

Tips for Getting Started

1. Gather what you know and can find at home.
2. Start by writing down or create a file on your computer to record what you know. For example, you probably know the names of your parents and grandparents. You don't have to have software to do this, but it may help. You can also find lots of forms to record information.
3. Start with your closest relatives and work backward.
4. Interview relatives while you can. Make notes and record the date of your interviews. You can use small voice recorders to help. Ask open-ended questions rather than questions requiring detailed information.
5. Look in your closets and your parents/grandparents closets. Preserve what you find and try to organize it (if you can't get them to part with stuff, try getting copies. You can take a scanner with you or use your digital camera. Examples include:
 - a. Autograph books
 - b. Bibles
 - c. Books (check for inscriptions in them)
 - d. Certificates (from schools or jobs)
 - e. Closet doors (look for writing on the inside)
 - f. Clothing and hats
 - g. Cookbooks
 - h. Diaries and day books
 - i. Family trees
 - j. Furniture (sometimes you'll find names and dates on the bottoms or backs of furniture)
 - k. Photo albums
 - l. Important papers (wills, titles, and deeds)
 - m. Jewelry (such as pins, ID bracelets, charm bracelets, locket, or anything else that may have an inscription or indicate membership in an organization)
 - n. Letters
 - o. Newspaper clippings
 - p. Pictures (don't forget to look at the backs)
 - q. Résumés
 - r. School papers (report cards can have parents' signatures)
 - s. Scrapbooks
 - t. Sewing samplers, quilts, and other handmade items
 - u. Trunks and chests
6. Be careful not to use abbreviations or codes that you won't remember later unless you also record the meaning somewhere.
7. Look for information on a record that will lead to other records. Birth, marriage, and death records may also contain information about parents, spouse, and children of the subject of the record.
8. Keep track of source information with sufficient detail to be able to find the source later.
9. Look for information that other people might have collected, both online and on paper—check with your cousins!
10. Verify the information you find. Do not accept information at face value—verify, verify, verify.
11. Listen to family stories for clues to other information, but don't assume that the stories are completely true.
12. Share your information with others.
13. Don't assume that your surnames are always spelled as you see them. Look for variations.
14. If you can't find something, put it aside and return to it another day.

Links to More Information

Familysearch.org Resources

- Learning Center Courses:
 - <https://familysearch.org/learningcenter/home.html> Beginner Courses are halfway down the page including a step by step starting set.
 - https://familysearch.org/learningcenter/results.html?fq=skill_level%3A%22Beginner%22 Courses at the beginner level. There are multiple topics in videos and slides, ranging from 2 minutes to an hour or so.
- Forms and Software
 - https://familysearch.org/learn/getting_started#print-your-tree--Family Tree Forms
 - <https://familysearch.org/sites/all/themes/frankie/documents/Step-2-Family-Group-Record.pdf--Family> Group Record
 - <https://familysearch.org/products> Free Software

Ancestry.com

Forms for recording your information are available at <http://www.ancestry.com/trees/charts/ancchart.aspx>.

Other General Sources, in no particular order:

- Genealogy Today--<http://www.genealogytoday.com/genealogy/newbie.html>
- Genealogy Center, Allen County Public Library--
<http://www.genealogycenter.org/Pathfinders/GettingStarted.aspx>
- Ancestor Search--<http://www.searchforancestors.com/gettingstarted/>
- Genealogy.com--<http://www.genealogy.com/genehelp.html>
- About.com--http://genealogy.about.com/cs/beginnerscorner/ht/family_tree.htm
- American Ancestors--<http://www.americanancestors.org/getting-started/>
- Geneasearch--<http://www.geneasearch.com/tips/1029.htm>
- Nagodoches Genealogical Society--<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~txnacogd/getstarted.htm>
- Connecticut Society of Genealogists--http://www.csginc.org/genealogy_getting_started.php
- Ellis Island Foundation--http://www.ellisland.org/genealogy/genealogy_getting_started.asp
- Progenealogists--<http://www.progenealogists.com/beginners.htm>
- National Genealogical Society--http://www.ngsgenealogy.org/cs/getting_started
- Families Unearthed--<http://www.familiesunearthed.com/getting-started.htm>
- US GenWeb Project--<http://usgenweb.org/research/starting.shtml>
- ComPortOne--<http://www.comportone.com/cpo/genealogy/articles/26tips.htm>
- Brigham Young University-Ancestors--<http://www.byub.org/ancestors/charts/> Includes links to forms.