

A Basic Guide to Doing Family Research

Overview:

Family Research is fun, but it is also “real history”. Just like in other research, you will need to follow the Social Scientific Method. You will also have to learn some basic terms and rules to follow.

This sheet will outline the basic terms and rules we will be using. Be sure to keep this reference sheet.

Important Genealogy Questions:

Here are the basic questions we need to answer for each person we research.

1. When and where was the person born?
2. Who were their parents?
3. Who did the person marry? When and where were they married?
4. When and where did the person die? Where are they buried?

In addition, we like to know the following information:

1. What was the person’s occupation?
2. What was their military service?
3. What were the names of their children?
4. What church did they belong to?
5. Where did they live in their lifetimes?

Remember, these are the BASIC QUESTIONS – the more we know the better it is!

Our Basic Genealogy Terms

- Surname – *a family name, the last name of a person*
- Given Name – *a person’s first name*
- Paternal – *your father’s family; your paternal grandfather is your father’s father*
- Maternal – *your mother’s family; your maternal grandmother is your mother’s mother.*
- Spouse – *husband or wife*
- Maiden Name – *surname of woman at birth*
- Place - *location of an event, usually includes the city, county, and state*
- Occupation – *a person’s main job, career, or work in life*
- Military Service – *being in one of the armed services, including Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Coast Guard, National Guard, Reserves*
- Family Group Sheet- *a record that has one whole family on it (parents and children)*
- Vital Records – *“official” records of birth, marriage, or death*
- Document – *An official certificate or other written-down information saying that something is true under law.*

- Pedigree Chart – *a chart or graphic organizer that has all your ancestors with the other members of their families*
- Generation – *members of the same “level” of a family. For example, the brother’s and sisters of a family are one generation, the parents and their brothers and sisters are another, and the grandparents are a third.*
- Source – *place where the information comes from.*

Some Basic Guidelines

1. When writing names, put the LAST NAME in CAPITAL LETTERS – it will help you find them on a page.
2. Always write out the full name if you know it, including the middle name.
3. When you write dates, use this form: DAY, MONTH, YEAR. So November 9, 1974 becomes 9 NOV 1974. To abbreviate the month, use the first three letters.
4. Also write down your source. A source can be a document, a family member, or other primary and secondary sources. Be sure to record the information even if you think its in error!
5. Keep organized. Get a folder, notebook, or start a family history toolkit.

Bibliography

The terms, guidelines, and basic processes used in the project have been adapted from the following sources.

- Beller, Susan. *Roots for Kids, A Genealogy Guide for Young People*. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1997.
- Greenwood, Val D. *The Researcher’s Guide to American Genealogy*. . Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 3rd ed. 2002.

The following websites also contain useful information and “how-to” guides. We will begin our Internet research at these sites. If you know of others, please share them with us! You can find additional links in Mr. Cook’s docushare folder “Family Research Project”

www.familysearch.org - website of the Church of Latter Day Saints. A great source for genealogical information that is free. You can also download research forms for free.

www.ancestry.com - premier genealogical site, but you must pay to use most of their sources. Worth a look anyways

www.rootsweb.com- free site that provides a good starting place for research

www.CyndisList.com - a remarkable site that provides great links for family research. Start at the main menu with the link “Are you new to genealogy”

www.nundahistory.org - a local history site with genealogy links – look at the “Reference desk”