

Beginning Genealogy

Start With What You Know

Gather what you already know about your family.

Start with yourself, your parents, grandparents.... – record what you know. It's okay if you are not sure if your information is not 100% correct, it is a good starting place

How to fill out forms: Surname/Maiden Name, Places, (small to large: city, county, state, country).

Dates: Why we don't use 2/12/16

Scour your basement, attic and closets (and those of your family members) and collect family records, old photos, letters, diaries, photocopies from family Bibles, even newspaper clippings.

Vital records such as birth certificates, marriage certificates and death certificates are all ...vital...to your genealogy research! These records show full names, addresses/locations, birth dates, occupation, spouse's name, and very importantly parent's names

Talk to your relatives

Ask your parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles about their memories. Don't ask just about facts and dates—get the stories of their growing up and of the ancestors they remember.

When it comes to family stories and the information you get from family members, remember that it might not be completely true. Details get left out; facts get jumbled. Use the stories and interviews as clues, but back it up with more research

Organize and Share What You've Found

Start with the five-generation "pedigree" chart. A pedigree chart starts with one person—like you!—and then shows the names, dates and places of events for parents, grandparents, and so on. Share them with family members, you may have something wrong and they can correct it for you.

The family group sheet takes one couple and shows them with all their children. Don't forget they are part of your family as well.

Most genealogy researchers use a family tree software program such as Family Tree Maker or Roots Magic. There are also many online options at the large genealogy databases such as Ancestry.com, FindMyPast, MyHeritage and FamilySearch.

Don't use an online tree as your only tree. Using a pay site such as Ancestry.com is great until you decide not to renew the subscription and then you can still look at the tree, but you can't access the records that are attached to it. It's always good to have a backup program such as Family Tree Maker or Roots Magic.

Focus your search

Have blanks on your pedigree chart? Don't try to fill them in all at once—focus on someone from the most recent generation where your chart is missing information. Work on that puzzle first, then work backward in time

Don't just follow the direct lines. By tracing siblings and spouses back you may find the missing information you have been searching for.

