

Eight Genealogy Tips for Beginners

1 Pick one ancestor you want to learn about. It helps to start with someone you know a little about. Many people begin with a grandparent or great-grandparent.

2 Write down what you already know about this person. It helps to ask other relatives what they know, too. Birth date, full name, names of close relatives, places lived—all of these can be useful.

3 Now you can begin searching for records. If the person changed their name, begin searching with their birth name.

4 When you find a record that looks like it is about your ancestor, make sure the information it contains matches some of what you already know. You'd be surprised how many people with the same name and birth year or place of residence will come up in your search.

5 You also may find records that misspell your ancestor's name, contain a nickname, or contain another error. If you compare the record to what you already know, you may realize that the record really is about your ancestor.

6 Try to find at least two records that give the same piece of information before you can be reasonably sure that it's true. For example, find two different census records that contain your ancestor's birthday. What you find now is the basis for your research later, so it's important to be sure that the information you have is correct.

7 Keep track of what you've found by using an Ancestral Chart (also called a family tree) and Family Group Sheets. You can search the internet for these charts or download them from Ancestry here: <https://www.ancestry.com/cs/charts-and-forms>.

8 As you search for information about one ancestor, you will inevitably find information about their children, spouse, or parents. Once you're satisfied with what you've found about your first ancestor, use the information you find about one of their relatives to begin researching that person.