigger venue, but since there are more of you chipping in, the cost will be spread wider. Don't be shy about it—in fact, asking them to

contribute is a good way of warming up to them. Turning them into guests would only make them feel like outsiders. This is a family reunion—make them feel like family! You hound your family, don't you? ☺

## **THE COMMITTEES**

Now that you've established when the reunion is and who will be coming, it's time to form Power Rangers. I mean, committees or teams to handle various tasks or items for the party. A committee can be a one-man team or composed of one nuclear family or a group of cousins of the same age (their task can be their bond, especially if they haven't met yet).



Have a relative who has a case of OCD? Get him or her to do a list of everything you'll be needing or wanting for the reunion. Why someone with a case of OCD? The list might look something as random and detailed as this:

- \* blankets
- \* playing cards
- \* insect repellent
- \* sun block
- \* allergy medications
- \* jelly beans



- \* marshmallows
- \* roasting sticks for marshmallows
- \* grahams for s'mores
- \* foot rests for the grandmas and grandpas
- \* disability accommodations
- \* game prizes

You see, it doesn't have to be a generic list like this:

- \* hotel bookings
- \* music
- \* food
- \* games

That doesn't help at all, and it's too broad for one committee to handle.

### *Specific Committees*

Hotel bookings can be done by one committee, yes, but it can further be divided into:

#### *Team "Hotel Scout"*

This team or individual canvasses the hotels near the venue (of course, you can also have a Team "Venue Scout" if the reunion is not in Grandma's acreage) and reports which has the best rates and creature comforts.

#### *Team "Confirm Who Are Coming and Needs a Hotel" (CCNAH)*

This team or individual calls around and confirms who'll be booked to a hotel. This is also the person or team people call if they've suddenly found a place themselves or if they're staying with Cousin Nilda instead after all.

#### *Team "Host Scout"*

This team or individual takes names of those who have room for guests to stay over and how many guests they can take. Preferably, this team or individual knows the hosts. It will be like roommate-matching in college. They can prepare a questionnaire

for those looking for hosts. Smoker? Some hosts might not like that. Light sleeper?  
This guest can't stay with people who have babies.

### *Team "Booker"*

This team or individual books and cancels the block of rooms.

## *ENCOURAGING COMMUNICATION*

Having teams like this also encourages communication. Family members are already reconnecting with each other even before the reunion. Team Booker depends on Team CCNAH. Team Hotel Scout will probably go with Team Booker to make sure Team Booker aren't given different rates. Team Host Scout will be bonding with hosts and guests alike.

Make a list of every single thing that needs to be done or obtained. Form your committees accordingly. Yes, you can have a Team Sunblock, a Team Lawn Chairs and a Team Ice Cream.

Task umbrellas and committee/team suggestions:

## *VENUE*

- \* hotel and hosting details (as outlined above)
- \* reunion location arrangements (bookings, décor, chairs, tables, etc.)
- \* reunion party details and frills (Print Team for invitations, nametags and maps; Souvenirs Team; Shirts Team—like "I Belong To \_\_\_\_" shirts so people will know whose kid or grandkid you are, etc.)

## *FOOD AND DRINK*

- \* Catering or potluck arrangements (same as Hotel teams, there's scout work to be done here, and tasting! More on potluck later in How's'its)
- \* Food items organizing (list making; vegan/vegetarian, allergies and favorites survey), shopping and bulk ordering
- \* Specific food item contribution, shopping, and prep/cooking (Team Ice Cream, Team Burgers, Team Salads, Team Steaks, etc.)

## *BUDGET AND FUNDS*

- \* PayPal Team (setup and sending money to teams who need funds)
- \* Soliciting more funds (Team Charisma!)
- \* Team Fundraiser for ideas and projects to raise money
- \* Team Budgeting (projection of expenses and allocation of funds; **MUST STAY WITHIN BUDGET** and not solicit more money once the fund goal is reached!)

### *COMMUNICATION*

- \* Contact Peeps (more on this in a bit)
- \* Announcements and Updates Team (every committee reports to them and they're the go-to persons to keep everyone else posted about what's happening)
- \* Numbers Team (collects and holds everyone's numbers; the go-to person if you need to talk to a Budget and Funds team and they're not online on Facebook)

### *TRAVEL AND DIRECTIONS*

- \* plane or bus ticket arrangements
- \* carpool arrangements
- \* airport fetching or arrangements with the hotel
- \* car rentals
- \* arrangement and distribution of maps to hotel, venue and/or host's house

### *ENTERTAINMENT AND ACTIVITIES*

- \* games for the kids and the kids-at-heart
- \* games/entertainment purchase or rentals
- \* live entertainment scouting and booking
- \* activity survey and think machine
- \* game props (straws, spoons, paddles, popsicle sticks, etc.)
- \* itinerary team (nothing strictly structured, but an outline of activities planned would be good)

### *PEOPLE CARE*

- \* baby duties assignments (Give the parents a break and a good time, but make sure that babies spend an equal amount of time among the grandparents and great-aunts/uncles. No baby hogging! Take names of those who want to squeeze babies or

volunteer to watch babies)

- \* kid chasing assignments (This team will give certain someones a much-needed workout or humbling experience, haha).
- \* the Baby Duties and Kid Chasing teams themselves.
- \* professional care arrangements (In-home caregivers might take this chance for a short vacation themselves, so a temporary nurse might be needed for the elderly if their regular caregivers won't make it). Heck, the grandkids can do this! Why hire?
- \* first-aid and care supplies team (Team Sunblock and Team Antihistamine will be in this category, as well as Team Bandages and Band-Aids)
- \* Intervention Team (for those who get too drunk, and for those who get too nostalgic—particularly with old fights). Ideally, members of this team will have two sets of age brackets. Teens for the old folks and old folks for the younger people. This age gap does wonders in giving perspective.

### **THE CONTACT PEEPS**

From the start, it's important to appoint the Contact Peeps, especially for large reunions that does include Gammy's cousins and their families.

The Contact Peeps are the representatives of each nuclear family or family branch, so-to-speak. Reunions can get confusing and overwhelming. Imagine receiving several emails from several people—and they're all only saying the same thing or different things.

But it's a delicate thing. Make sure every Contact Peep is committed and dedicated to the reunion and won't slack off in collecting and delivering messages or updates to their respective families. This is why you have the Contact Peeps as well as the Announcements and Updates Team. They back each other up. Some suggestions for the Contact Peeps:

Every committee has a Contact Peep, the spokesperson who contacts the other Teams as needed.

Every nuclear family and every family branch has a Contact Peep, the charismatic one who can coax the shy ones into participating, or the ones that the shy people contact to relay their reports to the rest of the clan.

The Contact Peep is charismatic, not bossy and overbearing. Make sure to nip those in the bud because they can dim the festivities before the festivities have even happened.

The Contact Peeps all have each other's numbers and emails for solid and fast communication.

### *THE WIFEY AND THE HUBBY*

Often, reunions are where wives and husbands are first introduced and paraded, admit it. We can be immensely proud of our other halves. It can get confusing, though. With so many cousins around, your significant other can be mistaken for a cousin instead of an in-law. Not that there's something wrong with that, but name tags get their most use on the wives and husbands!

Instead of carrying a name and surname to keep track of who's who and who's whose, use "Clyde's Bonnie" or "Bonnie's Clyde" on the nametags instead. Trust me, people will remember this more. That's how they think of you in their minds anyway.

If there are multiple Alices or Daves in the reunion, the nametag above can reduce confusion.

Add an occupation in the nametag. "Bonnie's Clyde – Teacher" This can make you skip that "What do you do?" question. Be inventive and fun! You can use a different 'occupation title' everyday. "Clyde's Bonnie – Architect" can be "Clyde's Bonnie – sock finder" the next day.

### **Chapter 4: WHEN'S ITS**

So when is the big reunion, anyway? Every season has its ups and downs and every clan is different. Is the reunion going to be a single day event, a weekend or a week-long affair?

### *SPRING:*

There are very few holidays during spring aside from Easter. This means venues are not on peak-season—cheaper rates. Most people holiday during the spring instead of summer, though, so avoid tourist magnets. Or book ahead of them!

The weather can be beautiful—not too hot, not too cold. But then you also have sudden frosts and winds. Very unpredictable. Packing can be tricky, since people will have to bring warm clothes as well.

The reunion can coincide with the kids' Easter vacation from school. But this means adults might be competing with their workmates for Easter vacation. Make sure they give their notices and leave applications way ahead of time.

Of course, while spring can be beautiful, it's also allergy and flu season. People can come down badly enough to not make it to their flights, buses or drives. Be prepared.

### *SUMMER:*

Hot, hot, hot. The best season for reunions. The weather is pretty much dependably sunny and warm.

Packing will be light. With no need for warm clothing, there's more room for more fun stuff!

Peak season for most hotels. Book early to save money.

A summer reunion needs a cool venue or else people will just be too wilted for conversation, much less any activity that requires them to get up and sweat. Gammy's backyard acre will do if it gets a lot of breezes and has plenty of shade. But if it's the kind of place that doesn't get any breath of wind because the wind is blocked by hills or other property, you'll need to find somewhere cooler.

Team Sun Block and Team Hydration will be kept on their toes. ☺

Companies and friends usually plan summer getaways—so be sure that the family has the reunion in indelible ink on their schedules.

The younger set can skip hotel expenses and just camp!

### *AUTUMN:*

Can still be nice and warm, or pleasantly cool and crisp. Places will be quiet because people are mellowing down from their summer high.

It's the off-season again for most venues. Rates and packages will be cheaper. Staff will also be more accommodating due to the lack of demands on their time and attention. Spring is different—staff are pressured to prepare for summer in the spring. But autumn is when they relax and are therefore more able to concentrate on you and your reunion.

Kids can miss days from school. They will either like or despise this. Make it worth their time and let them get used to the idea—another perk of the huge prep window allotted for reunions.

School assignments and projects might have to be submitted in advance. The extra schoolwork will need help. Perhaps add a committee for this!

Some will simply not be able to get away from school, especially those in college. This makes this season unfavorable for most families.

A very photogenic season (unless you're in one of those places that don't get autumn).

### *WINTER:*

Quite a delicate season to maneuver for a reunion. Flights can be cancelled. Drives can be long and hard. The cold can be a daunting challenge, especially for families with small children.

But it can be very beautiful and just as photogenic as fall. Scarves, sweaters, coats and furs—lovely to photograph against a backdrop of a blazing fireplace or glistening snow.

Activities: skiing and skating, snowball fights, snowman-making, sledding, sleigh racing.

Ski resorts and mountain lodges will be at their peak season. Book early to save money.



People tend to connect more when it's cold. Dates back to the time when our ancestors would huddle together in their caves, haha. But conversations over hot drinks are heavenly, and the kids are content to lie down (or roll around) by the fire.

Everyone cooped up in a place sealed against drafts is a breeding ground for viruses—keep everyone sickness-free or stoked in Vitamin C to prevent spread of any sniffles.

The cold weather won't be good for the older folks.

### *A DAY REUNION*

A perfect fit for smaller families who regularly see each other. They often have reunions at Christmas or New Year's, on Gammy's birthday, Thanksgiving, and on anyone else's birthday.

Day reunions often rely on repetition for its smoothness. Everyone knows what to do or bring. Arrangements are made via phone if anything is to be different.

It can last up to the kids' bedtime, especially when some long-lost family member or a new love interest turns up and gets interrogated.

Or it can turn into an impromptu two-day affair, and everyone just falls asleep where they're sitting, or stretches out on the carpet.

A whole clan with third cousins thrown in can also hold a day reunion, and people either remain in their own group or circulate too much to make the most of the time.

In any case, the bigger the party, the more organized a day reunion has to be to maximize the time. Activities should encourage mingling and mixing. An hour can be dedicated to introducing each family group to the rest of the clan.

This is the cheapest option—only three meals at most will need to be served. Lunch, tea, and dinner.

### *A WEEKEND REUNION*

A day reunion can be too short, and a weeklong reunion can be too long, but a weekend is just about perfect for families of any size.

It's also a lot cheaper. It only requires one or two nights' stay at hotels or a host's house, and three days and nights of food.

Family members can have options of when to arrive. People with tighter schedules can pick which day would be more convenient for them, if they can't get away for the whole weekend.

The two or three days of a weekend reunion can have their own themes. One day can be for mingling and mixing. The next can be for games and activities. There's no hurry, so there's no pressure.

Long-lost cousins can spend all day or night catching up on each other's lives without worrying about neglecting the others or having to get up early in the morning. There's time.

### *A WEEKLONG REUNION*

I mentioned that it can be too long, but only for the young who might have places to be. But for the old folks, a weeklong reunion would be just heavenly. This is a must if you're doing this for Grandpa and your long-lost uncle. They'll need time to get reacquainted with each other and their cousins.

Plenty of time to rehash old stories and then share the new ones. Old stories are more delicious anyway.

Quite expensive. Food and accommodations for several days and nights equal big bucks, but that's why you prepared and gathered funds for at least a couple of years!

A weeklong reunion is what forms new friendships and heals old wounds—and there are sure to be some that will come up. This is why you have an Intervention Team. ☺

Perfect for a nature immersion, whether you hold the reunion in Gammy's acre, a lakeside or a mountain resort. People will have plenty of time to unwind and soak up the place as well as the people. Day reunions and weekend reunions can be spent and done in a garden or a lodge, but your hiking trail or seaside retreat deserves a weeklong appreciation!

A weeklong reunion would be a vacation for the families. A week gives each family time to themselves as well, with no pressure to spend it with the rest of the clan.

### **EXPERT TIP**

Avoid holding the reunion on holidays a family usually spends intimately, like Thanksgiving and Christmas. You don't want to give pressure to anybody to shop for a hundred gifts anyway! And what are you gonna do for Thanksgiving, buy fifteen turkeys? One is bad enough. Can you imagine cooking fifteen?

If you're having the reunion in winter or autumn when indoor space will be needed, make sure there's plenty of room for people to move about without tripping or bumping into others. Personal space contributes a lot to people's happy-levels, especially those with kids who will be stir-crazy and spinning around.

### **Chapter 5: WHERE'S ITS**

Time and time again and in every section, the venue comes up. This has the potential to eat up the biggest chunk of your funds. And it's often worth it. It can be a huge fraction of why your reunion is memorable.

BUT—the venue really only needs two things: space and a good temperature. A roof is important in the cold. Shade is important in the heat. Everything else is background. What's essential is the time you'll spend with your family. Saving money means you might have to forego a venue, and you'll still have a splendid time.

Be resourceful and creative. If funds are low or time is short for funds to be collected and piled up, look around you. The park might be had for a day for a small fee. That meadow you always pass might be rented to you for a party and camping space, and you can negotiate the price down by doing all the clearing and prepping yourself.

Other free to very-cheap options are:

- \* someone's home and garden or yard (Gammy's acre, I keep saying!)
- \* school gyms

- \* camping grounds in the autumn
- \* church basements and church gardens
- \* your suburb neighborhood's club house
- \* hotel or restaurant dining rooms or halls during off-season



Just ask. Sometimes, you'll be surprised that historical buildings are for rent for a good fee. They're marvelous backdrops for photos and can lend a theme to your reunion!

Week-long reunions can be hideously expensive accommodations-wise, so try to fit everybody in the family's houses. Hold the reunion near the place/s where several of you can be hosts.

For weekend and week-long reunions, younger people can use cars as bedrooms and just 'camp' for the nights instead of booking a hotel room, if there is no more space to be had in your family members' houses. Vans and RV's are way cheaper to rent than booking a hotel room! You can save even more by sharing the rental cost with 'roommates!'

For autumn and winter, try to book a seaside hotel! The rates will be cheap. There will be plenty of space and the view will be amazing and hypnotizing. You'll have the space to yourselves and the staff won't likely bother you much. You can hold your reunion hopping into each other's rooms or suites!



For spring and summer, a very cheap option is to hold a reunion at the town fairgrounds. You can meet at the house or the parking lot and then you can explore the fair, which usually has amenities and attractions for all ages. The old folks can sit down at an outdoor café and the kids can do the rides. People can mix and mingle in groups. Space is usually available for lease at good prices. You can get a space for a day or the whole duration of the fair and simply set up tables and chairs there as a rest-and-gossip spot for the family, while all around you, you have entertainment and games and food to be had! More on this in How's'its.

## **Chapter 6: HOW'S'ITS**

For years to come, your reunion will be the talk of the family—and any honorary family you invited, too.

What do people remember during get-togethers? Well, when someone goes postal—that's an instant immortalization of your reunion.

Kidding aside, what becomes unforgettable is the dialogue and the moments shared. Uncle Morris coughing up his dentures while laughing at Aunt Emily. Little Alice punching Luke in the face when Luke tugged at her pigtails. The tell-tale gasp of Rebecca when Julia told her she's pregnant. The grandmas getting into a heated argument about who first kissed their

mutual ex-. Mama Lola belting out “*My Way.*” So don’t stress too much over decorations and food, although people will certainly remember bad food and starvation!

You can scrimp all you want on the background—but spend money on moments instead. What moments? Sharing meals and having a grand time with your loved ones. You might not have a cabin rented, but wrestling and water skiing in the lake is grand enough! So are Aunt Cissy’s salad and pies!

### **DECORATE YOUR BELLY**

Decorating can be a family endeavor everyone can enjoy, from the tots to the tots at heart. Even a grand venue like a hotel ballroom can look dull without proper party decorations. This can be your way to personalize YOUR family reunion, too! Why pay for decorating when you can do it yourselves?

I bet you’re already writing down ideas—or slapping someone in panic because you forgot decorations completely. Yes, I did, too. I didn’t mention it in this book until now. Haha. Don’t fret. Decoration is background. It’s not necessary, which is why I’m discussing it first before the more important How’s’it’s. ☺ But while decorations aren’t needed, they’re still good! They’re as much a part of the atmosphere as the good feeling of being full with good food.

For every item, think of ways to make it LOOK (not just taste, or sound, etc) good. Think themes. Think matchy-matchy. Think mismatched but complementary. Think FUNNY or SWEET or PRETTY!

Decorations can be divided into two categories: background/setting, and food and drink presentation and arrangement.

## *Background Décor:*

Consider the season and the venue. If it's cold, go for warm, jewel colors. If it's summer, pastels. If the venue is rather formal, inject fun into it with ceiling paper spirals (look online for DIY's!) or balloons! An outdoor setting with less than pristine conditions (bald patches on the grass, dying shrubs, etc.) can be made elegant as well as casual with cloth.

You can do a lot with cloth. Plan with your family. I'm sure everyone has a scrap pile. Scraps can be used as anything from napkins or chair décor to arcs and patchwork tablecloths.

And as for balloons! Is there anything balloons can't do? Don't answer that, that's a rhetorical question. But my goodness, if you have enough balloons, you can even have a whole venue composed of balloons. Also, blowing balloons means you have specks of everyone's saliva floating around. How's that for genetic unity? Oh, ew. Maybe a not-very-funny joke. But that made you laugh, right? Use an air pump. But blowing balloons is nice. I miss those days...

Oh, I think I've mentioned décor when I mentioned family photos. Have fun collaborating with family on the collages. Assign a room or a wall as a photo place where people can walk around and view everyone like they're pieces of Rembrandt. Make or print family surnames to label photos by family, or just mix everyone by age or gender. Arranging the photos by gender can be useful for the single people. ☺ Just kidding.

A floating balloon ceiling can hold photos in the strings. Photos should be just about forehead level. Easy enough to reach but not too low that people will keep getting smacked in the face by a photo.

Cloth, check. Balloons, check. And the cheapest of all: paper! There are a lot of DIY's online for paper decorations. Summer reunion? How about paper ice cream décor? Even balloons can become ice creams. Just make cones!

Cones bring to mind party hats. Each family can wear a unique color or design. This is jolly and a test of mettle—not all men and women are brave enough to wear paper hats. ☺ Fine those who refuse to wear them!

Scissors and balloons are your best friends. Turn balloons into fruits (little purple balloons as grapes, red balloons as strawberries); use paper to reinvent fairy lights and curtains; and make mini-tents for the kids or classy-hobo photo-spot for the adults with old bed sheets or quilts.



Dip balloons in paint: two-tone balloons that rock!

I love this one: monogrammed piñatas! They don't have to be piñatas you beat with a stick. They can just be lovely hanging décor. You'll need a cereal or detergent box, or a refrigerator box if you're serious about turning this thing into a piñata even the adults can take pleasure in. Trace your family surname initial on one side of the box (print it out if your cursive isn't that good, especially in scale), and then simply cut two pieces the box/cardboard that you'll box with other pieces of box/cardboard so you can have a 3D monogram. Cover with colored paper and texture with tassel cuts! Have fun!

### *Food and Drink Presentation*

Don't just serve them in platters and tureens. Well, you can. But cupcakes on a low table can look like a bunch of balloons from above if you place strips of glittery paper in the right places.

Have an old tub? Or see one lying around in the dump? Or just old big gardening or cooking pots? Salvage it, clean it (but then, you mustn't salvage something you'll have to soak in tons of Lysol), fill it with ice and use it as a bottled drink cooler.

Another popular idea now is to freeze water balloons instead and put this in the tub of drinks. No one will have to plunge their hand in icy water to get a drink!

If it won't offend Aunt Martha, add food color to the food and... have a Green Eggs and Ham party! Everything is green!

Food coloring can be used on the drinks, too, especially if you're having juice towers. Line up seven juice towers and dye the content of each a color of the rainbow.

In the evening when the adults are about to have fun, dunk glow-sticks (placed in glass or clear plastic sealed containers) in the punch bowls. Instant mood lighting!

I love this one: Put your cakes or pies to good use (aside from being yummy) by letting them proclaim the occasion. Use barbecue sticks and paper to spell out the reunion or the family name in a cute cake banner, or hang a banner proclaiming, "Sweets here!". If every stick has one letter, cut the sticks in alternating lengths. This way, none of the family will forget why they're there while passing by the buffet and the slices holding the sticks will be spared. ☺  
Call dibs!



### **LINE YOUR BELLY**

A reunion is double or quadruple your usual family party food requirements. Recipes can get tricky and too much bother. Having the thing catered is so tempting and easy.

So go have it catered then! Or all of you can cook. Or you can make it a BYO affair. All of these have their money-saving qualities.

#### *Catering:*

Big money-saver trick: if you're near a college or a university, ask the cafeteria to cater for you. You'll be surprised. They do offer that service, especially in the summer. They're used to making huge quantities of food and they have supplier contacts that enable them to buy ingredients in bulk and in low-prices. You can even ask for those same ingredients for your own cook-out. Say, you ask the cafeteria to cater one meal, and then you use that in with them to get supplies from their supplier for the rest of your reunion's meals.

Some churches are willing to cook and serve for free as long as you provide the ingredients. Your reunion can be a community activity indeed (aside from the yard/garage sale for

fundraising I mentioned earlier), especially if your family grew up in that church. Just invite your church mates and pastor/priest/preacher.

Catering is best for one-day reunions. Everyone can just spend time with everybody instead of cooking, serving and tidying up afterward. Your pooled money will be well-spent.

Speaking of tidying up—that's the perk of catering. Unless you're getting the church option, which might only provide cooking and the food, the catering should provide the plates, glasses and utensils, and haul them all away, too. If you end up with a mountain of dishes to clean up—well, I suppose you can make it a family affair!

Menu suggestions? Go with the familiar and usual favorites. You're there for a reunion, not a gourmet fest. Day reunions are already short on time. The food shouldn't steal even a minute of it by being 'interesting.' ☺

### *Cookouts and baked goods*

It's called a cookout for a reason—you grill and roast over open fire. You can let the meats cook in their own juices and lay out an array of condiments, or buy barbecue sauce by the bulk for marinade and you won't have to worry about recipe measurements.

Baked goods—store-bought or homemade (by the family or by specialty stores) are always good and hearty. Baking on-site (if the venue is a home or has a kitchen with an oven you can use) can be a bonding activity for many family members! Create assembly lines and trade stories while kneading dough or straining flour.

This is the best option for weekend or week-long reunions. The barbecuing itself is also a family activity, like baking. Fishing for fresh fish is another activity many in the family love and can easily share, if your venue has a populated body of water.

Food on sticks (meat and fruit/veggie kebabs, corn, etc.) is also easy and clean to eat, without need for plates and cutlery, only plenty of paper napkins for wiping your mouth. People can sit around in chairs without need of a table. Kids can sit Indian style in a circle and chat with their peers while eating, or take bites while playing a sit-down game.

Menu suggestions? Make everything boneless. Except for freshly-caught fish, try to order boneless and tender cuts. Yes, cuts. Will save you time in chopping up the meat for kebabs.

Butchers often offer big discounts for bulk orders! For fruits and veggies, go for ones that can be eaten raw and won't bruise or ooze juice all over hands or chins.

### *B.Y.O*

Bring Your Own can be the cheapest option of all, whether you're having one-day, weekend or days-long event.

Here, you won't have to worry about allergies and food preferences.

The downside is it defeats the purpose of reunions. When it's time to eat, families tend to go off by themselves to eat what they've brought. This is NOT potluck, after all. Bring Your Own has an unspoken rule that food is sacrosanct to the ones who brought it. They can offer you a bite, and you should take it or offer a bite back from your own food, but that's it. Sharing can be strained, because the amount is not enough for sharing to be widespread. It can get awkward, offering to share a box of brownies when it only has six brownies in it and not everyone will get one.

Get Your Own can be a variation of B.Y.O if you hold your reunion at a place where food can easily be bought. You can all go out for lunch or dinner—not necessarily together—and then just get back together afterward.

In Where's's its, I mentioned a fairgrounds reunion. B.Y.O or Get Your Own is great then. You can just separate for a while to eat, or collect everyone's money to buy food and eat it together at your leased space.

### *Potluck*

Potluck is a favorite for one-day events.

It does away with including food in the budget. In fact, it can do away with a huge fraction of the budget! You can just pitch in for the venue expenses.

Potluck can become a mini-contest. After all, there's science and skill involved in making a dish enough for more than several dozen people. Reward that! Make it exciting for everyone. But if you have a competitive family, better nix this idea. 😊

The downside of potluck is you might get too many of the same dish. To avoid this, having a potluck requires organization and cooperation. It can be ridiculous if you have five vats of potato salad. Communication is key.

Potluck can be both laidback and tense. It's human to fret beforehand and then afterward compare what you brought to what others brought, and to feel negative emotions for bringing just enough or too much or too little.

Catering and BYO doesn't have the same delicacy of potluck. The success of the potluck is a hit or miss if you don't organize it and do it with a smidge of precision. You'll want a hit! Here are few tips.

### *LUCKY POTLUCKS*

Don't leave it to luck. Don't leave it to everyone to bring whatever they can or want. Potlucks save the family a ton of money—but this doesn't mean it wouldn't be perfect.

For potlucks, you need to establish how many are attending, so you know how many will be eating.

If the family/clan/tribe votes on having a potluck, this means people are volunteering to shop, prep, cook and transport their dish. Make this clear. Confirm that everyone is willing to go through with it and shed sweat and blood in bringing what they're supposed to bring. Once you have a confirmation, make it clear that it's set in stone. No backing out.

Make a survey of what everyone wants to eat.

Make another survey, this time of what everyone can cook or might like to bring!

Combine the data from the two surveys (gosh, I sound so scientific) to create a list of food and drinks available for claiming.

DON'T have two people bring the exact same dish. No matter how lovely your folks are, comparisons will happen and feelings might get tweaked. Avoid that altogether. A good tip would be to have a heading of Potatoes and then list all potato dishes you want under that. Once the potato salad is claimed, no one else can claim it.

You have two options and directions to go, and ideally, you should use both: a potluck of dishes and a potluck of ingredients.

Potluck of dishes can give you up to twenty different foods and drinks. Of course, the quantity of each dish won't feed ALL the attendees. Two people can eat at the same table and yet have completely different foods on their plates, depending on what they chose at the buffet. Getting a bite off of each other's plates is a sweet and funny bonding moment.

On the other hand, there's the potluck of ingredients. As many as ten persons can buy the same ingredient for one or two favorite dishes that would cause heartbreak if it runs out before one had a serving! All families have those high-demand dishes. Make it and make A LOT OF IT. I'm sure several cousins would be willing to each contribute a couple pounds of shrimp for Aunt Martha's scampi!

Prepare a schedule and checklist and have a committee or individual who's assigned to remind everyone of steps/tasks they should accomplish.

Those tasks are:

- \* scouting for bulk deals
- \* scouting for food containers—tubs or vats, haha. One or two (or three) of those big pots you can fit in the car so you won't have to hire a van, unless the van will double as accommodation of course!
- \* pooling money and ordering the ingredients
- \* picking up and/or delivering the ingredients to the cook
- \* prepping the ingredients
- \* cooking/baking (surely, Aunt Martha can make her big vat of scampi alone. Team Scampi must be set up and ready)

### *IMPORTANT FOOD NOTES:*

If Pop's cousins and their progeny are invited, you might know them part of the way from Adam, but it's natural to ask about food preferences and allergies.

From the food preference/allergy survey, make a list of the answers you gather, and then, if certain dishes contain a particular allergen in them, mark the dish clearly in the buffet. You don't want to kill a relative during the reunion.

Variety will make sure no one will have to go somewhere else to eat instead.

## **SHAKE YOUR BELLY**

This book is all about saving money, so we're not into hiring entertainers, but do ask around if someone in your family knows someone and is willing to perform for food. ☺

But often, a reunion doesn't need a stage performer. All families have at least one emcee. Plan a game or two and you're pretty much covered. You can all arrange the entertainment between yourselves. You won't have an empty time anyway—it will be filled with conversation with your family! Who needs a show?

Games are fun, though. Look at party websites for plenty of ideas. But don't overdo it. Choose games with the goal of tiring out the kids so they won't run around and cause trouble.



For young adults, look for games with lots of bodily contact. Twister is a perennial favorite, as well as balloon-popping relay games where two people would bop each other to pop the balloon. You do have a First-Aid Committee in case of injury, don't you?

For the older adults, card games and karaoke are hits. Pun intended.

Like a petting zoo for the kids? Simply ask everyone to bring their pets! Have a pen ready for the dogs, and another pen for cats. Be sure the animals are socialized and won't have trouble meeting and playing with other dogs/cats and the kids. Exotic pets like reptiles and

amphibians would be lovely. Small fish can be easily transported. Bring them, too, especially if the reunion will last several days. Here, everyone saves on pet sitters!

All families have one or two computer geeks who can put together a good slideshow of photos! Ask everyone to send photos in so the IT guy/gal can sew them together. This is great especially when multiple families are attending the reunion. Include solo and group shots to introduce individuals, their families and everyone's interests or doings.

Of course, old photos from the time when Gammy and Gampa were courting would be awesome. Pictures from past family outings and holidays together would trigger more stories of "Do you remember?" as well. Who needs stand-up comedians when you have your own inside comedies?

Families also often have musicians—ask them to plan a recital together!

Any writers in the family? Perhaps they can write a play? Something short and simple that can star both babies and grandpas alike.

### **FLAUNT YOUR BELLY!**

Photography is so easy these days, because of everyone getting practice from their smart phones. Kids as young as five or six can shoot gorgeous photos—even if they might not frame things right and accidentally cut off Uncle Nick's head.

You won't have to worry about hiring a photographer or a videographer. You'll get plenty of photos and videos even without asking!

Set up a Facebook or Tumblr page where everyone can upload their photos and videos.

The best photos are the candid ones. Tell everyone to take shots without always asking people to pose.



The last hour or last day of the reunion is when everyone is fired up to take photos. Make sure to spread the enthusiasm to cover every moment and every day of the event.

Plan a Before and After shot. Before – at the start of the reunion. Make it the smiley and formal portrait. After – at the end of the reunion. Make it the wacky shot, as if everyone had overdosed on happy pills.

A huge group of people can be challenging to photograph, but it's fairly easy if you think about it! Have the camera set up somewhere high enough to get everyone in the frame and everyone can look up at it! No need for some to stand on chairs and stacked chairs!

For fun shots, group people randomly, not by family. Mix them together in photos by the color of their outfits or their accessories. Men wearing baseball caps together. Everyone in red together. Everyone of the same height stand together—no matter the age. That's little Aunt Minnie with the towering ten-year-olds. Everyone who's pregnant together. All the men who look pregnant together!

## **Chapter 7: YOUR CHECKLIST and SCHEDULE**

After reading all that, you're probably excited and raring to set it all up with your partners. Have fun! Keep in mind the double-goal of saving money and making memories.

### ***LOADS OF TIME BEFORE THE REUNION:***

- \* Tell everyone you're having a family reunion down the road.
- \* Talk to the family matriarchs/patriarchs. Ask everyone when the reunion could be, how long it will last (a day to a week) and who they want to invite.
- \* Set up a Facebook page for the coming reunion. This can double as the photo/video upload spot later. For now, it will be the place to post updates and get it into

everyone's heads that the reunion will happen. It doesn't seem official until it gets a Facebook page.

- \* Sound everyone out on how they want to do this, how much they're willing to spend. Should you set up a PayPal account where everyone can send funds?
- \* If yes, set up the PayPal account and establish the Moneybags Committee who'll be in charge of it.

### *SEVERAL MONTHS OR A YEAR BEFORE THE REUNION:*

- \* Set a date/dates.
- \* Confirm everyone's approval and commitment to that date/dates. Finalize it.
- \* Outline the committees you'll need (as suggested here in this know-it-all book you're reading) and form them!
- \* The Points of Contact should be assigned now.
- \* Contact numbers should be collected and posted now.
- \* The committees involved with the planning stages should start doing their jobs. Especially collecting suggestions for venues, if it's not going to be at Gammy's huge backyard.
- \* Finalize the venue and make necessary inquiries and reservations to save money. Someone can cover this initially and get paid back by the money pool.
- \* Yep, start the money pool, if you're having one.
- \* Agree on, and outline, where the money will go (venue? transportation? accommodations? catering?) and how much you need to raise.
- \* The Moneybags Committee should start doing its job. Costs and budgeting should be researched and finalized.

### *5-6 MONTHS NEAR THE REUNION:*

- \* The Food Committee should start doing its job. Catering or potluck, confirm agreements and arrangements.
- \* Remind everyone of the date/dates.
- \* Confirm the venue, if it isn't already. Make reservations, if it hasn't already been made. Outdoor venues are particularly difficult to catch past the six-month mark.
- \* Accommodations should be inquired now, too. Accommodations Committee should do its job now and make reservations early to save money.

\* Create free save-the-date invites online and send it out via email and social networks. Print and mail some for those who are not online often.

### *3-4 MONTHS BEFORE THE REUNION:*

- \* Send out RSVP invites, especially if you're having this catered.
- \* The Food Committee updates the caterer or their shopping plans depending on the number of people coming.
- \* The Facebook page should be updated regularly by now with what's happening.
- \* If any elaborate entertainment shows are planned (a play, a group dance, a talent presentation, a recital), inform the involved parties so they can start prepping and do rehearsals
- \* The Transportation Committee should do its job now by posting maps and directions for everyone.
- \* Reservations for plane tickets should be made, again to save money.

### *1-2 MONTHS BEFORE THE REUNION:*

- \* Accommodation reservations should be made (if they haven't been already) and finalized.
- \* Confirm, confirm, confirm. Attendance, catering, venue, etc.
- \* Send out reminders for the reunion and for fund contributions, if there have been slackers. ☺
- \* Are you having souvenirs like customized shirts or mugs made? Make arrangements NOW.

### *1-2 WEEKS BEFORE THE REUNION:*

- \* Remind everyone to send in photos for the slideshow. Or to dig up family memorabilia and bring them for display during the reunion!
- \* Think up and gather decoration materials. Buy as little as possible. And then make the décor!
- \* The Committees should do a meeting to confirm everything is in place and to confirm roles for the committees involved during the reunion itself (people care peeps!).
- \* For potlucks, shopping should be done now.

- \* Any other necessary supplies should also be bought now.
- \* Confirm your souvenirs. They should be ready or almost ready and would be en route for the reunion.
- \* Make a list of nearby places (cafes, shops, etc.,) near the venue where family members can escape from everyone else during downtimes for reunions that will last for days. ☺
- \* Arrange for a maid/housekeeping service that will come and tidy after the reunion if it's going to be held in Gammy's house after all. Can't leave the mess to Gammy to clean up!
- \* Start a countdown to the reunion. Double up as a reminder!
- \* Panic.
- \* Relax.
- \* Get excited!
- \* Have fun!

###

#### **About the Author:**

Laura is a dedicated mother who loves family and enjoys spending time with them. Realizing the importance of family, and the lack of communication that permeates today's families, she set out to fix this by making family reunions as fun and pain-free as possible to plan.

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