

## Discovering Your Family Tree

A fabulous idea for your next family reunion is to put together your family tree. Discovering your family tree—doing genealogy or family history research—can be an exciting experience. Many people just like you have discovered who their ancestors are. You too can gain new insights into your family and feel a sense of belonging, perhaps in a way you have never felt before.

There are several steps one should take when attempting to discover their family tree.

### 1. Write down what you know.

Start with yourself. Grab a notebook or create a database format, and enter the family history information you already know. You are entering information as to relative's names, birthdates, death dates, etc. If you do not know exact dates and places, estimate them. Take note of any missing or incomplete information, and decide what you want to find first.

### 2. Talk with your family and friends.

Get together with your family and friends and record any useful information and stories they provide. This not only allows you to work on your project, but can also be a fascinating, exciting and fun experience at the same time. What a good "excuse" to get together with loved ones.

In addition to reminiscing, be sure to inquire if they have any copies of birth, marriage, and death certificates as well as newspaper clippings, diaries, journals, letters, photos, yearbooks and other records that might be available.

### 3. Search other sources.

Gather your research that you have accumulated thus far and organize it. Next, there are many online sources that you can further explore that allow for free access to family history records, guides, and resources. A few examples of these sites are usgenweb, Rootsweb, or MyHeritage.

By searching through databases that are diverse in nature, free genealogy search engines help you obtain a lot of data about your ancestors and family. Combine data from various sources for a more comprehensive picture.

You can easily do the bulk of your genealogy research using free genealogy databases. Some websites will describe the methods of research as well as provide detailed sources on microfilms and papers; others may focus on searchable genealogy databases and online tools.

Some websites are free, while others require a fee. Those requiring a fee will typically offer a free trial subscription, and often times you'll be able to find what you are looking for even before the trial expires.

### 4. Compile your research and share!

Put together a book and have several copies printed, as friends and relatives will certainly have an interest in your research. There are companies that offer software products to help you do this. What a great idea or gift that you can share at your next family reunion!

While researching and formalizing your family tree can take a good deal of time and effort, it can also be a very rewarding and fun experience as well. Take your time and enjoy the experience and be sure to preserve it, share it, and pass it along so that future generations of your family can appreciate and enjoy their family history as well.

## About the Author

Doug Woods is a part owner of Legacy Publishing, which offers various specialty items and resources for all types of reunions. For a FREE sample of Legacy Publishing's Reunion Memory Book as well as other reunion resources, visit <http://www.reunion-memory-book.com>

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