



Digital Family Reunions

Devin Ashby

ashbydr@familysearch.org

youtube.com/ashbyster

Want to get together with your friends and family but can't do it in person? There are many tools that will allow you to get together online and interact together. GoToMeeting, Skype, and Google Hangouts, will allow anyone to share and record conversations.

ONLINE INTERACTION

How many people today live next to all the people they want to communicate with? New online communities are created on a daily basis. What can you do to build a community that will help you interact with your family to help you capture family history?

Benefits of online interaction:

1. Available 24/7 with internet connection
2. Conversations can be documented and made available for later use
3. Saves money by limiting travel

WHAT DO I NEED?

You will need an internet connection and an integrated webcam if you want to use video in your online interaction. It also helps if you have a newer computer/tablet/mobile device. If you don't have a computer and all you have is a phone there are mobile apps for each of the three options discussed here.

WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS?

There are a number of different options for online video interaction. The three I will talk about here are GoToMeeting, Skype, and Google Hangouts. A few questions to consider are, "Can I share my screen," "How many participants can join a meeting?" "Can I record it?" etc. I will try to answer these questions as I discuss these options.

1. GoTo Meeting: www.gotomeeting.com

This a great option if you want to involve a lot of people and there is now face to face video interaction. It does do a good job of allowing someone to present and allow multiple people to watch the screen and participate through a chat feature. There is a trial period of about 30 days that allows you to use it for free.

* Adobe Connect is another option similar to GoTo Meeting and a purchase is required. A free trial is also available.

2. Skype: www.skype.com

Skype is now owned by Microsoft and can be downloaded for free. Skype seems to be very popular internationally. The phone/chat feature is great and video works well. You can add multiple people to the chat feature but not to the video feature unless you want to pay a little extra. Skype does let you share your screen and upload/download images and files easily.

3. Google Hangouts: www.google.com/+learnmore/hangouts/

This is another free option but there are several features here that make this product unique. First of all hangouts are a part of Google+ which is Google's stab at a social media tool like Facebook. You can have up to 10 people participate at once on a Google hangout after you have created a Google account and added people to your circles. You can share your screen easily and there is an option to record hangouts and even broadcast them live. This makes sense since Google owns YouTube and hangouts can easily be placed on a YouTube channel.

Here is a great article that does a good job of providing a video conferencing comparison [here](#).

A DIGITAL FAMILY REUNION

Here is a way you might give this all a try. I'm going to recommend getting started with a Google Hangout.

1. Identify a reason for getting together, i.e. collecting stories about Grandpa Bill.
2. Invite your family members to create a Google account if they don't already have one and set a date for the meeting. Then, be sure each of you have each other in your circles.
3. Present 3-4 images/documents/videos/interviews that you have collected over the years and then ask everyone else what they have to share. If you like you can upload them to Google Drive for quick access during the hangout.
4. Schedule a time to reunite in the near future so everyone can share what they've found or captured.