



Reunion Planning Guide – Full Course

YOUR COMMITTEE

If you want to have a successful reunion, don't do the planning solo. The size of your committee can vary, but a good rule of thumb is 3 to 5. Too few and the tasks can be burdensome. Too many and it will be hard to get a consensus.

Pick your committee members carefully

- You may know classmates who are connected with the entertainment, hospitality or food service industries. You may find these folks to be a great asset for planning the event.
- It is VERY important to make sure that your committee represents DIFFERENT social groups from high school. Student government, cheerleaders, jocks, honors society, chess club, etc...The more DIVERSE, the BETTER the TURNOUT!

How committees save hours of time and headaches (short 3-min video [HERE](#))

MAXIMIZING REUNION ATTENDANCE

The financial goal of your event is to at least break even. And that is dependent on a successful turnout. A common error is to OVER estimate your expected attendance. For example, we hear something like this often: "I have a class of 500 so I expect at least half will attend. And most of those will bring a guest!"

It's understandable that when you're excited, motivated, focused and sure your event is going to be awesome, to think that EVERYONE who is ANYONE will want to be there! But the real-life national statistics are important to know so you can plan accordingly. The average attendance across the country over the last 5 years is about 28% of your class size, including guests.

This should not discourage you. It should EMPOWER you to do better than the average. A lot has changed with reunion planning over the last 5 years. New tools are making it easier to maximize attendance.

Other tips to finding ALL of your classmates and planning a successful reunion ([HERE](#))

Tips on finding your classmates and marketing your event successfully:

- ✓ Having a proven plan and a complete class database to market your event is vital.
- ✓ Although using Facebook or other social media sites may help you find some classmates, not all classmates are active on Facebook and getting them to buy tickets is a whole other challenge.
- ✓ Using "create an event" websites may help you sell tickets online and display reunion details, but they don't go out and find classmates and direct them to the site to help you ensure a well-attended reunion. There are easier and less expensive ways to sell tickets online.
- ✓ It's never too early to start planning your next reunion. The sooner you can find and communicate with ALL of your classmates, the better attendance you will have.



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DON'T FOCUS ON THE WRONG STUFF

It's easy to get excited about the event. How should we decorate? What kind of food do we want? What kind of awards should we offer? What about the invitations, the program? Those things are fun and important...BUT...It won't matter what the room looks like if there are no people there!

It's also easy to get caught up in building a website. Photos, flashbacks, polls, quizzes, donations, sponsors, guestbook, calendar, what's new...FLUFF! If you can't find people, then no one will be able to even get to a website. A simple Facebook group page that advertises your reunion is useful and recommended...you can then use an online database tool to help with the rest.

Take a look at Reunion Planning Options ([HERE](#))

CHOOSING A DATABASE

A huge mistake is choosing NOT to use an online DATABASE tool to manage your reunion. See if you can relate to the short example below that we hear often:

"I went to XYZ High School. I'm part of a reunion planning committee and we've been trying to use Excel as our database to keep track of classmate information: RSVP'd, who we've contacted, who paid, updating emails, phone numbers, etc. It's become more difficult to keep the information up to date and it's very manual. We also can't easily share the data and don't have access to it 24/7."

The right online database tool for reunion planning will maximize efficiency, save time, help you stay organized, track addresses, contacts, RSVPs, sell tickets online, deliver emails, calling lists, reports of who have paid, print name badges and provide a budget calculator.

The right database tool will help you and the committee focus on what is really important—GETTING PEOPLE TO ATTEND. Also, the right database should:

- Be secure
- Have automated accounting and reporting capabilities
- Allow users to edit data
- Be entirely web-based
- Require no training to use
- Allows different levels of access based on committee needs
- Always be current and accessible 24/7
- Allow classmates to buy tickets securely online or on a mobile device
- Go above and beyond the simple accounting tasks
- Come with live support (the best companies will also include a marketing component)
- Include one- click features



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FACEBOOK TIPS WHEN PLANNING A REUNION

Creating a Facebook Page

1. Creating a **Group** page rather than an Event page or a School page is more flexible and useful. A Group page, unlike other pages, doesn't have an end date and it allows everyone to share photos and post messages on the Group wall before, during and long after your reunion.
 - It can be created from any personal Facebook page
 - You can give it its own look and feel so you can brand it for your school and class year
 - You can securely add or invite anyone to the Group, even if they are not on your personal Facebook "friend" list
2. When you have a Facebook Group page, combined with a well-organized online database, there is no need to spend money on creating a "class website." Before Facebook came along, class websites were a way for classmates to chat, upload photos and get reunion details. No need to replicate what Facebook already allows you to do for free.
3. The Facebook Group page will give classmates who use social media, a simple and safe way to RSVP and purchase reunion tickets directly from your Group page (assuming you already have your class database in place).

Using the "DESCRIPTION" tab on your group page:

4. It's a good idea to create some kind of 1-page PDF **invite** that contains all your reunion details. Posting it under the "DESCRIPTION" tab prevents you from having to re-post reunion details every couple of days.

Facebook limitations:

5. You're not going to find ALL of your classmates on Facebook.
6. Not everyone on Facebook is an **active** (everyday) user.
7. Many classmates will opt to turn their Facebook notifications **off** especially when they are members of Groups.
8. Having classmates reconnect on Facebook is a good start, but this is only one small part of the reunion planning process. Getting the bulk of those classmates to **commit**, RSVP and purchase their tickets in a timely fashion is a **completely different** process that needs to be done methodically if you are to maximize your attendance.

Beyond Facebook

9. Since some classmates will not be on Facebook or actively using it every day, it's important to have some kind of **database** to work with. In the past, committees used spreadsheets, but with today's technology, the manual aspect of using and maintaining a spreadsheet has become obsolete. Having your entire class database centralized and **online** is how classes are eliminating a lot of the information management headaches and **saving a lot** of organizing and planning time.
10. Collecting email addresses for email blasts is very important because not everyone reads their Facebook posts every day or chooses to receive Facebook notifications. This is another reason why it is good to have a COMPLETE online database independent of your Facebook Group page.



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TICKET PRICE

Be careful that your ticket price is not TOO EXPENSIVE! In today's economy, the #1 reason that people are NOT going to attend their reunion is because of the COST.

We realize that you want to make it a nice event that people will appreciate and remember, but the truth is, it's not about the venue or the food or the entertainment. It's about getting together and re-connecting with as many high school classmates as possible.

A snapshot of ReunionDB's planning calculator here ([HERE](#))

More tips on keeping your ticket price low and other important ticket stuff:

- ✓ Your venue choice will be the biggest factor in establishing a ticket price. Because chain hotels tend to be pricey, more reunions are becoming less formal. It's more cost effective to have your event at a Country Club, nice restaurant, catering hall or high-end bar.
- ✓ Choose a simple menu and do not waste a lot of money on a fancy meal because it is not the main focus of the reunion. Heavy hors d'oeuvres passed around and more casual food stations with "finger food" will keep costs down, and make it easier for people to maximize their mingling time during the reunion.
- ✓ Using a cash bar instead of an open bar is recommended to keep ticket prices down. Including a drink ticket or two as part of your ticket price is a possible way to compromise between an open and cash bar.
- ✓ More reunion committees are using their own iPods and/or Pandora for music instead of hiring a DJ or a loud band.
- ✓ Hiring a photographer frees up the committee and/or other classmates from doing this task and gives everyone more time to enjoy the reunion. Your best option is to hire a friend, a relative or an intern at the high school who is willing to give you a break on their price or will do it for free.
- ✓ A few people will always show up at the door on the night of the reunion without a purchased ticket. Have some means to accept a check, cash or credit card, even if it means charging more for walk-ins. Asking family members or friends who were not in your class to help at the check-in desk will free up committee members and other classmates to have more time to enjoy the reunion.
- ✓ If you decide to plan a pre-event the night before your reunion, it's important to not negatively impact the attendance for your main event, especially if the pre-event has no entry fee. Many may choose to only come to the free pre-event, impacting your expected ticket sale revenue. Offering one price for both nights is a possible option and don't advertise a Friday pre-event until the bulk of the tickets have been sold for the Saturday main event.



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THE EVENING PROGRAM

While the evening's program shouldn't be long, if done well, it can provide the longest lasting memory of your reunion. The program should not last more than **20 minutes** because your classmates really want the chance to socialize as much as possible. Here are some program ideas to get you started but remember, the best ideas will be the ones that are personalized to the interests of your classmates.

- ✓ Create a slide show, video, or Power Point presentation: request old slides or pictures from your classmates. You may need to arrange for your own audio visual equipment if your venue is not a hotel. Your school or public library may offer the equipment. And don't forget the extension cords!
- ✓ Be sure to recognize any teachers, coaches or counselors who may be attending.
- ✓ Here are some fun ideas for awards.

Award ideas for your reunion event:

1. Christopher Columbus Award (*traveled farthest to attend*)
2. Indiana Jones Award (*most adventurous*)
3. Cliff Clavin from Cheers Award (*still living at home with parents*)
4. Sleeping with the Enemy Award (*married someone from a rival school*)
5. Sweethearts Award (*high school sweethearts who got married*)
6. Ozzie and Harriet Award (*married the longest*)
7. Brady Bunch Award (*largest family living in the house*)
8. Fertile Myrtle Award (*most children*)
9. Latest Edition Award (*newest baby*)
10. Kojak Award (*most hair loss*)
11. Don King Award (*male with the most hair*)
12. Die Hard Award (*has taught or teaches at your high school*)
13. Elton John Award (*most creative attire for the night*)
14. Ringling Bros Award (*most unusual occupation*)
15. Howard Hughes Award (*person least likely to show up, but did*)

To determine the winner of the most children award, for example, you might have all the parents stand up. Find the winner by process of elimination ("if you have fewer than 2 children, please sit down...fewer than 3 children...and so on). Eventually, the winner will be the only one standing.

If you wanted to do a Most Changed/Least Changed Male and Female, you can ask the classmates to nominate from each table. Then the table winners are brought up to the front winners are determined by applause.



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✓ Gathering memorabilia:

Gathering memorabilia for your reunion can be a fun task for your reunion committee that will highlight the decorations at your reunion event. Here are some ideas on how to use the memorabilia:

1. Photocopy pictures, from your yearbook or high school newspapers. Mount them on foam board that has a tri-fold and can stand on its own.
2. Create a poster board of old ticket stubs, programs, invitations, event pictures like Homecoming, Prom, Other Dances, Sporting Events.
3. Ask the school if they have anything you can borrow or buy like banners, trophies, mascot costumes, etc.
4. Create a display of school sweaters, letterman jackets, cheerleading outfits, pom-poms, sports uniforms, graduation cap and gown, etc.
5. Create a display of things you did after school like records or album covers, CD cases of favorite music groups, pictures of favorite movies, TV shows, actors, clothes from your era (poodle skirts, saddle shoes, paisley shirts, leisure suits, bell bottoms, etc.).
6. Have an enlargement of your senior class group photo made. You can expect a charge of \$40 or more to make a black & white poster size enlargement. Mount the picture on foam board, leaving space around the edge for classmates to sign when they check in.

Talk to other classes who have used ReunionDB's Database and Marketing Services ([HERE](#))

FINAL SUGGESTIONS AND SUMMARY:

A lot has changed with reunion planning over the last 5 years. New tools make it easier to maximize attendance, save hours of time and headache, and also eliminate financial risk for committees. Planning committees experience great turnouts by working smarter and using today's technology.

If you have not taken **3-mins** to see our online planning tool created exclusively for high school reunion committees, please take the time. You'll quickly see why the most successful reunions held in the country over the last 5 years, ALL used the [ReunionDB® Planning & Marketing Database](#) to help guarantee maximum attendance.

Regardless of where you are in your planning process, you'll save over **200 hours** of stress and frustration, and you'll be **working more efficiently**. Your only out-of-pocket expense could be as low as **\$79** if you act early.

To learn more about us, you can:

- View our [3-min video](#)
- Read our 2-page [Features & Benefits Summary](#)
- Call our toll-free number below
- Fill out our 60-second online [Pricing Survey](#) and request us to contact you.

Join the list of customers ([Testimonials](#)) who tell us that using our database was the best planning decision they ever made. If you are still weighing your planning options or think you're already on the right path, this 1-page [Comparison Document](#) may be of some help.