

## Introduction to Genealogy Research

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Genealogy involves tracing and documenting the relationships between individuals within a particular family. The goal of genealogy is to create a family tree or pedigree chart that shows the relationships between individuals over several generations.

### Start with what you know:

- Fill out a blank pedigree chart, including as much information as you know
  - Free charts from the National Archives:  
<https://www.archives.gov/research/genealogy/charts-forms>
- Interview family members
  - Interview via telephone, video chat, letter, in-person, etc.
  - Ask them about traditions, religious affiliation of the family, significant events in their childhood, etc.
  - American Ancestors article, offering tips on conducting interviews with family members along with additional questions:  
<https://www.americanancestors.org/conducting-family-history-interview>
  - Don't be limited by these questions - be creative!
  - Decide how you will record the information...audio recording...notes...be sure to obtain the permission of the interviewee before recording them.

### Preparing to research:

- Select research tools
  - Online databases: Ancestry, FamilySearch, MyHeritage, Fold3, FindMyPast, Newspapers.com, NewspaperArchive, etc.
  - Local archives: Explore the local library, local genealogical/historical society where your ancestors lived to identify potential sources
- Create a research plan
  - Decide which side to start with, maternal or paternal?
  - Research questions:
    - Question of identity - Example: "Was John Smith, who lived in New York in the early 1800s, the same person as John Smith who later moved to California and died there in the 1870s, or were these two different individuals with the same name?"
    - Question of relationship - Example: "What was the connection between Mary Johnson, who was born in Pennsylvania in 1820, and William Johnson, who lived in Virginia in the same time period?"
  - Board for Certification of Genealogists, How to Ask Good Research Questions:  
<https://bcgcertification.org/ten-minute-methodology-how-to-ask-good-research-questions/>

- Genealogical Proof Standard - a set of guidelines and principles used by genealogists to ensure accuracy, thoroughness, and credibility in their research and conclusions. It was developed by the Board for Certification of Genealogists (BCG) and has become the widely accepted standard in the field.
- The GPS consists of five elements that genealogists should follow to establish a reliable and well-supported genealogical conclusion:
  - Reasonably Exhaustive Research
  - Complete and Accurate Source Citations
  - Analysis and Correlation of Evidence
  - Resolving Conflicts and Discrepancies
  - Well-Reasoned Conclusion
- Read more about the GPS at these links:
  - <https://bcgcertification.org/ethics-standards/>
  - [https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/The\\_Genealogical\\_Proof\\_Standard\\_-\\_International\\_Institute](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/The_Genealogical_Proof_Standard_-_International_Institute)
  - <https://familytreemagazine.com/strategies/genealogical-proof-standard/>

#### **Sources and where to find them:**

- FamilySearch Research Wiki pages:
  - [https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Main\\_Page](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Main_Page)
  - The FamilySearch Research Wiki is a “free, online genealogical guide created by FamilySearch. It contains links to genealogy databases, websites, research strategies, and genealogical guidance to assist in the search for your ancestors. Articles included are locality pages for countries around the world and topic pages that include pertinent genealogy record types explaining how to use the record, what it contains, and how to find it”.
  - <https://www.ngsgenealogy.org/ris/> - Link to listing of NGS ‘Research in the States’ series
  - Genealogy Center Databases: <https://acpl.lib.in.us/explore-genealogy/our-resources>
    - “Free Databases” can be accessed anywhere without a library card
    - “On-Site Databases” are the databases you can access if you are physically inside the Genealogy Center or one of the ACPL branches.

## Helpful Guides:

Carmack, S. D. (1999). Organizing your family history search: Efficient & effective ways to gather and protect your genealogical research. Betterway Books.

ACPL catalog entry: [https://acpl.lib.in.us/wise-apps/catalog/6000/detail/wise/660553?offset=0&q=organizing%20your%20genealogy&search\\_in=iets&state=search](https://acpl.lib.in.us/wise-apps/catalog/6000/detail/wise/660553?offset=0&q=organizing%20your%20genealogy&search_in=iets&state=search)

The handybook for genealogists: United States of America. (2006). . Everton Publishers.

ACPL catalog entry: [https://acpl.lib.in.us/wise-apps/catalog/6000/detail/wise/1032044?offset=9&q=the%20handy%20book%20for%20genealogists&search\\_in=iets&state=search](https://acpl.lib.in.us/wise-apps/catalog/6000/detail/wise/1032044?offset=9&q=the%20handy%20book%20for%20genealogists&search_in=iets&state=search)

Mills, E. S. (2017). Evidence explained: Citing history sources from artifacts to Cyberspace.

Genealogical Publishing Company. ACPL catalog entry: [https://acpl.lib.in.us/wise-apps/catalog/6000/detail/wise/1569695?offset=3&q=elizabeth%20shown%20mills&search\\_in=iets&state=search](https://acpl.lib.in.us/wise-apps/catalog/6000/detail/wise/1569695?offset=3&q=elizabeth%20shown%20mills&search_in=iets&state=search)

Smith, D. (2016). Organize your genealogy: Strategies and solutions for every researcher.

Family Tree Books.

ACPL catalog entry: [https://acpl.lib.in.us/wise-apps/catalog/6000/detail/wise/1538732?offset=1&q=organizing%20your%20genealogy&search\\_in=iets&state=search](https://acpl.lib.in.us/wise-apps/catalog/6000/detail/wise/1538732?offset=1&q=organizing%20your%20genealogy&search_in=iets&state=search)

Szucs, L. D., & Luebking, S. H. (2006). The source: A guidebook of American genealogy. Ancestry.

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