How to Start Your Genealogy

"In all of us there is a hunger, marrow-deep, to know our heritage- to know who we are and where we have come from." ___ Alex Haley

These are good steps to follow as you begin the process of finding out about your heritage.

Step 1: Get what is in your head into a Family Tree i.e., *Record what you know*; digital software Or paper records: make your knowledge permanent.

Step 2: Search your home for any documents with genealogical information AND interview your relatives for more information; do they know something beyond your knowledge and/or records?

When, you find new information then, get what you learn into your family tree.

Seek help, check online sites; is anyone else is working on your family?

Step 3: Focus on one person. Choose a research question.

The empty places in your Family Tree will tell you: What do you want to know?

The next task is to determine: Where might you be able to find that information?

Step 4: Sign up for a genealogy account AND Start Searching Records.

Top four (4) large genealogy sites according to *FamilyTree Magazine*:

FamilySearch,
Ancestry ($),
Find My Past ($),
My Heritage ($)

Step 5: Get Smart, use these tips

Keep a Research Log;
Use FamilySearch Research Wiki;
Find and Use the "Questions" platform for your chosen site;
Keep Checking Back – the collections can change DAILY;
Split your desktop; **Don't get discouraged**.

Step 6: Explore your chosen genealogy site. Become knowledgeable about the best use of your site.

Step 7: Put in the Time. Rome was not built in a day, and neither will your research happen instantly. However, you've chosen to take this on and it will be worth the time you spend.

Remember that at ANYTIME you may: Come to the FamilySearch Center for help.

This link – https://sites.google.com/view/vista-fhc/home – will let you know when we're open.

12 Genealogy Research Rules ['Rules' might be a little strict . . . let's call them guidelines! ☺]
___ FamilyHistoryDaily.com (Free Genealogy Search, Articles, Research Help, and More.)

1. Always Cite Your Sources. Always.
2. Never, Ever Assume Another Researcher's Information Is 100% Correct.
3. Remember, Every Name Has Variation. Check Them All.
4. Never Copy Another Person's Public Tree. Use it Only as a Helpful Aid.
5. Share Freely With Others And They Will Share With You.
6, Don't Trust Your Assumptions. Trust Only Sources.
7. Check And Double Check Your Facts Before Recording or Sharing.
8. Take a Second Look At Records, Your Answer May B Right in Front of You.
9. Don't Limit Yourself to Only One or Two Research Sites, Look for Options.
10. Go Offline or Order Hard Copies to Expand Your Research.
11. Back Up Your Files, Monthly, And Keep At Least Two Copies of Your Research.
12. **Never Give Up**. You may not find what you're looking for but the journey is always worth the effort.

The proceeding is the basis of the class as presented live; however, you may wish for expanded direction when this handout is all you have for guidance.

– Expanded Step Guidance – **The Golden Rule of Genealogy: Start with yourself and work back**

Step 1: You must have some means to make a record. These are some options:

Free *Family Tree (genealogy) software*: FamilySearch/FamilyTree; MyHeritage – familytree builder; RootsMagic Essentials; Ancestral Quest Basics; Legacy Family Tree 9 Standard; others (?)

Printed *Paper Forms*: [There are four basic records which have many different names]

#1.. Pedigree / Ancestral - charts;
#2.. Family Group – sheets / records;
#3.. Research Notes / History Sheet;
#4.. Research -Log / -Calendar / -Journal

| All are available for download here: [They will appear different and which you use is your choice.]

https://wiki.familysearch.org/ search with "use appropriate forms"
https://www.archives.gov/research/genealogy/charts-forms
https://support.ancestry.com/s/article/Free-Charts-and-Forms?language=en_US

Step 2: Collect information –

Get a box; put it in the middle of the Living Room floor and be aware as you go around the house; when, you see anything which has information about your family then, put it in the box. Then, as you find you are no longer adding things to the box; sort it out and put the information into your preferred record system.

Interview Relatives:

https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Creating_Oral_Histories

When interviewing consider this:

Don Ray's guidelines for the investigative reporter [He was one]:

"Shed the six; *what, why, when, where, how, who* of the reporter and Do NOT QUESTION – ISSUE GENTLE COMMANDS: "Tell me about . . ."; "Describe for me . . ."; "I'm curious about . . ."; "I've always wondered . . .", then *listen to the answer*.

When, they stop talking just wait, **two minutes.** [It will be hard to wait, but watch, are their eyes rolling back as though looking for more?]

Can't think of the next prompt – use: "Interesting, tell me more . . . ."

There are any number of online lists of interview questions; however, with small effort those online lists of interview questions can become these GENTLE COMMANDS.

Step 3: This is the basic «Research Cycle» – like knitting instructions; repeat from **

** What do you know
What do you want to know
What records have that information
How do you get those records
What is next (redo at **)

Step 4: Use any / all available resources.

This really means, learn the history of and types of records made during – the time(s) in which your ancestors lived.

What records may have been created which would tell you about your family and how they made it possible for you to be here now? Where and how might you gain access to those records? [This is an area in which the FamilySearch Research Wiki shines. Learn to use it.]

Step 5: Educate yourself

Being smart is all about the details. Use the best practices learned by those who've gone down this road before you. Most, if not all, of the organizations from Step 1 have some type of educational / help location from which you are able to learn these practices.

Step 6 and 7: These deal with > research as a skill.

As with any skill, whether it be driving a nail or hitting a golf ball, we learn with the same steps.

1.. Learn the theory
2.. Try it – do it, usually with less than optimum performance, then do it again!
3.. Practice it – perfect practice make perfect
4.. Improve upon it – ask for the feedback from others

«Make a Game of Research»

In order to gain experience; choose a notable person(s), and see how your site works to find information about them.

Genealogy has a language or jargon.

These guidelines aid people around the world to understand the research done by others.

Names:

- Use full names, as given at birth, when recording names.
  There will be a place to enter nicknames, titles, and relationships such as Junior, etc.
- Do NOT use all caps for surnames.
  This is a convention from the days when group sheets were filled out by hand or typewritten to help identify a surname.
- Record only the maiden names for all females.
  You will not be able to trace your grandmother's ancestry with her married name. If you know only her first name, record it e.g., Jane.

Dates:

- Record the dates as done in Europe: day, month [in script not numeric] and [full] year.
  For example: 24 April 2001.
- As you type the date in Family Search, a menu will appear for you to select your date.
  This feature is to keep dates in a standard format to facilitate matches with similar names with the same associated dates.
- What if you don't know the exact date to put in your Tree?
  | If you do not know the exact date, you can wait until you have more information before you enter a date. Or, you can enter incomplete, calculated, or approximate dates.
- Incomplete dates
  | If you do not know an exact date, you can enter incomplete dates e.g., 1988; August 1988
- Calculated or estimated date
  | You can calculate a birth date based on the age at the time of an event. For example, if an 1860 census lists a person as two years old, you can calculate the birth year as 1858. In FamilyTree, you can enter the calculated date in one of these ways: 1858, Calculated 1858
- Approximate dates
  | You can also estimate the year of an event based on other information. In FamilyTree, you can enter one of the following words with the estimated year: Before, After, About
- Date ranges
  | You know that an event occurred within a specific time period. In this case, enter the earliest date and the latest date: From 1860 to 1870

Locations / Places:

- To record a location, start from the smallest entity to the largest such as city, county (parish), state, country.
- For a person born in the USA, an example would be: Chicago, Cook, Illinois, United States.
- If a person was not born in a city and you know the county, you might record just the county and state e.g., Cook, Illinois, United States.
- If you only know the state, you will record: Illinois, United States.
- If you only know the country you will record: "United States".
- In other parts of the world, locations may be: City, Province (District), Country.

For example: Chester, Cheshire, England or Acapulco, Guerrero, Mexico.

- As you type in the location, you will see a menu [in FamilyTree] to select your location. This feature is to keep locations in a standard format to facilitate matches with similar names with the same associated locations.

Location/Place - Recommendations and Standards

Societies and organizations have had varying opinions as to what the standard should be. They are discussed in more detail below.

Historically, the Genealogical Society of Utah has made different recommendations for the way to record an event place. The original recommendation was to use the place name as it was at the time of the event. For example, a person was born in 1860 in what is now Salt Lake City, Utah, the usual three levels of locality (city,county, and state) would be recorded as Great Salt Lake City, Salt Lake, Utah Territory. The current recommendation is to use the locality as found in FamilySearch Places as the standard place name used in Family Tree.

The most common recommendations are:
• the name at the time of the event,
• the contemporary name,
• or the then-and-now format.

In my opinion, the name of the place recorded should be name of the place at the time of the recorded event ... otherwise it loses the historical context.

Is it okay to guess?

In order to find the best sources a kind of elimination by trial-and-error or guessing is sometimes used. But, remember, any form of guess work in genealogy is only temporary and eventually should be replaced with evaluated and well-documented sources. No guesswork should be allowed in the final product you share.

Add sources for all the infromation you add

Backup your data or wail when it is lost

Other Handy Hints – Tools

• · When beginning, keep your research in the 1800s and later. There were more records made, these records are more easily obtained, and you will have a greater chance of success while you develop your skills.

• · Use a "Snip Tool" to capture online information i.e., documents and photos.
Windows: icon-shift-s
https://getgreenshot.org/ or https://snip-and-sketch.com/

• · Make use of the big cemetery / grave websites
Billion Graves http://www.BillionGraves.com
Find A Grave http://www.FindAGrave.com

• · Go To School [Careful, do not get so involved in learning how that you forget to do!]
https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Research_Resources
https://www.familysearch.org/rootstech
https://fh.lib.byu.edu/classes-and-webinars/basic-tutorials/

• · Vista FamilySearch Center- class handouts: [scroll down]
https://sites.google.com/view/vista-fhc/home