

Six Easy Steps to Writing a Family Reunion Announcement that Will Make Family Members *Want* to Come!

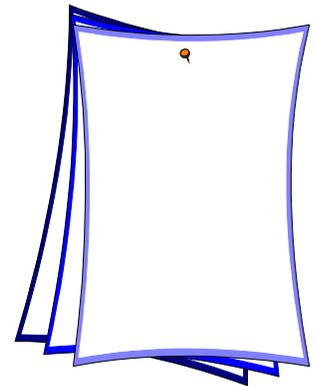
by Stan W. Merrill, PhD

You're ready to hold your family reunion. But how do you announce it so everyone will want to come? It's easy to write a persuasive family reunion announcement when you follow six simple steps.

Step 1. Collect the Essentials

Start by gathering the basic information about the reunion. Write it on a sheet of paper or on your computer or PDA. You can probably do it in ten or fifteen minutes since you already know the information.

- The date and time
- The location
- Who's invited (for example, all descendants of a particular person or all of a certain person's cousins)
- What to bring (potluck, laptop computer ...)
- What to wear (casual, 1930's retro, etc.)
- Any special facilities that will be available (for example, wireless connections, hookups for RV's, horses for riding)
- The cost (if any)
- RSVP? (yes or no)
- How to reach you for questions (email address, phone number ...)
- A map of how to get to the location. You can get one at maps.google.com or maps.yahoo.com or www.mapquest.com.
- A photo--perhaps of one or more ancestors or of the location where the reunion will be held



Step 2. List the Exciting Things

Make a list of all the things that will make this reunion interesting and exciting. If you're working on the reunion with other family members, invite them to spend five to fifteen minutes helping you make the list.

Ask yourself and anyone helping you to answer this question: "What are we going to do that will be exciting for me personally?"

To start your brain sizzling, here are some examples of things that family members might find exciting:

The location.

- We're holding it at a place that has a lot of family history associated with it. (For example, it's next door to the cemetery where grandma's parents and grandparents are buried.)
- We're holding it at a great vacation spot. (For example, it's on Uncle Bill's yacht or at a National Park.)

Heirlooms and history.

- We'll show off some never-before-seen heirlooms from great-grandma Smith.
- We'll be passing out a collection of photos and old family movies on a DVD.
- We're doing a re-enactment of the reading of great grandfather Jones' will.
- We're having a potluck dinner using only old family recipes.

Someone special.

- We're focusing on Aunt Cora in honor of her 90th birthday.
- A mystery guest is coming to reveal how the family is related to Queen Sylvia of Sweden.
- Uncle Don will review the terms of the family trust.

Step 3. Write a Headline

Write a headline about the most exciting thing at the reunion.

Tip! Try one of these techniques used by professional copywriters to capture attention.

- ➔ Appeal to their desire for gain by offering them something they don't already have.
- ➔ Make them afraid they might lose something precious by not coming.
- ➔ Arouse their curiosity about something they don't know.
- ➔ Tease them with an invitation to something exclusive or unusual.

Here are some examples of headlines using each of the copywriter techniques:

How to get your own DVD full of old family movies and photos.

Your last chance to see the old homestead before they tear it down!

Aunt Jenny reveals ten embarrassing secrets about Mom's teen-age years.

Taste fifteen different old family recipes that have been *lost* for two decades.

Step 4. Write a short description.

Write three or four sentences to describe the interesting things you'll do at the reunion. You want to help people visualize what they will be doing. For example, suppose that Cousin Steve has just finished collecting death certificates on all deceased family members over the past hundred years and Aunt Lydia has found an old recipe for barbecue sauce. Then you might write:



Seventy years ago, great uncle Bob developed his own special barbecue sauce. You'll get to taste it on the chicken at our potluck dinner. Aunt Lydia has promised to reveal the secret ingredient to those at the reunion. Then, after some games and music, cousin Steve will unveil the ten top causes of death in our family over the past 100 years. He'll tell you what to ask your doctor to make sure you don't succumb to the same things.

Step 5. Put it together.

An invitation doesn't have to be fancy. But the nicer it looks, the more likely people will be to get excited. Here are two ways to combine what you did in the first four steps into an attractive, must-read invitation.

1. Create it on the computer Use *Microsoft Publisher* or *Adobe Photoshop* or the free open source program *Scribus* or any other software that you know how to use and that will make a good-looking announcement. Even your word processing software will work.
2. Or, do it by hand on a piece of paper, then photocopy it.

Either way, follow these steps.

1. **Use the photo as a background.** On your computer, blow up the photo to fill half the paper, more or less. If you're doing the announcement by hand, paste the photo in the upper right hand corner of the paper. (The directions here are general guidelines. If you're a graphic designer or have a keen eye for design, feel free to paste it where ever you want. Be sure to use a *copy* of a photo and not the original if you're mounting it on paper.)
2. **Write your headline.** Use big, boldface type, draw with a thick-pointed dark marker or cut out letters from construction paper. If it will be legible, you can write over part of the picture. Otherwise, write in the space that doesn't have a photo. Either way, put the headline at or near the top of the page where people will see it first thing.
3. **Write your three or four sentence description.** Put the description immediately under the headline so people will read it right away. Use a normal typeface or pen.
4. **Include a "Details" box.** Draw a box near the bottom of the sheet. Write "Details" as a title inside it. Then tell the essentials that you wrote down in Step 1. You can add anything else you feel is useful or important.
 - When
 - Where
 - Who
 - What to wear
 - What to bring
 - Cost
 - Special facilities
 - RSVP (if they have to)
 - How to reach you
5. **Insert a map.** Put the map near the Details Box so readers will understand that it shows where the reunion will be held.



Step 6. Make the Envelope Interesting

Send the announcement in regular mail. You'll make the reunion seem more important and improve your response. You can still email or fax your announcement to family members as well. But regular mail makes it feel special.

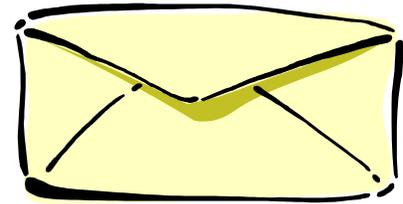
Your envelope makes a difference. Choose a big envelope or one that is an unusual color so it will stand out when it comes in the mail.

Tip! If you've chosen a color scheme for your reunion in order to make the reunion more memorable to family members, use the same color scheme for the announcement. For other tips about planning your family reunion, see the checklist at www.EasyFamilyReunion.com

Address an envelope to each invitee. Make sure you include your return address.

Write "Family Reunion" in big letters on the front of the envelope so people don't throw it away or put it in their "Open when I get around to it" pile.

Optionally, for extra impact you can write your headline under the words "Family Reunion." You may also add a sticker if that fits your personality.



Put on the stamps and *send it out!*

Tip! Researchers have learned that people are more likely to open a letter if it has lots of stamps on it. So if you want to make your letter stand out, glue several stamps instead of a single first class one.

Congratulations! Your invitation is on its way.

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