Reunion Planning

**Planning, Timeline & Checklist**

Introduction

This document is a general guide only, to assist in the planning and organising of school year/class reunions. It is worth noting that any reunion is successful if approximately 40% of classmates attend. Even though this number might seem small, it is more important that the event be a fun and memorable one.

The absolute first step of reunion planning is to evaluate if there is enough interest in holding one! There is no point in devoting 18 months of unnecessary planning if four people turn up; better off meeting for coffee!

Assuming there is contact with past students and a positive response has been received; recruit help, form a committee, hold a planning meeting at least every eight weeks and keep everyone informed! Allow plenty of time, be mindful of the budget and be open to all suggestions.

If the reunion is for the early years, the timeline for planning the event could be from 12 to 18 months, due to the difficulty in finding ex-classmates and selecting an appropriate venue.

So, plan well, catch up with ‘old’ friends and, above all, have a great time.

Good luck!

*Note:*

*The following guidelines represented an 18-month timeline for school year reunions and used in part for the 1962 Foundation Students Reunion in 2014*.

Planning

*1. To Begin:*

Getting in touch with the high school should be the priority in the planning of the reunion. It is important to:

* Inform the school about the intentions to plan a year/class reunion.
* See if other past students have the same idea, then coordinate efforts.
* Leave contact numbers so former students’ names can be passed on.
* If not already known, find out if the school can provide a list of names of the year/class.
* Make enquiries regarding placing an upcoming reunion on the school’s website or inclusion in the newsletter.
* Find out if there are any memorabilia or school banners available for the event.
* See if any yearbooks are available for the year, either for sale on the night or loan.
* Get permission from the school before taking any photos in the school grounds, for any photographic displays.
* Check with the school if there is to be a School Champion Award coinciding with the proposed reunion.

*2. The Reunion Committee*

The next task is to form a reunion committee. The number of potential members would depend upon the type of reunion being planned. A large group of volunteers would only be necessary for a school year reunion. The class reunion committee can be as little as one although not recommended.

The more diverse the group, the better the result! Potential volunteers who know their way around the computer/internet, budget planning and organising, help to keep costs down.

If there are classmates who are unable to devote time to a committee, but would like to be involved, ask them to consider helping on the night.

Select a date for the first committee meeting and prepare a preliminary budget. For further meetings, try to have an agenda and stick to it.

Note: Refer to the timelines and keep to deadlines.

Create a computer file to manage all reunion matters such as searching for missing and deceased classmates, and RSVP’s.

Break the committee into smaller groups, to divide the workload.

Committee Leader:

* Coordinate committee
* Delegate tasks to certain members
* Organise meetings

Treasurer:

(This position can easily be taken on by the Committee Leader)

* Budget
* Collection of monies
* Payments to vendors

Alumni team:

* Classmates search
* Update to website (if accessible)
* Mailings (email, post)
* Invitations
* Photo collection
* Guests (teachers/school staff)
* In Memoriam
* Update to classmates

Event Team:

* Selection of:
  + Venue
  + Menu
  + Decorations
  + Displays
  + Centerpieces
  + Giveaways
  + Awards

&

* + Entertainment
* Slideshow/DVD
* Programme Booklet
* Photographer
* On-site planning
* Memory Books
* Memorabilia
* Informal events
* Mementoes

*3. Getting the Word Out*

Searching for ex-classmates can be the single most time-consuming task if contact proves to be elusive.

Creating a reunion website (or having access to one) is a great way to stay in touch and to keep classmates up to date with the reunion planning.

Working from the list of ex-classmates provided by the school, here are a few suggestions for ‘getting the word out’:

* Word of mouth (known contacts and their contacts)
* Lists from previous reunions (if any)
* The ‘White Pages.'
* Social Media - Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn.
* “Can You Help” section of the West Australian.”
* Community Newspapers, ‘Western Suburbs Weekly’ and ‘The Post.'
* Email
* Post/current addresses
* Create a ‘Who’s Coming’ email
* Ask ex-classmates to contribute any memorabilia
* Also for consideration is if the event is to include partners.

*4. The Event*

In making a decision on the venue, offer a few suggestions to as many classmates as possible, for options on the following:

1. **Venue**
   * Hotel
   * Restaurant
   * Function centre
   * Students Home
   * Suitable location for the age group
2. **Date**
   * Consider school holidays (if applicable)
   * Long weekends
   * Major sporting fixtures (e.g., AFL Grandfinal/cricket)
   * Weather
3. **Theme**
   * Milestone (e.g., Class of ‘88)
   * The eighties!
   * The sixties!
   * Celebrating classmate’s birthdays! (The year we turn 40!)

Note: Remember the need to budget for caterers, tables, linen and cutlery, waiters and bartenders if the reunion is not being held in a hotel or restaurant.

1. **Define the event:**
   * Cocktail Party

(Great way to mingle, but still need to provide seating)

* + Formal Dinner.

(A hotel/restaurant sit down dinner with place cards)

* + Casual Dinner/Buffet

(People can mingle while selecting their food and are not restricted to one table)

* + Backyard BBQ

(Very informal, but challenging)

1. **Decorations:**

This depends on the theme of the event, as the possibilities are endless:

* + Balloons/streamers in school colours

Note: Budget for around $270.00/10 bunches of 10 balloons

* + Table centrepieces in school colours or theme of the night.
  + School banners, if available.
  + Enlarge school photos for memorabilia tables.
  + Photos and memorabilia from ex-classmates
  + Original uniforms (if available)
  + Display of school trophies/awards

1. **Accommodation:**
   * Providing accommodation may not be necessary, but needs to be discussed.
2. **Catering/Menu:**
   * In deciding on the menu keep in mind the age group
   * Try to avoid highly elaborate meals (not everyone likes chili)
   * Incorporate a vegetarian option
3. **Beverage:**

The alcohol package should include beer/wine, soft drink and water, with tea and coffee facilities. Options would be:

* + A set amount allocated to cover the cost of drinks and up to a certain time: (this should be included in the ticket price and decided on by the committee)
  + A cash bar (attendees to purchase their own drinks)
  + A cash bar (attendees to buy drinks after the bar service has closed, usually about 10pm for an evening function.)

1. **On the Night:**

Consider on whether to incorporate any activities into the event. This would depend very much on numbers, and might include some of the following:

* + Appoint an MC for the evening.
  + Create a floor plan of the venue with ‘what goes where’.

(Usually supplied by the venue and is a great help to event staff and committee)

* + A reunion cake
  + Run a continuous photo slideshow throughout the event, with music from the era.
  + Consider a door prize
  + Decide early if there is to be a guest speaker
  + Remember to include tributes to absent friends and deceased students
  + An event programme (include an order of events/speeches as well as bar closures and menu options.)
  + Prepare any displays ahead of time and arrange to keep everything at the venue until required
  + Have blank name tags available for any last minute corrections and additions.
  + Be prepared to:
    - Schedule in the unforeseen
    - Start the day early.
    - Factor in ‘drinking and not driving’. Check if there is overnight parking available and include in the reunion invitations.

Consider mementoes of the event:

* + Pencils/Pens or notepads \*
  + Coffee mugs – printed with the reunion date & Theme
  + Key rings
  + T-Shirts – printed with the reunion date and theme \*\*

\*\*Note: If there are plans to have T-Shirts, save on costs by doing the artwork.

Approximately $8.50/100 in sizes M, L, XL, 2XL & 3XL.

\*Note: If there are plans to have pens as mementoes, budget for around $2.25/100.

Note: Any customised items should be ordered three months in advance.

1. **Collection and payment of monies**

Make sure when booking the venue, to check when deposits/final payment is due. Keep an electronic record of all expenditure.

* + Finalise any outstanding money to the venue.

Timeline

The following timeline is for 18 months. It can be easily shortened if contact with past students is achievable.

**18 Months Out**

* Contact the school
* Organise a Committee
* Set the first committee meeting
* Determine if there is enough interest in holding a reunion
* Commence missing classmates search (ongoing up to the event)
* Start to collect memorabilia (needs to be ongoing)
* Post missing classmates on the website (if a site is available)
* Prepare a contact list
* Advise classmates the names of the committee
* Set an official date based on feedback
* Book the Venue, or if required
  + Caterers
  + DJ (usually just background music)
  + Photographer (or a volunteer)

**12 Months Out**

* Continue search for classmates
* Create a Budget
* Open a bank account (or have access to one)
* Decide on a theme
* Continue to send out updates
* Invite ex-teachers as non-paying guests
* Plan to have some speeches or awards
* Design reunion invitations

**6 Months Out**

* Meet with Venue/Caterer to plan the menu
* Confirm all reservations and bookings
* Make contact with classmates yet to respond
* Plan the decor of the event
  + Centerpieces
  + Displays
  + Colour theme
* Obtain a detailed diagram of the room for the setup.
* Order Mementoes
* Continue collecting memorabilia for the displays
* Continue to update alumni list
* Plan the name tags
* Revise the budget, if necessary
* Mail reunion invitations, to include:
  + Cost
  + Directions
  + Food being served
  + Dress code or theme
  + RSVP
  + Banking facilities for EFT payments

**3 Months Out**

* Continue updating the list of attendees and missing classmates
* Collect photos for a slideshow
* Put together background music (if applicable)
* Plan some giveaways or ceremony
* Advertise in newspapers
  + The West Australian (reunion page)
  + Community Post newspapers\*\*\*
  + Western suburbs weekly

\*\*\*Note: Be aware the need to allow about two weeks for the artwork, and a further three weeks before the advertisement appears.

B*udget for around $350.00/ad with a dimension of 10cm x 7cm.*

* Arrange supplies for name tags (there are good programmes on Microsoft Word)
* Plan nostalgia table
* Organise volunteers to help with:
  + Meet and greet
  + Name tag table
  + Hand out drinks
* Decide how to honour deceased classmates
  + Small memorial table
  + Mention in speeches

**1 Month Out**

* Confirm attendance and advise Venue
* Finalise all plans and purchases:
  + T/Shirts, pens, et
  + Cake
  + Decorations (colour theme)
* Create name tags
* Prepare guest list
* Prepare classmate list
* Prepare missing classmate list
* If attendees request to pay on the night, have one person responsible for collection.
* Confirm with the venue if they are providing:
  + Event staff to Liaise and assist throughout the night
  + Registration tables
  + Easels
  + Bulletin boards
  + Microphone
  + Podium
* Confirm closing time with the venue
* Print off any event signs for the venue (if required)
* Prepare an event schedule for the day

**1 Week Out**

* Continue to update the attendance list (if necessary)
* Gather all memorabilia and decorations for the event
  + Banners from the school
  + Old uniforms
* Give the final numbers and balance of money to the venue (this timeline can vary with each supplier)
* If balloons and streamers and other decorations are to be part of the decorations, order these now. Most party hire companies will deliver on the day!

**Day Before**

* Decorate the Venue

Note: In the event of the room being used during the day or night before, be mindful to allow time to decorate on the day!

**The Reunion Event**

* Pick up cake
* Pick up any floral arrangements
* Check that all audio and visual displays are working
* Complete the decorations (if required)
* Make sure all the mementoes and memorabilia are on display

**After the event**

* Dismantle displays and return to the school archives
* Return any other memorabilia to the donors
* Upload photos to the website (if you have one)

Or

* Make available via email
* Don’t forget to thank the helpers
* Have a post-reunion meeting, usually about two weeks after the event.
* Keep the lines of communication open. Very useful for any future reunions and encourages classmates to stay in touch.
* Appoint a committee member to liaise with the school for any further activities
* Share the event planning activities with other years/classes (via the school website)

Checklist

* Contact the school
* Form a reunion committee
* Select the Committee Leader, Treasurer and other positions
* Continue work on reaching out to classmates
* Hold regular reunion committee meetings
* Survey classmates for ideas and potential dates
* Decide on venue and format of events
* Create a budget
* Develop classmate contact list
* Develop class website (optional)
* Arrange a bank account
* Select photographer (optional)
* Select DJ (optional)
* Select Caterer (If not part of venue hire)
* Choose menu
* Pay all required deposits
* Print reunion invitations
* Mail reunion invitations
* Make or arrange purchase of decorations
* Order event mementoes such as T/Shirts, pens, etc.
* Create old photo slideshow
* Arrange deceased classmates tribute
* Confirm all preparations
* Create name tags
* Memorabilia table and photo collages
* Delegate last minute tasks: picking up the cake, flowers, mementoes decorations.

*Note: Suppliers used for the 2014 Foundation Students Reunion were:*

Churchlands Senior High School (Memorabilia and Alumni webpage)

Oxford Hotel Leederville (Venue)

Corica Pastries, Northbridge (Reunion Cake)

Osborne Party World (Room decorations and table centerpieces)

Scope Sportswear (Printed T/Shirts and Pens)

J & K Hopkins (Corkboards)

Community Newspapers (Reunion advertising)

Officeworks