



# Family Reunion Planning Guide

Having a family reunion takes time, commitment, and planning.



This guide is intended to help you throughout the process, from forming a committee of family members and deciding how often to meet, to managing your reunion's logistics and most of all ensuring that everyone has a wonderful time at the reunion.

**Need assistance getting started? Contact:**

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PA Dutch Convention & Visitors Bureau  
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She'll be glad to help!



*Much of the information in this Guide was generously provided by  
The Family Reunion Institute at Temple University.*

For more information on the Institute  
visit [www.temple.edu/fri](http://www.temple.edu/fri)  
or contact them at:

**Family Reunion Institute**  
School of Social Administration  
Temple University, Ritter Hall Annex  
Philadelphia, PA 18122  
215-204-6244 / 215-204-9606 fax

# Communicating with family members

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

A computer makes it easier to handle all of your communications.

## **Step 1: Gather your family members**

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

## **Step 2: Send a notice**

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

## **Step 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.

## **Step 4: Plan activities**

You may wish to distribute a survey soliciting the kinds of activities family members would like to have. This can help the planners. Or your survey may be sent to gather information about each person to be included in a directory.

## **Step 5: Invite the family!**

Send an invitation to all family members. Include a deadline date for registration and payment.

You'll need to know who will be coming to the reunion so that arrangements regarding the food, trips and tours, and lodging may be finalized. Be prepared to mail a follow-up letter closer to the due date and set up a phone chain to contact family members who haven't responded.

Don't forget to include directions to the event and access using various modes of transportation. Some facilities may provide maps.

# Selecting the right facility and food

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

If there is a particular purpose for the reunion, e.g., bringing people together primarily to get acquainted, a more isolated area may be preferable. But if family members have indicated that they want to spend time on their own,

look for a facility near shopping and amusements. The PA Dutch Convention & Visitors Bureau can be very helpful in providing assistance.

In addition to hotels, consider state parks with housing facilities and college campuses. Not all activities need to be held where people are housed. Picnics may be held in a park and banquets can be held at a local museum.

Eating is an important component of any reunion! The choice of a facility sometimes dictates the food arrangements. Some require you to use their food service, others offer a meal plan, and still others may suggest a caterer with whom they work. Confirm all arrangements in your negotiations with hotels and meeting facilities and in the information package you send to your family members.

### *Planning Checklist*

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

## Activities, tours & more- What to do!

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

The more they are involved in coordinating the activities, the more likely their participation will be over time. Use the abilities and interests of family members to organize such activities as talent shows, music and poetry, family history/ storytelling, sports, arts & crafts exhibits, sing-alongs, and recognition ceremonies.

Family members may also lead workshops in topics with which they are familiar such as economic development, investing, education, parenting skills, and political action. Remember to include activities for all ages, including the youth and elderly.

### *Itineraries to consider!*

- **PA Dutch Country culinary trails**
- **Tri-county bounty tours**  
Visit neighboring destinations like Hershey, Gettysburg and York.
- **Quest for Freedom tours**  
Explore historical sites and attractions that tell the real story of the Underground Railroad.

Visit [www.padutchcountry.com](http://www.padutchcountry.com) for more ideas!

For more information, contact Alice Sanders at the PA Dutch CVB,  
[asanders@padutchcountry.com](mailto:asanders@padutchcountry.com) or 717-917-6917.

## 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, duplication, stationary, and phone. These costs may be passed on to family members as part of their registration fee. The planning committee should be aware that deposits might also be needed for the sites, souvenirs, and the like. However, some families have fundraising events during the year to offset these expenses.

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## Fundraising Ideas

These ideas can help you raise the money you need for field trips, a banquet, and other “extras!”

- Hold a 50/50 raffle in which the winner takes half of the proceeds and the reunion takes the other half. You may also want to ask family business owners to donate some prizes to raffle off.
- Sell or raffle off goods and services (homemade crafts, baked goods, jams and preserves, babysitting services, a free dental visit with cousin Mark, a massage by aunt Marge).
- Sell t-shirts, hats, and other keepsakes. To minimize cost, take orders before the reunion. Auction off a family quilt. Each member prepares one square with a design significant to their family. Some quilts can raise hundreds or even thousands of dollars. (Note: This activity may require up to a year of advance planning.)
- Create a family cookbook, memory book, book of family genealogy, oral history tape, etc. in advance and sell it at the reunion.

source: bhg.com

## Getting to the root of the matter

# Understanding the ABC's of genealogy

Thanks to the Lancaster County Historical Society for contributing this article.

Genealogy, an increasingly popular pastime in the United States, is the study of the history of a family. The Lancaster County Historical Society is the repository for resources, records and documents that reveal the details of families who lived in Lancaster County since its founding in 1729. These records serve as the puzzle pieces needed to see the picture of your family. There is always a professional staff member on site to assist you in using our collection and to help you put together your puzzle pieces.

Begin your genealogy research with present generations and work back in time. Start by interviewing relatives. Ask them about themselves and their ancestors. Be sure to ask for family stories. How did your family respond to a war or an economic depression? What were your ancestors' religious and political views? Ask if there are any family artifacts such as photographs, diaries, family Bibles or military records; all of which can help in your quest.

As you begin, take the time to read a variety of books on genealogy to familiarize yourself with the kinds of resources and techniques used in this type of research. At the same time, be sure you get off to a good organizational start. Use standard forms such as pedigree charts and

family group sheets to help keep your family lines untangled. Good recordkeeping is essential. Remember to always record the source of any information you collect.

The library holds a large collection of published family histories in addition to thousands of family name files. The information found in these publications is usually the work of other genealogists. These can serve as a helpful guide and are often the first place you will want to look.

There are many different types of records you can use in searching for your family's history, such as church records, court records, military records, and census records. The Federal Census, taken every 10 years since 1790, can be a great help to your genealogy search. The most recent census made available to the public is for the year 1930. From 1790 to 1840 the Census listed only the head of household and the ages of the people living in it. From 1850 on, the Census listed the names of everyone in each household as well as ages, occupations, and places of birth.

The library subscribes to Heritage Quest Online, a database resource that includes images from the Federal Census from 1790 to 1930 for the entire country. This database also contains full text versions of thousands of historical

and genealogical books. The Lancaster County Historical Society has several resources such as this that are very useful to genealogists who don't have any ancestors in Lancaster County.

You can access the Historical Society's online Library Catalog from your home computer. Printed Research Guides will help you to effectively use the many resources found in the reference collection. As you become more proficient you will want to use more specialized material housed in our archives.

For those unable to visit the library, the Lancaster County Historical Society provides research services by mail and maintains a list of contract researchers you may contact directly.

Taking an introductory class in genealogy is an excellent way to learn from those experienced in researching family history. The Lancaster County Historical Society offers a Basic Genealogy class each fall. Check the upcoming events for specific classes.

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## Budget

	Projected Need	Actual Amt. Spent
Food	\$ _____	\$ _____
Rental fees	\$ _____	\$ _____
Gifts/games	\$ _____	\$ _____
Paper/plastic ware	\$ _____	\$ _____
Miscellaneous	\$ _____	\$ _____
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>
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 \_\_\_\_\_