

How to Get Started

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Basic Principles

1. Start with yourself and work backwards
2. Do not skip generations
3. Work from what you know toward what you don't know
4. Genealogy is more than names, dates and places
5. Genealogy is the story of what people do, why, how they live, where they go, and with whom

First Steps

1. Start your research at home
2. Interview close family members
3. Collect vital records documents at home
 - a. Birth, marriage, death, and divorce documents
 - b. Baptismal, burial, military, school & employment records
 - c. Wills, deeds, & immigration records
 - d. Obituaries, newspaper articles, diaries, letters
4. Collect & identify photographs
5. Collect and identify tangible objects

Expand Your Research

1. Interview extended family members
 - a. Prepare oral interview questions ahead of time
 - b. Ask open-ended questions: "describe;" "how;" "why"
 - c. Ask same questions in different ways
 - d. Ask same questions of many different family members
 - e. Use catalysts to memory: photos, family traditions, draw floor plan
 - f. Always ask who might have more information

2. Collect family documents from extended family members
3. Collect photos from extended family members
4. Obtain records from state registrars & county clerks
5. Utilize LDS Family History Centers
6. Use Internet sites for clues to your family

Add “Flesh to the Bones” of Your Family

1. Biographies
2. County histories
3. Census records
4. Military records
5. Church records
6. Land records
7. Cemetery records
8. Probate records
9. Visits to family locations

Organize Your Information

1. Pedigree chart - - shows direct ancestors only
2. Family group record - - shows all members of a given family for each couple on the pedigree chart
 - a. Prepare a separate family group record for each spouse
 - b. Always use maiden names for women
3. Make formatting decisions
4. Devise a filing systems that works for you
5. Be consistent!

Analyze Your Information

1. Examine the degree of accuracy of information provided
2. Research several sources for the same fact
3. Consider the source in determining accuracy
4. Use the continuing process

The Continuing Process*

- a. Look at what you know
- b. Determine what you want to learn next
- c. Decide what source might help
- d. Locate that source
- e. Research the source
- f. Compile and organize information learned from that source
- g. Analyze the results to determine what information you want to find next
- h. Repeat these steps

*The continuing process designed by Jean Johnson,
Santa Cruz, California