



Basics on Genealogy for Beginners

Start with what you know –

1. Fill out a pedigree chart. In other words, create a list of your direct ancestors (parents, grandparents, and so on).
 - a. The National Genealogical Society has free templates you can download: <https://www.ngsgenealogy.org/free-resources/charts/>
 - b. For each person, try to record the name (first, middle, last, maiden names, and nicknames), date and place of birth, date and place of marriage, spouse name (if applicable), and date and place of death (if applicable).
 - c. Record what you know to be true, and mark what you estimate to be true.
2. Add in collative relatives, including aunts, uncles, cousins, and siblings. Record full names, spouse names, children, and any birth, marriage, or death dates and places.
3. Look at materials you have at home. Do your photographs have names on them? Do you have any birth, marriage, or death certificates? Do you have diaries, personal letters, or family books or records? Do you have medical records, voter registration records, or emigration, immigration, and naturalization records? Do you have any death notices or old newspaper clippings? Do you have records of any memberships? Items such as these are helpful because they can at least tell you when and where a person lived.
4. Once you fill this out as best as you can, take what you have and bring it to another family member. They may have other information, and you can collectively piece your knowledge together.

Reminders -

- Spelling is often irregular (especially for times before computers), so try alternate spellings.
- Death certificates often had mistakes because they were filled out by shocked or grieving loved ones



- You can maintain a research log to keep track of your notes, especially the list of sources and spellings you have already tried.
- There's little tricks to learning how to read information. For instance, on old census records the head of the family (the man) will be recorded, and then the wife and children. Consequently, the children are listed as the wife's children – even if she's not the birth mom – because it is based on the relationships to the head.
- Ancestry DNA tests often fail to provide an accurate picture, especially for nonwhite and/or non-European individuals due to issues of underrepresentation within the reference databases.
- If you are a person of color, there are guidelines created that can help you navigate the additional obstacles that affect record keeping due to racism.

Suggested Records –

- Birth certificates, adoptions records, and notices for naming or related birth ceremonies (like christening/baptism, b'rit milah, nāmakaraṇa, and so on)
- Death notices, tombstones, cemetery records, and certificates
- Marriage certificates and divorce records
- Court records, criminal records, civil records, wills, probate records, and voter registration records
- Property records and deeds
- Records from places of worship
- Military service, conscription, and registration records
- Organizations or historical societies that would keep records of one's family line (for example, the Daughters of the American Revolution)
- Census

A number of suggestions listed here were provided by Rebecca Kemp from Tulare County Library during the 2018 CLA Conference.

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