

Beginning Your Family History Search

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Start with the known; work toward the unknown.
Start with yourself; work back one generation at a time.

Write the names of your parents, grandparents, and great grandparents, if you know them. Include their birth, marriage, death dates and places with as much detail as you know. Working on one family line at a time will likely be less confusing.

Collect birth, marriage, and death certificates from your or your family members' homes.

Interview family members and write down their memories and family stories. Search for sources that document the stories.

A Pedigree Chart (or Ancestry Chart or Family Tree) is a helpful map to the family relationships. A Family Group Record allows you to record more detail than will fit on a chart. These forms are available several places online or can be easily generated with a genealogy software program.

Search for missing b - m - d certificates at official registrars or courthouses. Some are online.

Collect photos, old letters, and family memorabilia from your relatives.

Use the collected certificates and interviews to fill in the Pedigree Chart and Family Group Records with what you did not know or remember. Ask family members more questions especially about what you find.

Keeping the sources where you find the information you are recording is very important! Be sure to record all the information you find and where you found it. Learn to make proper source citations.

Continue adding reliable sources of information expanding the types of records.

Expand the search to local, state/province, and federal repositories.

Continue updating your Pedigree Chart and Family Group Records as you expand your search for documentary evidence of your ancestors and keep adding sources to your findings to meet the Genealogical Proof Standard. Write your findings to analyze and complete your research.

Genealogical Proof Standard (GPS)

- conduct reasonably exhaustive research in reliable sources for all information pertinent to the question
- include a complete, accurate citation to the source or sources of each item of information
- analyze and correlate the collected information to assess its quality as evidence
- resolve any conflicts caused by items of contradictory evidence
- arrive at a soundly reasoned, coherently written conclusion



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