



How to Plan Your Reunion

Most high school reunions gather together classmates every 10 years after graduation. If you are planning a reunion, remember - it takes many hours of thought and planning to ensure that everything runs smoothly.

First, though, lets reserve your date at Coconut Joe's Beach Club, the #1 Banquet Hall for Fun! Great! Now that your venue and food are all taken care of, it's time to start the real work.

PART 1 - Organize a Planning Committee

1 – Organize a Planning Committee

Begin at least one year in advance. High school reunions involve a lot of coordination. To ensure that you leave yourself enough time to plan a great reunion, begin to organize your committee at least 12 months prior to your reunion date.

- Keep in mind that high school graduates can disperse quite widely. Your committee members might live in other states or even other countries. Some classmates might have changed their names. The earlier you begin assembling your committee, the more time you will have to reach out to the appropriate people.

2 – Contact your high school’s alumni office

Many high schools have an alumni office. If the alumni office handles reunions, they might be able to assist you with the reunion planning. If they do not typically handle reunions, they might be able to assist you in other ways, such as providing contact information for your classmates. Before making any official decisions, talk to your high school administrators about how other class reunions were handled and about whether there are any class gifts you can use to help fund your reunion.

3 – Reach out to designated committee members

Some high schools appoint a reunion committee prior to high school graduation. For example, many high schools ask their Class President or Student Council Members to take on the role of reunion planning. If your high school has already appointed a reunion committee, you will simply have to get in touch with the right people. Write them an email or begin a phone chain to get the ball rolling on your reunion plan.

- If you have lost touch with other members of your reunion committee, contact an administrator at your old high school. Many high schools maintain an alumni contact list.

4 – Recruit a reunion committee

Some high schools do not appoint a reunion committee prior to graduation. And sometimes pre-designated reunion committee members are unable to fulfill their roles. In this case, you will have to formulate your own high school reunion committee. Send an email to your high school class list or use a Facebook group to ask for volunteers who can help with this important task. Remember that the best planning committee members will have the following traits:

- Planning committee members should be able to devote at least 5-10 hours per month on reunion tasks during the 12 months leading up to the reunion.
- Members should be able to devote significantly more time during the final 4-6 weeks before the reunion.
- A planning committee should be diverse and represent students with a variety of interests. You do not want your planning committee to be cliquish or exclusive: a high school reunion is for everyone.
- A committee should be large enough to allow tasks to be delegated to several members but small enough to be manageable. A committee size of 3-12 members is ideal, depending on high school class size. Having one committee member for every 25 class members is a good rule of thumb.
- Committee members should be organized people who can multitask effectively.

5 – Delegate tasks

A high school reunion involves a lot of moving parts. A single person cannot handle all these roles in addition to their other responsibilities in life. Use task delegation in order to make sure that everybody on the committee is pulling his or her weight. Try to divide tasks fairly evenly. You should try to stick to your designated tasks as much as possible, while remaining flexible in case a task proves to be particularly difficult or time-consuming for your committee member. Your committee will likely need to appoint specific members to handle the following tasks:

- A committee chair who helps keep committee meetings on track.
- A secretary who takes and communicates meeting notes and maintains a meeting calendar

- A communications team that gathers contact information for classmates and sets up a website, Facebook group, and email list to notify classmates of the reunion
- A financial subcommittee who manages the budget and handles registration, ticket sales, and donations
- A welcome committee who staffs the reunion event itself, greets attendees, and manages volunteers who help staff the event
- An activities coordinator who helps plan entertainment surrounding the reunion, such as a class softball game, outing, or other events.

6 – Create a tentative meeting schedule

One of your committee members should be in charge of setting a meeting schedule to keep everyone on the same page. Decide to meet at predetermined intervals and put them in your calendar right away. Aim to meet twice a month while you are in the early stages of the planning process (2-12 months before the reunion) and once a week in the final two months before the reunion.

- If your committee members live in other cities or states, use video chats or conference calls to keep one another updated appropriately.

7 – Create a tentative timeline

Some tasks are more important than others, and some tasks have to be done before other tasks can be completed. It is therefore important that your committee develops a sensible timeline to allow your reunion planning to run smoothly. Every reunion is different, but the following timeline is a good starting point:

- 12+ months in advance: organize planning committee, create tentative budget, open a bank account, gather classmate names and contact information, begin to narrow down a reunion date, contact your high school.
- 6-12 months in advance: finalize event date, finalize budget, book Coconut Joe's and key vendors (photographer, etc.), promote event to classmates, determine ticket pricing, look for missing classmate contact information.
- 2-6 months in advance: sell tickets and gather RSVPs, continue promoting the event, order any special decorations or souvenirs, gather supplies for the event, recruit volunteers to help assist with the event.

- Final two months: finalize guest list, provide final counts to your vendors, assemble decorations and other supplies (such as nametags), confirm your vendors, email reminders to your guests, finalize a registration procedure, provide specific schedule of the reunion day to your volunteers and guests.

PART 2 - Assemble in Invite List

1 – Set up a master list of class members

You will be gathering a lot of information from a lot of people. It will be important for you to keep everything organized so that your invitations get sent to the correct parties. Create a spreadsheet that you can continue to update as you gather names, addresses, and email addresses. The following categories should be included in your spreadsheet:

- Current name of the classmate
- Former name of the classmate (if relevant)
- Classmate's spouse or domestic partner
- Classmate's address
- Classmate's email address
- Classmate's phone number
- Classmate's social media contact information

2

Talk to your high school's alumni office. Most high schools maintain a detailed list of their graduates, including name changes and updated contact information. Your first step to developing a thorough invite list is to gather a list of all your class members from your school. This will likely provide the bulk of the names, email addresses, and addresses you will require.

3

Examine your yearbooks. It is possible that your school's alumni office will leave off a few names for members of your class. Compare the list from the alumni office to your old yearbooks. Note any discrepancies between the two lists, and add names from the yearbook to your contact list.

4

Create a Facebook reunion group. Facebook is a great way to keep track of former classmates as they move and change names. Set up a Facebook group early on and invite as many of your former classmates as you can find. Encourage group members to track down their friends and acquaintances from your class. Hopefully word will spread that a reunion is imminent.

- The Facebook group is a way to assemble an invite list as well as update class members about how the reunion planning is going. Be sure to send the group relevant updates in order to boost excitement.

5

Confirm that you have the correct contact information for everyone on the list. At this point, you might have a spotty contact list for your classmates. You might have the addresses for some classmates and nothing but a Facebook update from others. Fill in the gaps by taking the time to confirm the contact information for all your classmates. Use the information you have to get in direct touch with them: call the classmates whose phone numbers you have, email the classmates whose email addresses you have, send Facebook messages to group members, and send letters to classmates whose physical addresses you have. Ask them to confirm all of their contact information with you. You can also ask them how they prefer to be contacted and note that in your spreadsheet.

6

Create an email listserv once your contact list is complete. After you have filled in your contact list, go ahead and have your communications team put together an email listserv for your high school class. You can use the email list to notify classmates of important reunion updates and to gather information from them as necessary.

7

Hunt for missing classmates. There are usually a few people who are hard to track down after graduation. They might move abroad, change their names, or lose touch with their high school friends. Create a list of these "missing classmates" whom you are unable to contact. Use the Facebook group and email listserv to ask about these missing classmates. Perhaps another classmate might know how to get in touch with them.

8

Use your contact lists to continue promoting the event. Drum up excitement and attendance for the reunion by posting frequently to the email listserv and Facebook group. Let people know that the reunion is at Coconut Joe's, and let them know why they should be excited to attend.

9

Create an "In Memoriam" list as necessary. Unfortunately, sometimes high school classmates pass away over the years. If you find that one of your classmates has passed away, create an "In Memoriam" list. This will allow you and your classmates to pay the proper tribute to them during the event. Perhaps the loved ones of your dead classmates might be willing to provide you with a photograph or other memento you can use to remember them at your reunion.

PART 3 - Coordinating Event Logistics

1 – Open a reunion bank account

Reunions can be funded through alumni donations, class gifts, alumni association dues, or ticket sales. No matter how you handle the finances of your reunion, you will want to keep meticulous records. This task will likely fall to your Class Treasurer or reunion committee member who will handle ticket sales. Make sure that any money you collect for the reunion is being spent responsibly and that you stick to your budget.

2

Establish a budget for the reunion. Perhaps you already have funds available from class gifts or alumni association dues. Or perhaps the money from the event will have to come entirely from ticket sales. No matter what, you need to determine a total budget for the event. Make sure that you do not rely on high ticket sales or expensive tickets. You want the event to be manageable for everyone, and expensive tickets can hurt attendance. Make sure you keep room in your budget for:

- Bartending (catering is included at Coconut Joe's)
- Souvenirs (gift bags, special T-shirts, etc.)
- Other vendors (photographers, DJs, etc.)

3

Settle on a reunion date. Ideally, a reunion will be on a weekend when people are more able to travel freely. Your reunion could be a full weekend affair with many activities, or it can simply be a gathering on a Friday or Saturday evening. If you like, you can ask your classmates to vote on several possibilities for a reunion date. By using a Doodle poll or Google survey, you can encourage attendance amongst your guests.

4

Send out invitations 3 months prior to the reunion. Use your contact list to send invitations to all your high school classmates. Be sure that you include their spouses or significant others on the invitations. The invitations can be digital invitations that you send out by email, or they can be paper invitations you send through the mail. No matter what, you will have to include the following information on your invitations:

- Date and time of the event
- Who is invited, including whether plus-ones
- Dress code (casual island attire)
- The cost per person of attending. Be sure you specify how exactly your guest should pay (by check, PayPal, etc.).
- Activities attendees should prepare for. Will there be quiz games? Sports activities? Dancing? Give your attendees some specific information about what they can expect from the reunion.
- Other important logistical information. For example, if you are reserving nearby hotel rooms for guests or a transport bus, you should inform your attendees.
- Instructions on how to RSVP and when they must RSVP by. Should attendees send you an email, fill out a Google poll, or mail in a reply card? Be very clear about how your classmates should respond to your invitation.

2.

5

Book your vendors. The kind of vendors you hire will depend on the type of event you are hosting. You may need to hire some vendors to take care of important event details. A high school reunion is likely too large an event for you to handle it all yourself. Vendors to consider include:

- A DJ
- A photographer
- A bus driver

PART 4 - Providing entertainment

1 – Let everyone know the theme

Let everyone know you are having a reunion in the islands – so dress appropriately! Having a clear vision for your event will help you sort out all other subsequent decisions.

2

Include nostalgic details. Many reunion guests will want to relive their high school experiences. Having some details to remind guests of their high school days can help make them feel welcomed, and can help your guests interact successfully with one another. Some nostalgic details to include are the following:

- Ask your DJ to play music that was popular during your high school days
- Create a photo display of important high school events, such as sports games, extra-curriculars, or school dances.
- Make photocopies of high school yearbooks and newspapers and spread them around your venue
- Create a quiz game about important events and pop culture from your high school days.

3

Consider a reunion book or other souvenir. Especially for important reunions (like the 25th or 50th reunion), a reunion book or souvenir might be welcomed by your guests. A reunion book will include short biographies of your alumni and details about their lives. Not every reunion will require something this in-depth, but it can help provide your guests with special memories from your event.

4

Plan activities for plus-ones and guests. Remember that not everyone at a reunion will be an alum. Your guests will bring spouses, friends, partners, or even children who might be unfamiliar with your high school. Include a few activities that are generic enough for anybody to enjoy. These could include:

- Dancing
- Athletic activities (a softball game, three-legged races, kickball, etc.)
- Party games such as Charades, Twister, or corn-hole.

Tips

- Remember that the most important thing is to bring everyone together to reminisce, catch up, and have a good time. Do not worry about throwing the most sophisticated or fancy party.
- If you volunteer to serve on a reunion planning committee, be aware that you may spend a lot of time on coordination activities. It can be easy to underestimate the time that event planning can take: be sure that you give yourself plenty of time to do what needs to be done and that you don't take on too much.

Warnings

- Remember: Sometimes you have to pester classmates to come and have a good time. Use phrases like – “it won't be a success without you” and “everyone will be disappointed if you are not there” to nudge those who are sitting on the fence.
- Consider providing safe ways for people to travel home to minimize drunk driving: a party bus, taxi service, Uber, or hotel rooms in walking distance of your venue (Residence Inn by Marriott is less 100 yards away – 885-499-0001) can help keep everyone safe. Coconut Joe's will issue a “last call” 30 minutes before

closing to allow people to gather themselves and arrange safe rides to their home or hotel.