

Where Do I Begin...?
A Beginner's Guide to Researching Your Genealogy and Family History
Power Point Presentation

I. Welcome and Introduction

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II. Why Do Genealogy?

- A. To satisfy your curiosity about yourself and your roots.
- B. To provide your children with a sense of who their ancestors were, where they came from and how they lived their lives.
- C. To preserve family cultural and ethnic traditions for future generations.
- D. To compile a medical family history to give family members an advantage in the battle against inherited diseases or defects.
- E. To qualify for membership in a lineage or heritage society.
- F. To assemble and publish a family history book, whether for family members or for profit.
- G. To discover facts that others have overlooked and solve the puzzle of a lifetime.

III. The Research Process - Overview

- A. Step One: Prepare
- B. Step Two: Organize
- C. Step Three: Gather
- D. Step Four: Interview
- E. Step Five: Research
- F. Step Six: Document
- G. Step Seven: Verify
- H. Step Eight: Share

IV. Step One: Prepare

- A. Gather basic materials: paper, pen, pencil, hi-lighters, notebook(s), dividers, file folders.
- B. Read some books about genealogy.
- C. Take an online tutorial.
- D. Join a genealogical society.
- E. Become familiar with the terminology used in genealogical research.
- F. Become familiar with the types of records used in genealogical research.
- G. Obtain copies of basic genealogical research forms:
 - Pedigree/Ancestral Chart
 - Individual Data Sheet
 - Family Group Record
 - Research Log
 - Correspondence Log

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- H. Forms can be found free of charge at:
www.capitalareagenealogy.org
www.cyndislist.com

V. Step Two: Organize

- A. Organization is the key to a successful genealogy research project.
- B. The amount of paper can be overwhelming if you don't keep things organized.
- C. Set up a notebook(s) with dividers for each surname being researched.
- D. Add additional dividers or notebooks as your research progresses.
- E. For each surname being researched place copies of blank forms under each notebook section.
- F. Set up a filing system in a similar fashion, one file folder for each surname.
- G. Place copies of blank forms in each folder.
- H. When doing research outside of your home DO NOT take original documents with you. Use photocopies and leave the originals at home.
- I. A computer is helpful but not essential.
- J. Some popular computer programs:
 - Family Tree Maker
 - Personal Ancestral File
 - Family Ties
 - Brothers Keeper

VI. Step Three: Gather

- A. **Begin with yourself and work backwards, generation by generation.**
- B. Record what you know about each person on the appropriate Pedigree/Ancestor Chart, Individual Data Sheet or Family Group Record.
- C. Record the full name, date and place of birth, marriage, death and burial for each person in your family tree.
- D. Record surname (last name) in all capital letters.
- E. Use maiden name for married females.
- F. Record dates as 25 Dec 2012.
- G. Record place names as City/Town, County/Parish, State/Province, Country.
- H. Gather copies of birth, marriage and death certificates which you may have in your possession.
- I. Gather other records and documents such as family bibles, photo albums, obituaries, newspaper clippings, journals, diaries, wills, deeds, military discharge papers, naturalization records, school records, and etc.
- J. Contact family members to see what documents and records they may have in their possession. Obtain copies wherever possible.
- K. Record the information found on these documents on the appropriate Pedigree/Ancestor Chart, Individual Data Sheet or Family Group Record.
- L. File these documents or photocopies in the appropriate file folder for future reference.

VII. Step Four: Interview

- A. Interview family members especially older family members.
- B. Take good notes!
- C. Consider audio taping or videotaping the interview.

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- D. Be sure to prepare the person to be interviewed. Be sensitive to interviewing family members, especially older family members, about sensitive matters like divorce or out-of-wedlock children, etc.
- E. Prepare a list of questions in advance.
- F. Base questions on your research thus far.
- G. Try to obtain missing information or clarify conflicting information.

VIII. Step Five: Research

- A. You are now ready to begin your research outside of your home.
- B. Visit the genealogy and local history section of your local library or your local historical society.
- C. In order to avoid re-inventing the wheel, check for the existence of any previously published family histories.
- D. Visit local cemeteries where family members may be buried.
 - Consult census records.
 - Check church records.
 - Visit county courthouse and check for wills and probate records, deeds, and marriage records.
 - Check city directories.
 - Obtain vital records such as birth and death records.
- E. Use the Research Log to record sources that you have checked or need to check.
- F. Use the Correspondence Log to keep track of your correspondence.

IX. Step Six: Document

- A. Be sure to document or cite the source of each piece of information which you obtain during you research.
- B. Documenting your sources enables you to go back and double-check information which may be in question.
- C. Documenting your sources also adds credibility and a degree of professionalism to your research.
- D. The *National Genealogical Society* has published a set of standards which serve as an excellent guide to documenting your sources.

X. Step Seven: Verify

- A. Review your research from time to time.
- B. Check for errors, completeness and accuracy.
- C. Be prepared to do additional research when you find conflicting information.

XI. Step Eight: Share

- A. Be willing to share your research with others who may be researching the same family or surname. You just might find some long-lost relatives you didn't know you had. You might also obtain information on a branch of your family that you couldn't get without doing additional research.
- B. Consider publishing a family history.
- C. Share information with other family members.
- D. Have a family reunion.