

Basic Information

1. Genealogy is the search for our ancestors. Family history is the study of the lives they led. A true picture of the family is the result.
2. Genealogy helps you to learn about your family and where you belong in that family.
3. There is no greater legacy for your children and grandchildren than teaching them about the history and lives of their ancestors.
4. Tracing the family medical history helps your children and grandchildren to take preventive measures with their own health.
5. Because each generation doubles the number of ancestors, developing a plan of how you will proceed in your research is absolutely necessary.
6. When you begin your genealogy research, focus on one or two families so you do not become overwhelmed. The other families will be there when you are ready for them.
7. Everyone has a mother and a father. Female and male lines are equally important.
8. A generation equals 22-25 years for a man and 18-23 years for a woman.
9. Organize! organize! organize! You should be able to find information quickly. If your system doesn't work, change it ASAP!
10. When taking notes use standard size paper, one surname per page, records source(s) so you can find it again and the date and place of your research.
11. Use only accepted abbreviations (no homespun stuff).
12. Understand the basic terminology.
13. The Pedigree chart is your road map. Begin with yourself. Use maiden names of married women.
14. The Family Group Sheet identifies a couple and their children.
15. Everyone has two family group sheets one as a child with parents and one as a parent with children.
16. A Chronological Profile begins with your ancestor's birth. Fill it in with various life events as you discover them. Eventually, you'll have a picture of your ancestor's life.
17. Surname Sources: The four basic groups from which surnames developed are patronymic, landscape features/place names, action/nicknames and occupational/office names.
18. Think out of the box for surname spelling variations. Surname spelling standardization didn't begin until the early 1900s. Many people were unable to read or write or spell!
19. The Research Log is very important for keeping a record of the source of every piece of information you collect.
20. An ancestor is a person from whom you are descended. A descendant is a person who is descended from an ancestor. A relative is someone with whom you share a common ancestor but who is not in your direct line.
21. Make a list of all your living relatives when starting your genealogy research. Interview every one of them.
22. When interviewing a relative, etc., be prepared with a list of questions. Use a tape recorder or take very good notes. Respect the person's privacy.
23. When writing to a relative for information, make specific requests, don't ramble! Offer to share your information.
24. Remembering every letter you write is impossible. Use a Correspondence Log!
25. Write down your sources of information. Who/what told you? This is documentation. From this, you will be able to find the source again, if you need to do so.
26. The first federal census was taken in 1790 and is taken every 10 years on an established day.
27. Soundex is a system of coding names for the census based on sound rather than alphabetical spelling.
28. A variation of the Soundex called the American Soundex was used in the 1930s for a retrospective analysis of the US censuses from 1890 through 1920.
29. There are various types of deeds to property. The most common are the warranty deed which transfers property with assurance of good title and the quitclaim deed which transfers one person's interest in the property without guarantee of good title.
30. There are pay sites and free sites. The major pay site is ancestry.com.
31. There are pay sites and free sites. The major free site is familysearch.org.
32. Join a Mailing List E-mails about subjects of the list will come to your e-mail box. Be sure to subscribe digest. □
33. Podcast is "a digital recording of a radio broadcast or similar program, made available on the Internet for downloading to a personal audio (or video) player."
34. Obituaries - don't limit your scope of your research to just the deceased. You may find a relative in the list of survivors or pre-deceased...or pallbearers. These clues help place your relatives at a specific place and a specific time in many cases!
35. The practice of double dating resulted from the switch from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar.
36. An ancestor is a person from whom a person is descended, e.g. parent, grandparent, great-grandparent.
37. Banns of marriage are a public announcement in a Christian parish church of an intended marriage. The announcement is made three successive Sundays.
38. Civil records are created by and for a governmental agency.
39. An emigrant is a person who leaves a country to reside in another country.

40. A Fact is something known to exist, be true, or have happened.
41. Use timelines to find holes in your research.
42. The use of the term Junior did not always mean the son of. Sometimes it identified the younger of two persons in a locality with the same name.
43. Maps of all kinds are important to your family research.
44. Migration is the movement from one place of residence to another, usually within a country.
45. A common ancestor is the mutual ancestor of two or more persons.
46. The term Senior may not refer to a person's father, but to the older of two persons in a locality who have the same name.
47. In early American History, the term "son-in-law" referred to one's step-son or the husband of one's daughter.
48. Joining a genealogy society in the location you are researching is a good idea!
49. When doing field research never use water-based pens. A few drops of rain can be lethal to your notes.
50. When doing field research "Posted" does not mean "except for genealogists".
51. When searching old cemeteries, always check outside the fence. Many criminals, "sinners" and those of mixed races were buried outside the cemetery proper.
52. Evaluate the information that you find. Don't just stick it in a file.
53. Make sure you cite your sources!
54. Remember to keep your information organized.
55. Search from the known to the unknown.
56. Record every search, good or bad, on your research log.
57. Cite enough information so another person could easily find the source later.
58. Minimum identification includes: name, birth date and birthplace of an ancestor.
59. Keep track of the alternate spellings of the surnames you are searching.
60. "Genealogy of Place" is vital to your research. Determine where the town/county/state is located and how boundaries have changed over time.
61. When researching your family history, keep an open mind!
62. Take the time to read a book about doing genealogy.
63. Organization is critical as you compile the information you've found.
64. If you are visiting a library for the first time, ask the librarian for a tour of their holdings.
65. Most public records will be found at courthouses or state vital statistic archives.
66. Child bearing years for women in previous generations ranged from age 13 to 48.
67. Large gaps between children can indicate other children not identified, divorce or early death.
68. In some families you will find children named after older brothers/ sisters who died.
69. Make photocopies and store original documents in a safe deposit or fireproof box.
70. When transcribing a record or document, copy it EXACTLY as found, even if words are not spelled as they are today.
71. Some families record the most important events in their lives in a Family Bible.
72. There is no central depository for Colonial Records. They are scattered among the 13 original states.
73. Patience is a virtue that will serve you well.
74. Given names can have many variations in spelling as well as surnames.
75. Strive to obtain primary sources for each event.
76. If you don't find an ancestor in an index, it doesn't mean that a record for your ancestor does not exist.
77. Store your original documents in a safe place apart from your working files.
78. Write your family history for future generations.
79. Develop a research plan.
80. Analyze, analyze and analyze again.
81. Check original records whenever possible.
82. Network with other researchers.
83. Every family's story is unique.
84. Sometimes it's not the people who move, but the boundaries.
85. Take advantage of genealogy classes, workshops, seminars and conferences.
86. A free Soundex converter is available at www.rootsweb.ancestry.com.
87. Check out: thegenealogyguys.com.
88. In City Directories look at who lived near your ancestor. Were they relatives or neighbors from the same home town?
89. Genealogy is the study of family heritage.

90. Finding out as much as possible about our ancestors is the ultimate goal of research endeavors.
91. Genealogy research generates paperwork.
92. Your ultimate success in your family research will depend upon organizing this information into a readily accessible format. Any researchers use genealogy software programs to organize their information.
93. To be successful in genealogy research, one must have the ability to plan each research step, and organize the information you find there.
94. Clues found in multiple types of primary and secondary records, indexes and sources must be investigated.
95. DO NOT take original documents on your research trips. Make copies instead.
96. When inputting research information into a computer genealogy software program, do not discard the paper copies of your research. If your computer ever crashes, you will still have your research information.
97. An "Ahnentafel" (German for Ancestor Table) chart is a version of a pedigree chart which is written out.
98. Keep an alphabetical Surname List of ancestor surnames you are researching and take with you while researching.
99. Start with what is known. Always work from the known facts to the unknown.
100. Look for name variations. Check variant spellings. Phonetics and imagination were often used.
101. Use maps. County and state lines changed from time to time. Don't forget to check surrounding counties.
102. Pay attention to chronology. How young or old is the mother? Is there a generation missing?
103. Stuck on an ancestor? Don't forget to trace other family members, e.g. brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles.
104. Review and evaluate. Are there facts that don't fit or are missing? Go back and review and re-evaluate.
105. Use information passed down by word of mouth as a clue, not as a fact.
106. Undocumented family genealogies and county histories can contain truth and errors.
107. It is not unusual to find the same name in different states at the same time.
108. Lineage societies' books should be used as a guide only as the information may not be correct.
109. Jr. and Sr. after a person's name may not mean they are related. Depending on the timeframe, it could mean a younger and an older man in the same area with the same name, who may not be related.
110. Obituaries tell you the date of death, name of cemetery, date and place of funeral.
111. Obituaries tell you the name of the deceased, the year of birth and location.
112. Obituaries may name children and siblings of the deceased.
113. For hard to find female ancestors, go sideways and search their husband and children.
114. Remember to search for female ancestors using nicknames for their given name.
115. Going to the library to research? Don't forget to take money for photocopies.
116. Have a smart phone? Look for a scanner app like Turbo Scan to take images of records and documents.
117. Always check with the librarian if you want to use a personal scanner or phone camera to take pictures of a book page or other document.
118. Take advantage of the many online classes and webinars on genealogy research.
119. A genealogy class a day keeps the brick walls away.
120. Don't forget to cite your sources!
121. Take time to analyze your findings and give everything another look.
122. Sometimes the answer to a question is waiting in records you have already discovered.
123. An easy way to copy a negative is to scan it on your computer at a high resolution, and then use the negative function in your photo processing software to create a positive image of the scan.
124. When looking for documents for your ancestors, it helps to understand the time period you're researching,
125. Want to learn how to organize your genealogy records? How to create a timeline for your ancestors using Excel? Or how to use Online Polish Records? Check out the hundreds of fantastic free Learning Videos available at FamilySearch.org.
126. Not all information is available online. You will have to get out of your chair and step away from your computer to track down documents that have not yet been digitized
127. Sometimes you might be looking at a transcription or abstract made from an original record. While every effort is made to ensure transcriptions are accurate, it is essential to examine a copy of the original record.
128. Don't wait around for databases to be added to your favorite genealogy sites. Volunteer to index records at websites like FamilySearch.org or Ancestry World Archives Project.
129. Directories are often overlooked in favor of tax rolls, census information and other forms of primary resources. However, these can be amazing resources for your family history.
130. There are thousands of records not yet available online that include important information for family history research. Printed resources include printed genealogies, local histories, record transcriptions and abstracts, and other materials. Search for these materials in libraries and other repositories.
131. In searching for marriages, the name of the officiating minister or justice of the peace, or the name of a church, county, or town, might be a way of finding an ancestor whose name was scrambled in some old transcription.

132. Because the study of our ancestors' lives provides us with a long-term view of humanity, it also reassures us, generation after generation, that people survive.