

This Report is brought to you by...

# The WOW Experience

Overdelivery is our Specialty!

Where Vision and Value Go Hand in Hand with Information and Opportunity!



Other Companies Make Promises -- We Make Dreams Come True!  
We Offer QUALITY CONTENT in Every WAY, TYPE and FORM

- Exclusive WOW Private Label Releases
- Private Label Products
- Public Domain Products
- Master Resale Rights eBooks
- Master Resale Rights Software
- Bestselling Audio eBooks by Top Authors
- Non-Fiction Audio eBooks
- Exclusive WOW Affiliate Products
- Resale Rights Products
- Exclusive WOW Private Label Reports
- eBook to Audio Conversion Software
- Resale Rights Generation Software



And, of course, if you want it all tied up in a neat website package, with *all the work done for you*, we have our NEW [Niche Empire Builder Software](#) – the Niche Real Estate Business Builder's Dream Come True!

## Niche Empire Builder

The Complete Done-it-For-You Niche Real Estate Business Builder's Dream Come True!

[www.the-wow-empire.com](http://www.the-wow-empire.com)

## The WOW Content Club

Your Full Spectrum Content Provider

If Content Is King,  
The WOW Content Club is the Kingdom  
You Have Been Searching For!



[www.wow-content-club.com](http://www.wow-content-club.com)

## WOW Profit Packs

Help Yourself to Hundreds of Brand New, Blockbuster Products at Bargain Basement Prices!



[www.WOWProfitPacks.com](http://www.WOWProfitPacks.com)

Enjoy this Free Niche Report, compliments of WOW Enterprises  
For Many More Free Reports, simply click on the links below.

[www.TheWOWExperience.com](http://www.TheWOWExperience.com)

[www.NicheEmpireBuilder.com](http://www.NicheEmpireBuilder.com)

[www.WOW-Content-Club.com](http://www.WOW-Content-Club.com)

[www.WOWProfitPacks.com](http://www.WOWProfitPacks.com)

# Tips, Hints and Mistakes to Avoid When Conducting a Genealogical Search

## Topics Covered:

Eight Ways to Avoid Barking Up the Wrong Family Tree  
Four Important Pieces of Information Vital Statistics Can Provide  
Five Important Things You Can Learn from Researching Death Records  
How Networking with Other Amateur Genealogists Helps Your Search  
Important Tips of Unearthing Vital Statistic Information on Ancestors  
Love of History Can Fuel you Family Tree Investigation  
Vital Statistics Can Be the Key to Finding Your Family  
Why Double or Triple Checking Facts is Important in Ancestral Investigations  
Bring to Life Those Dead Ends in your Genealogy Research  
How to Let Go of Those Dead End Leads in Genealogy Research  
Handed Down Family Names Can Provide a Genealogical Clue  
Historical Museums May Help in Your Ancestral Research  
Family Mementoes Hold the Key to Your Ancestral Search

# Tips, Hints and Mistakes To Avoid When Conducting a Genealogical Search

## Eight Ways to Avoid Barking Up the Wrong Family Tree

For anyone into genealogy there is nothing more frustrating than doing hours and sometimes day's worth of research only to find that you have been looking at bad information or even in the wrong family. It is a problem that plagues everyone who has ever dabbled in genealogy and one that you should try to avoid. Obviously it wastes your time, it can lead you down long incorrect roads, and it can really be frustrating.

So how do you avoid this pitfall? Well there is no one magic answer to keeping yourself from barking up the wrong family tree, but there are some tips that may help you end up on the wrong path a little less frequently. Take a look at these eight tips and you will lessen your frustrations as you seek out your family history and heritage.

First and foremost, always keep track of all of your resources. When you get new information, write down where you got it. If it was a book, get the title, the author, publisher, and even the ISBN or ISSN number so that you will know where you got the information and where to get more if you find yourself in need of more information down the road from the same resource. If you get information from a relative, write down from whom you got it and when you conducted the interview. Information is a big part of this hobby so make sure you know where you are getting yours.

Second, along those same lines, keep yourself organized. When you are organized you are less likely to mix up information and get yourself off track. Put together some sort of filing system, both for print and for your computer documents. That way, when you need a birth certificate you are sure you have, you will know where to look for it. Also, if you want to review information you have previously recorded, you will know exactly where it is on your computer or in your files.

Third, double-check everything. That is, make sure that things make sense before you just assume they are right. For example, if your great, great grandmother was born in 1810, she probably did not get married in 1815 and was likely not a mother in 1820. The same goes for any other chronology of dates or events. Just always make sure things are making sense before you keep going down a wrong path.

The fourth thing you should do to keep things straight is to be very careful about scams. There are a lot of scams out there that are designed to take advantage of those who are into genealogy. For instance, you may get the mail order brochure that offers to get you all the information you need on whatever family you are researching. Do not fall for this, since most of these are not researched and use only phone listings and other unreliable information to come up with what is supposed to be a family history. You are always better off doing your own research. In addition, remember that anything you hear about that sounds too easy is probably a scam.

Fifth, make sure you are very specific when you make notes and share information. Date formats vary from country to country so make sure you are clear about month, date, and year. Also, be very clear with your writing and with which names are surnames and which ones are given names. That way, when it comes time to ask others for help, everything is clear.

Sixth, to keep things accurate make sure you are not assuming things about families and relationships. In earlier times, a stepchild was sometimes called a son in law or a relative that was not a sister or brother was called a cousin no matter what the actual relationship was.

Seventh, in order to avoid following down paths you are not sure about, make sure you review and verify conclusions you have come to. There is often a lot of conflicting information within families as you do your research, especially if it is from farther back. By taking time to verify, you may actually save yourself more time down the road.

Finally, give yourself the opportunity to succeed by advertising the surnames for which you are searching. Post them online with genealogy websites and get the information to any genealogical societies to which you belong. If you do not belong to any, it is something you might consider since they often have resources you may not be able to get on your own.

Genealogy is fun, but it can also be frustrating. To avoid the frustration of chasing bad information or the wrong family, follow these eight tips. You will enjoy genealogy much more when you know you are looking at correct information.

### **Four Important Pieces of Information Vital Statistics Can Provide**

Vital statistics can provide priceless information when doing genealogy research. The pieces of information they can provide that can prove essential are:

- Birth
- Marriage
- Death
- Birth of children

Here's how to use these pieces of information effectively. In researching an ancestor that you know lived in a particular state, checking his birth record will give a complete name and the names of his parents. Checking his marriage records will show the name of his spouse. Checking his death records will show how long he lived. And it will show survivors, children, which allows checking on the date and place of birth of the children.

Why is this information important? Because tracing a family tree is akin to following a trail with many branches. These days there are many records of a person's life and

many of those records can be found online. In years past it wasn't that easy. However, everyone had these vital statistics, these basic pieces of information, saved. If someone moved and dropped out of sight, then checking the marriage records of his children, and the birth records of their children may give an idea as to the town or area a person may have moved to and allow for easier tracking. Some jurisdictions in those days kept more extensive records than others did, and by following the trail of breadcrumbs and being a diligent ancestor detective these lives can be traced.

It was also common for people to have large families in previous years. Birth records of children will give the names – the full names that are not used by people at times, and can make searching for the children easier and more accurate. Take the name John Smith for example. This is a very common name. But the birth records will show the full name, which may be John Wesley Smith or John Adams Smith. This information will make it possible to track someone who might otherwise have slipped into the woodwork of history.

Death records are also useful. People, as we've said, moved in those days and many times when they moved it was so far from the old home area that they never returned. Death records, which give a cause of death, can show what eventually happened to someone and since they are kept in the region of death, it usually shows where that person was living when he died. Then a search of that particular area may turn up children or other family members. Then checking their birth records will show if they were located in that area at the time of birth, and marriage records will show if they were there at the time of marriage.

In turn, the children may have had children. Checking the death records of the child will show who survived the child, more than likely, their children. Then checking the marriage records of these children forms a more complete picture. In this way a family tree really begins to resemble a family spider web more than a tree. Branches can travel, and branches can intersect.

Many times vital statistics will show evidence of a name change. Name changes for new immigrants were common. Sometimes the name was changed by the immigration official at Ellis Island because the old name was hard to spell or hard to pronounce. If for example a man immigrated using the name Schmidt, and he came over around the time of World War I, when anti German sentiment was running high, he may have changed Schmidt to Smith, the English version of the name.

While this world allows the new immigrant to blend into American culture easier it would also make it more difficult to find him when doing genealogical research, and if the researcher didn't know the name had changed, then it would send him in the direction of England rather than Germany when trying to trace the history back to the old country. Vital statistics will many times show the birth name.

Also when women married they would change their last names. Death information will usually contain a maiden name and the time of birth. Using this information a person can more easily trace the female side of the family back further. Vital statistics are a vital tool.

## **Five Important Things You Can Learn from Researching Death Records**

Why should you research death records? Death records are an important source of information for any serious genealogy student. Commonly death records can be found in the county courthouse, or in newspaper archives of obituaries. They will include information on the deceased such as parents, siblings, children, spouse, when and where married, where the deceased was born, the occupation of the deceased, possible military service, and cause of death.

Why is this information helpful? Finding out where a person was born, for instance, can help distinguish between two people who may have the same name. Take one family for example, in Missouri, the Stricklands. When modern day members of the family tried to research its origins they found that the first Strickland in Missouri came from West Virginia. When he died his parents names were listed, as well as his place of birth, in Virginia. Researchers were then able to check death records of the parents in Virginia and discover where the parents were married, in the state of Maryland. Searching marriage records in Maryland they found the couple, and their parents' names.

Going from there the web evolved. Siblings were discovered. Grandparents were discovered, and on and on. The Strickland family member who went to Missouri, it was discovered, was one of three brothers. At the beginning of the Civil War one brother joined the Union Army, one joined the Confederate Army, and one brother went west to Missouri to escape the war. This allowed tracking of the military records of both of the other brothers, and led to discovery of their death records, with names of their children as survivors, going on to show two entirely different branches of this family and how they spread.

Also by going back to the marriage records and death records of the parents, it led to the grandparents who emigrated from England. This of course allows genealogical researchers to go to records in England and go back even further.

Many times researchers are trying to paint a portrait of the life of an ancestor and death records can help tremendously in this endeavor. Death records will tell the occupation of an ancestor, and that will help to determine if an ancestor was poor or rich, middle class or well to do. It gives a good idea as to what his life was like. Since death records show where an ancestor was born, it helps to draw a picture of the journeys made in the life of the ancestor being researched. Also by listing the children it helps to show the geometric growth of a family.

Military service is shown on death records and a practical benefit of that for many people is qualification to join one of several organizations dedicated to certain conflicts. Sons of Union Veterans and Daughters of Confederate Veterans for instance are there for descendants of people who fought on either side during the Civil War. The most famous of these groups are probably the DAR and SAR, or Daughters of the American Revolution and Sons of the American Revolution. In order to join one of these organizations a person must be able to document descent from a veteran of the War of Independence. If a person can go back that far in their documentation, there is another organization, Colonial Dames or Daughters of the American Colonists, for those who can

document pre Revolutionary War ancestry. Death records play an important part in this research.

When looking for death records there are two primary methods. The county court houses in most counties keep detailed records of births, marriages and deaths. These can be very reliable with the only exception being some of the counties where courthouses were burned during the Civil War, or suffered from fire at another time. The other method is the record of obituaries for the newspaper serving a particular area. Newspapers come and go, some going out of business and others starting up. However, newspapers do have a good track record of acquiring the records of predecessors when they can, and they usually keep these records on microfilm. Most genealogists will find these records very helpful.

### **How Networking with Other Amateur Genealogists Helps Your Search**

Genealogy is fast becoming one of the best and most popular hobbies. As a result, there are thousands of people working on their own genealogies. Networking with other amateur genealogists helps your search in a number of different ways. Remember that two heads are always better than one, and when you find someone else who can help you, whether in spirit or with actual information, it can be immensely valuable on a number of levels to your research. There are a number of different ways to network with other genealogists to improve your search.

One good way to network with others is to join a genealogy bulletin board on the Internet. Bulletin boards are a way for members of an online community to post and respond to each other's messages in a public forum. Instead of simply e-mailing someone, it's like e-mailing hundreds of people with the same interests you have. You never know who might turn up with what response to your problem or question.

There are hundreds of these genealogy bulletin boards across the Internet. Providers like America Online and CompuServe have their own genealogy bulletin boards you can post to. Other sites, dedicated to genealogy, have a bulletin board section that you might find helpful. Becoming a member of several of these might be very valuable to your research. Most charge no fee to be a member. Once you become a member, you will need to both post and respond to other's posts to be a valuable member of this kind of online community.

When you get ready to make your post, the most important thing you can do is look at the kinds of things others have posted before you. You want to look at the style, language, and subject matter of the previous posts. This will help you decide on the rules of etiquette for the board you are working with. You might also want to examine the board a little. Some boards are divided by topic area. If this is true of the one you are working with, be sure to post your message in a topic area that matches your post. If you ignore the topic areas, the board moderator may have to remove your post, which can result in several things. First, no one will be able to respond to your post.

More seriously, though, you may be kicked off the board.

When you do get ready to make your first post, take a couple of minutes to plan your question out. Remember that most of the people on these boards have no idea about your family background, so you want to be sure to include enough information so that they can respond to your question. Names, dates, and locations are both helpful and necessary for responders. Also, don't forget to include your own contact information so a board member can get back to you.

Posting your own questions, though, isn't the only important factor in being a member of a board. You should also respond to the posts of fellow board members. Check the message board for instructions, but remember, if no one responds to anyone else, a bulletin board would not be possible, so do your part to help the boards stay in business.

Other than Internet bulletin boards, you could join a local genealogy society to help you network with others. There are several reasons you might want to do this. First, it can help you feel as if you are no longer by yourself. At each meeting, you will see lots of other people who are dealing with the same difficulties and problems that you are. Second, you will learn about new skills and products to help you with your research process. Third, it may help you hone some of your skills, whether they're research related or techniques for deciphering handwriting. Fourth, guest speakers may prove immensely valuable to your own research. Finally, you may find someone with the same family lines you happen to be researching. In that case, you've just opened a whole new door to information sharing.

Networking with others can prove seriously valuable to your genealogical research for a number of different reasons. Consider your options, and find the best way for you to network with others.

### **Important Tips of Unearthing Vital Statistic Information on Ancestors**

When researching ancestors, then vital statistic information can be of vital importance. Digging up the dirt on your family is easier when you have some basic information. Start out with a note pad, making notes. First start with your parents, then your grandparents, great grandparents, and so on, working back as far as you can, listing their full names, their birthdates, and all other information you know about them. Most people start to run out of information when they get back past two generations. That is where vital statistics come in.

When you go to an information storage facility, which can be a courthouse, or if you are lucky, a state historical museum with more extensive records, either on computer or on microfilm, then go to the furthest ancestor back. Let's say that was your grandparents. Then check out the vital statistics information on your grandparents. Check death records, birth records and marriage records. This information is like the part of the

iceberg you can see from the surface, with most of the iceberg lying beneath. This information will spider web out, leading to siblings and parents of the ancestor you are checking on. In turn, by checking on the siblings and parents, you'll be led to even more relatives in your vast web.

When doing this research, you'll need a library with a good selection of microfilm records. The University of Missouri in Columbia maintains the Missouri State Historical Library and in that state is the premier research location. Most other states have similar libraries. If you're having trouble tracking down the best research location, call the history department of your local community college or ask a research librarian at your public library where the historical archives are located in your state. While having all of these records online would make the task easier, most states have yet to convert their microfilm files to digital form, so you have to make several trips in person to get the information you need, but the drive will probably be worth it if you are a serious genealogical researcher.

When you get to the research library, be prepared to spend the day. Many people go planning on just a couple of hours of research and are amazed at how quickly the time passes. Make sure you have pens and a legal pad for taking notes, and plenty of loose change for the copy machine, or for prints outs of the microfilmed information. You'll probably find a great deal of information you want to take back. Also, as you will be spending the day there, make sure you are wearing comfortable clothing and have packed a lunch.

Taking notes or records that you already have, such as the names and dates of birth of ancestors you already know about will also save you a great deal of time. There is nothing more frustrating than starting extensive research and realizing that you didn't bring some needed information along. Keeping basic information in a notebook you carry with you can be very helpful. If your genealogical records are kept in a computer data base, then making a print out and using a three hole punch to fit your print outs into a loose leaf binder will aid you in your research.

Another good source of information for your search is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, most often thought of as the Mormons. The LDS Church maintains extensive genealogical databases considering the tracing of family trees to be an important part of their mission, and they make this information available to the public for a small fee to offset some of their cost. They can be located online, or you can simply stop by any LDS Church in your area and inquire about access to the records the church maintains. Even if your family is not Mormon, the LDS Church may well have records that will help you.

Genealogy is a fascinating hobby and many people feel it gives them a sense of attachment to their ancestors and more of a sense of heritage. Using vital statistics information to find out the scoop on your ancestors is a great way to get this project up and going, and good research skills will develop from it.

## **Love of History Can Fuel you Family Tree Investigation**

One of the questions that may arise when someone is considering making a genealogy or a family tree is the reasons behind investigating into their family history. By beginning to investigate your family tree, you will most often times find direct links to significant historical events or people that are in history. If you have a love for history, then creating a family tree will help with understanding different individual aspects of history that you may not have known before.

Creating a family tree means creating direct links to different generations, all which provide information to the history taking place around them. Understanding the history of your family will allow you to gain individual insight to what was happening in the world during this time. You will then know what link you had to these historical events from a biological and individualized perspective.

The first way in which history will relate to your family tree is through understanding the different time periods that you are directly linked to. You will be able to gain a deeper understanding of the political and cultural affairs that were taking place at a certain time. By creating a link to the historical aspects of the time period, a direct link will be created to the different historical events and people that were living from this time period. This not only will give historical insight to a time period, but will also create an individual relation to different historical events that helps in creating a larger picture of the events taking place from this time.

Another link that you will be able to make on a personal level is in relation to the cultural, ethnic and religious customs that were being practiced during this time period. Your family genealogy will allow you to directly link a way of living in history to a personal type of experience related to cultural influences. By searching for one person that is directly linked to you, you will be able to find a deeper explanation for ways of living and historical facts from a time past. For example, if you find a lineage that is from a British ethnicity, you will be able to gain insight on the different historical surroundings in relation to your genealogy from several different time periods and how they evolved from British history.

A different part of history that you may be able to find through your investigations is in relation to people that were famous or carried out certain events that have been recorded in history. This can help you to make your investigation easier. Through building family trees, many have found that they have relations to famous people or events. Greek Gods, royalty, famous women, celebrities and presidents have all been things that have been traced through family trees.

One way in which families find historical events that are used in relation to their families is through the use of surnames. Many times, names were used in order to remember a historical event in history. Surnames are one of the direct links in order to remember a link to a historical event or a story that the family has wanted to remember. By linking your last name to your family, you can find significant historical events that are used in relation to your family. The meanings and origins of your surname can be another reason why building a family tree can become a historical lesson.

A different type of history that you may be able to learn about when tracing your family tree is the genetic make-up that you carry from your past. DNA is an easy way to find direct links to past figures and relationships that carry direct links to historical events. DNA tests will give direct evidence about your ethnic origins, including surnames and ancestor relationships.

By beginning to make a family tree, you are also contributing to your knowledge about historical events and people that made significant contributions in shaping the world. You can find this history through DNA, surnames, famous events or people or through the understanding of what events were taking place during the time that you have linked to your ancestry. By making your own family tree, you are able to create an individual history that is related to the events in history at large.

### **Vital Statistics Can Be the Key to Finding Your Family**

Birth, marriage and death are possibly the three most important events in a person's life. These events are recorded in government vital statistics records, and these records are of great importance to a genealogy researcher. In fact, without these records, doing genealogical research would be next to impossible.

Here's an example of how vital statistics can be used. In tracing your own family tree lets say you can go back as far as your great grandparents on each side of the family, but know nothing about their parents and can go no further with family records. By going to the courthouse and checking government vital statistics you can find the birth records of your grandparents, their marriage records, and their death records. With this information you can find information on their brothers and sisters, leading to other branches of the family.

You can also find the names of their parents, your great, great grandparents. You can then find out where your great, great grandparents were born, showing the geographic trail as your ancestors moved. By checking their death records and lists of survivors you'll find brothers and sisters, and children listed, showing other family branches again.

As an example, one man researching his family found that his grandfather had two brothers. His grandfather moved to Illinois, his brothers went first to Canada, and then to California. The brothers married and raised families in Canada, and some of the children married and stayed behind. Some went to California. It is now obvious that there are three branches of this family: Illinois, California and Canada. Vital statistics records provided the trail to follow. This record also showed that one member of the family was a military veteran of World War I. He was buried without a tombstone, so the family used vital statistics to prove his service and requested a tombstone from the Veterans Administration, which was granted.

In California, this researcher discovered birth records for long lost cousins he didn't know he had, and by using these records he got in touch with other family members who were interested in genealogy, and was able to tie his research in with their research and go on from there. This led him to a branch of the family in New Zealand, a branch in Indiana, and a branch in Illinois that moved back and lived just a few blocks away from the researcher.

From a practical standpoint vital statistics are often the easiest records to find and the most reliable since they are kept by government agencies and recognized as being official documents. Many people say that they have no relatives, or have no living relatives. This is a misconception. Everyone has relatives. If you are alive then you are related to someone. Many people just don't know who their relatives are. It becomes a question of identity, and how close or how distant relatives happen to be.

Using vital statistics can also allow a person to check on marriages. In past years many people would have more than one marriage, since mortality was so common. If a person's spouse died, they usually remarried. Sometimes there would be children from the other marriage as well, leading to a larger family, with more records of birth, more records of death, and more records of marriages, again leading to more children and more records of birth. These records will in turn lead to more birth records, more marriage records and more death records, adding more and more names to the family tree list, and making a more complete picture.

Finding these vital statistics isn't a secret. These are government records kept on file in courthouses in counties across a state, and across the nation. In some areas the records are gradually being converted to digital form and may eventually be available online. Most however, still use the old method of microfilm storage, which requires a person to go physically to a location and look up the information in person.

The record of death, the record of birth, and the record of marriages in government vital statistics are an important tool for the genealogical researcher, a tool that many have learned to use to great benefit. The next time you need to find out information about an ancestor, perhaps checking the vital statistics would be a good place to start.

### **Why Double or Triple Checking Facts is Important in Ancestral Investigations**

When researching your ancestors, it is crucial to your research that you find their correct vital statistics. You need to know their full name, birth date and location, marriage date and location, death date and location, and the full name of their parents. In order to insure that your vital statistics are correct, it is critically important for you to stay organized and check and re-check your facts based on a variety of sources.

The only way to be able to double-check your sources is if you keep complete, accurate, and organized notes. Notes should be taken on loose-leaf paper, which can be combined

into three-ring binders, or kept in bound notebooks so that all of your notes will stay together. It is also a good idea to develop a personal system for labeling your notes. On a part of each piece of paper, such as the upper-right-hand corner, include pertinent information, such as the surname of the family or individual you are taking notes on, the location where you are taking the notes so that you can return there later if necessary, and the date on which you are taking the notes. Different surnames should be kept on separate pieces of paper. If your notes mention more than one surname, create a duplicate under the other surname(s).

Try to not recopy your notes too much in order to decrease errors. Also, don't forget to cite your sources, including title, author, date of publication, and other pertinent details about where you found your information. Your genealogical findings will not be considered reliable if you can't prove that you got it from a reliable source, and all your hard work will be for nothing. Also, if you cite your sources well, then if you find conflicting information, you can double-check the original source to see who or what is in error. Finally, you may also want to consult a source again for more information.

When taking notes, you can abbreviate words, but you must be thorough about certain details and include full names whenever possible. When writing names, enclose maiden names in parentheses and place before married names. Enclose nicknames in quotes and place after the first name. Finally, aliases can be included following surnames by placing them inside parentheses after the abbreviation "a.k.a.", which means "also known as." It is helpful, even essential, to make a list of alternate names and alternate spellings of names for all of your ancestors.

In index searches that require the correct spelling of names, such as the Social Security Death Index, being aware of alternate spellings and names can help you locate your ancestor. Names can be tricky in other ways as well. Alternate spellings of certain names, such as Gale (Gail) or Francis (Frances), could indicate whether the ancestor being referred to is male or female. Therefore, it is important to write names in your notes exactly as you see them to ensure they are spelled correctly.

In addition, other names you may assume are female were actually also used for males in the past, such as Mildred and Beverly. Finally, women can have changing surnames as a result of marriage. You will want to keep track of all of your female ancestors' surnames, including their maiden names. If you don't know an ancestor's married or maiden name indicate that with empty parentheses or a question mark when you write her name.

Place names and dates require just as much thoroughness and accuracy as people's names. When you are taking notes, record full place names, including county, city, and state. For example, some states may have cities and counties with the same or similar names. When writing about places, also include any references that are made to geographic landmarks.

Record dates by beginning with the day, spelling out the month, and ending with the full year. For example, writing the date as "12 February 1895" makes it clear and correct. The typical abbreviation for dates, such as "12/2/95," can lead to confusion regarding

which number is the month and which is the day (i.e. whether the date is December 2 or February 12) and what the correct century is (1895 or 1795?). Finally, carefully check your notes before you end each research session, and make sure they are completely clear. There's no telling when or if you will be able to consult the source or sources again.

## **Bring to Life Those Dead Ends in your Genealogy Research**

If you are into genealogy, you will at some time or another hit a dead end. It is just a fact that dead ends are a part of this hobby, and they are frustrating. However, you will want to have strategies that will help you to get over, around, or through these dead end obstacles in your family searches. The following are a few tips that may help you when you run into a dead end and keep you from totally pulling your hair out. Though these tips will not solve all your problems, they should be able to get you through some of your obstacles and back on the genealogical research trail.

First of all, consider doing some networking. Though message boards, email lists, and newsletters are likely already a part of your genealogical search, you should lean on them even more in the case that you have hit a dead end. The worst thing you can do when you run into some sort of obstacle is to isolate yourself from others who may be able to help. By using the message boards and email lists, you are adding more brains to the problem solving process, which certainly cannot be a bad thing, can it? If you do not already belong to message boards or email lists, then you really should. They can help you with your research, act as added support in tough times, and can even offer you advice on strategies for finding more information.

Another strategy for overcoming your genealogical dead end is to go back over everything you have already done. Always make sure you have covered all of your bases. Otherwise you will be very upset when you realize that you spent months working on a problem you could have solved in the first five minutes. Many websites and books on genealogy offer checklists for just this particular issue. They will help you to make sure you have done all of the obvious things you can to solve the problem you are experiencing. Review some of your how-to genealogy books or pamphlets to make sure you didn't get careless and skip over a step that could get you out of the predicament you have landed in.

As a last resort, and this really should be your last resort, you can hire a professional genealogist. Despite what others who do this for fun might tell you, there are times when you should consider hiring a professional. However, if you do find yourself considering a professional, check out some of the genealogy websites that will tell you when you should and should not consider hiring a professional. After you read all of the information and you still think hiring a professional is the right thing to do, then make sure you do serious research on who to hire and how to hire them.

There is even published information on how to do this. Then, at least you will know whether or not it is a good idea to hire a professional and how to do it. With all of the supposed professional genealogists out there, you should always make sure that you are getting a legitimate one that will actually help you overcome your obstacles.

Lastly, you can always just shelve the problem for a while. It may sound a little odd, but sometimes you just need to get disconnected a bit from a problem before you can really tackle it again. Work on another part of your family tree or another portion of your genealogy project for a while and just forget about your dead end. Then, after a few days, or maybe even weeks, get it back out and look at the problem with fresh eyes. You may surprise yourself with how quick of a solution you can come up with after a break.

Genealogy can be a lot of fun and a great hobby. However, when you hit those inevitable dead ends, it can be immensely frustrating as well. If you find that you have hit a dead end, then you need to know how to handle it. By following the advice outlined here, you will be able to overcome the majority of these dead ends. However, there are times that a dead end is a dead end, so just follow these tips and do the best you can, and good luck.

### **How to Let Go of Those Dead End Leads in Genealogy Research**

When someone begins to make efforts in finding out their past with genealogy research, they may begin to run into dead end leads. This happens when you begin to find something on your family history, but it ends up going in circles or leading to the same information that you have already found. Often times, information will lead to no new insights at all. If you begin a search, there are several ways that you can determine what a dead end is and how to let go of the dead end when conducting your family tree research. The best thing to do, if you have found a lead that is going nowhere, is to either validate the information, or drop the information completely.

The first way to find out if you have a dead end lead is through the type of resource that you are using. There are primary and secondary sources that you will be using when you are looking for your family history. A primary source will most likely include direct links to dates or will be recorded during the correct time period from your lineage. Secondary sources make more assumptions and interpretations. If you believe that your source is secondary, it is best to compare it to other sources. If it doesn't match, then it is a dead end link and should be recorded as not having the right information.

While you are searching for your family history, you can keep track of what led to the dead end and what you were able to use in finding accurate information. This will help you from going around in circles with the information that you are finding and will allow you to find new avenues of information when trying to put together your history. If you are finding information that has too many gaps or has been interpreted through several other sources, then you should let that particular source go as it will only lead to more

dead ends.

Dead ends are most often going to be found from false information that is discovered on websites and search engines or from secondary sources. Sifting through the information that is available on the web and by validating your sources will help you to get away from genealogy information that is not correct. There are several places available that will let you know whether a website is valid or not. You can do this by finding more primary sources out of books and information from certificates. Websites should also be able to give you certain site information that gives it validity.

While websites and search engines can help direct your search by giving you a basis to find your information, often times the information may be misleading and run you into dead ends. The best way to use websites and search engines is as a basis for finding better, primary sources that will lead to accurate information. For example, if you find an obituary notice on a search web, you can validate the information or request more information from a different source, such as the Social Security office. This will help to ensure that you are getting the right information for your genealogy research.

After you have received a certain amount of information about your genealogy, you should look into the holes or gaps that are left from certain time periods. By doing this, you will be able to find validated information about your family. You will be able to gain clues into whether the information that you have found is misleading or is the truth. Finding details into your family tree is important in knowing whether what you have found is a dead end or will help you in finding more information.

Beginning genealogy research can lead to several revelations and new understandings about your family history. However, dead ends can often times be part of this process. By knowing how to validate your information, knowing which resources and sites will help in gathering new insights, and knowing when to fill in the gaps to your search, it will make it easier to trace your history. By knowing when to take a turn, you will avoid running into the dead ends of tracing your history.

### **Handed Down Family Names Can Provide a Genealogical Clue**

Two types of names are handed down from generation to generation: surnames and given names. Surnames have obvious genealogical links that can indicate country of origin, ethnicity, and even religion, and genealogists must be aware of the difficulties of surname research. Given names, however, can also provide clues to family history. Both types of names, therefore, should be studied in order for genealogists to understand better their ancestral origins.

Nearly everyone has been asked at some point what their first name means and why their parents gave them the name that they did, which indicates that parents often bestow upon their children given names with a history or a purpose behind them. Whether you were named after Aunt Gladys or Grandpa Fred, given names often

represent a family legacy. In some cultures, for example, families name their eldest son after his father's father and their eldest daughter after her mother's mother.

In other cultures, children are given the same name as a recently deceased relative in order to carry on that relative's memory, or younger siblings receive the same name as a deceased sibling. Obviously, fathers and mothers often name children after themselves, either with a first name or middle name, and women sometimes use their own maiden names for their children's middle names. Also, some siblings may have the exact same first names but be referred to by their middle names. Finally, don't be fooled by nicknames. Grandpa Bert's real name may not have been Albert but Gilbert, Robert, Cuthbert, Herbert, Osbert, or a number of other variations. Doing research to discover what the nicknames of the day typically referred to can be helpful.

When it comes to surnames, most can be traced back to the naming patterns of men in the Middle Ages and typically fall into four broad categories: patronymic or matronymic names, names derived from geographical locations, names based on physical or personal characteristics, and finally occupational names.

Patronymic and matronymic surnames use prefixes or suffixes to indicate that someone is the "son of" or "daughter of" someone else. A few patronymic prefixes and suffixes are "O," "Ab or Ap," "Mac or Mc," "Fitz," "ich," "itch," "ev," "off," and "ssen or son," and a few matronymic prefixes are "datter" or "feu." Place names could indicate geographical locations (i.e. Parris), geographic features (i.e. Brooks), or compass directions (i.e. Eastman). Descriptive names could indicate a physical characteristic (i.e. Broadhead) or a personal characteristic (i.e. Goodman). Finally, occupational names are based on occupation (i.e. Tailor or Miller).

A glance at modern surnames, particularly in America, would lead one to believe that not all surnames fall into these four categories; this variety, however, is based on phonetic variations and human error, which can often make genealogists shake their head in frustration as they struggle to trace their family tree. For example, Fitzgerald can be FitzGerold, Fich Gerrel, or Fitzjairald, depending on the census taker, transcribers, and a number of other factors involved in human error.

Phonetic variations often occurred as a result of many ancestors being illiterate and knowing only how their name sounded, not how it was spelled. In addition, some foreign names have varying letter sounds when translated into English, such as Wagner and Vagner or Freer and Veer. Sometimes prefixes or suffixes were dropped (i.e. Van Horn to Horn). Old-fashioned handwriting can also cause modern-day transcribing errors. Indexers may mistake a "g" for an "s" or an "i" for a "j," and your Singer ancestor could be indexed under "g" for Ginger.

When searching indexes and other documents for your ancestor, be creative and try all of the possible variations for the name or, if possible, use a "soundex," which will provide you with results that include all of the phonetic possibilities based on the surname you type in. Finally, be aware that different records or even the same record may spell the same person's surname differently.

At times, surnames may have been purposely changed by immigrants in an effort to sound more American. Ancestors may have anglicized their names by choosing similar American names (Savitch to Savage), translating their names into English (Bleu to Blue), or changing their name entirely and adopting a wife's name or an alias. As a result of these surname variations, both purposeful and accidental, immediate relatives or direct descendents may have completely different surnames. Also, sons or daughter were sometimes given their mother's maiden name as a result of divorce or in a desire to carry on the mother's family name.

Finally, sometimes even an exact match of both given name and surname in an index can still cause a genealogist difficulty. Different people can have the same full name and birthdate and live near each other. Also, keep in mind that no matter how strange or unique a name may seem to modern ears, it could actually have been quite common in your ancestor's generation. It's best to double-check all of your search findings with corresponding facts and information

In the end, genealogists must use their knowledge of naming patterns and all of its immense variations and difficulties in order to successfully fill in the blanks of their family tree.

### **Historical Museums May Help in Your Ancestral Research**

Genealogy is, essentially, a historical endeavor. Genealogists attempt to discover not only the history of a family but also the history of individuals living during a specific time period. The importance of understanding the social and cultural forces shaping your ancestors during a particular slice of history cannot be overstated. Historical knowledge will shape your research efforts and give you a very personal understanding of your ancestors. Knowing where they lived, what they did for a living, what religion they practiced, and even what they died from can tell you something about yourself and your heritage.

Our ancestors shaped history, and history shaped our ancestors. Accordingly, as you begin researching your family tree, it is beneficial to simultaneously study history. Historical museums can offer a multi-sensory learning opportunity, a chance to step out of the bookracks and see, touch, and even hear information about the period or place in which your ancestors lived.

Before you try to find the right museums to visit, you must first narrow down the time period and geographical location you want to study. For example, are you most interested in your Great-Grandmother Gretel from Germany or your Great-Grandmother Maria from Italy? Look for social or political upheavals that may have lead to your ancestors' emigration from their countries of origin.

Other changes in society, such as abolition or the end of a war, may have inspired a change of residence or the birth of children. If you construct chronological profiles on

the ancestors you are interested in, you may be able to pinpoint seemingly out-of-place events in their life or the life of their family that could be the result of external forces.

Once you have narrowed down the time period and geographical location you want to research, look for museums that specialize in that particular era, region, or ethnicity. For example, if your family escaped the Potato Famine in Ireland, look for museums that specialize in Irish History or have an exhibit on the Potato Famine. If your family was a specific ethnicity, such as Chinese-American, look for museums in locales with a high concentration of Asian Americans. These museums are your best bet for research, but don't rule out large national museums, such as the Smithsonian. The size and comparative wealth of these museums allow them to have extensive information on a variety of topics and time periods and may be worth a visit.

What will you find once you locate an appropriate historical museum? In addition to informative exhibits, museums might contain archives with special collections, such as maps, atlases, gazetteers, or manuscripts that you could use in your research. The National Museum of American History in Washington, DC, which is part of the Smithsonian, collects a large number of artifacts on a variety of topics, from agriculture to food to sports and leisure. The museum can only display a small number of these artifacts at a time, but the whole collection is available to be researched on an online database.

The museum also contains a separate database for its extraordinarily extensive archives, which contains letters and other personal papers, photographs and other images, music, films, videos, tapes, business records, advertisements, sheet music and publications of professional organizations. The sheer abundance of materials that you can research at the Smithsonian is almost overwhelming, and smaller museums may possess equally detailed and unique, if less extensive, collections. Museums are more than just places for the public to see a few exhibits. They are repositories of history.

Curators and other research historians in the employ of the museum are also a valuable, yet frequently untapped, resource. Contacting them and asking for their aid can lead you to valuable manuscripts, collections, or information that you may not have found otherwise. Curators at the Smithsonian, for example, frequently have advanced degrees in American History and knowledge of many other specialties, such as African-American history.

A visit to a museum can also be used to gain information from people who witnessed history firsthand. Some veterans are reluctant to talk about their unique experiences in the military. You can encourage them to share their history by taking them to visit applicable exhibits at museums. Sometimes reliving a war through pictures and artifacts is enough to make them begin reminiscing.

## **Family Mementoes Hold the Key to Your Ancestral Search**

Family mementoes can be a useful tool in your ancestral search. You can use just about anything that has been passed down from an earlier generation. One of the most common things to use is a family bible. Many family bibles have family names, children's names, family churches and a host of other information. Sometimes they also include information about marriages, births, divorces, and even deaths. Many people also include a family tree. Usually the family church is listed and you can use this information to get baptism certificates, marriage certificates, death certificates, and lots of other information. If you can get to the church, it would not hurt to ask around. You never know if someone may remember your family and give you some information about them.

Another good place to look is old photo albums. Many people label the backs of pictures or the bottom of Polaroid pictures. Most are not labeled and you will have to ask your parents, grandparents and other family members about the pictures. Pictures are the best thing to stir forgotten memories and help older people remember other people and events. You can learn about family members, family friends, family and non-family events. You can usually find wedding pictures, birthday pictures, anniversary pictures, and a lot of other pictures that may prove useful.

Some people, especially those of a war generation save letters. If your parents or grandparents saved any of these letters, ask if they can see them. They usually will give them to you, and if you read them together, they will probably have stories to share about that time. It will serve two purposes: It will give you the information you need, as well as allow them to reminisce. You will both enjoy the time spent together. Reading through the letters should give you some information about family, events, places, names, and many other leads you can follow up on.

Talk to as many family members as possible, someone may have birth certificates and/or death certificates of family members. These will usually have parents and spouse information on it that can help guide you. These can usually be found at family churches, census bureau, older family members, etc

Gifts and jewelry passed down is also a good thing to check. Many things are engraved or have certificates of Authenticity. You can ask around your family, someone is bound to know about the ring you got from your mother or the watch you got from your grandfather. It never hurts to ask. Sometimes if you bring jewelry to a reputable jeweler, they can do some research and find the original owners and maybe a bit of history about the piece.

Sometimes your family will keep newspaper clippings of things that your family has accomplished or events that have happened in the past. Asking family members about these is another good way of stirring memories that can lead you to other family members. Just like photos, these can be a very powerful tool in getting the older family members to talk about the past

The many resources of a family can almost always deliver a wide collection of old photographs (sometimes unlabelled, but sometimes you can be lucky), newspaper cuttings, birth, marriage, and death certificates, and other mementoes. These help to stimulate interest and are useful things to take when talking to older people whose memories are not as good as they used to be and can often be stirred by such memorable things.

Write everything down, remain skeptical about stories that the family is descended from King Charles, the Duke of Something, Baron Somebody, the guy that discovered this and that and is famous for this, or all of these people, and follow the leads that promise to point the way back to the unknown. Do not start with some famous person who had the same surname as yours back in the 15th century. The golden rule is to work backwards from the known to the unknown. The records of civil registration, the census returns of the 19th century, and church parish registers are the basic sources for the beginner. You may very well find that you are a direct descendant of Napoleon Bonaparte, but you can't just take Grandma's word for it.

**You are invited to pass this report along to as many people as you like,** provided that you make no changes to it and that you give it away for FREE.

If you would like **your own Private Label Version of this report** and hundreds of others just like it on hot, high interest niche topics – all of which come complete with 5 custom cover graphics – [click here to visit our Niche Reports Resource](#).



**WOW: Where Vision and Value Go Hand in Hand with Information & Opportunity!**

Please click below to check out all of our entrepreneurial friendly sites and products.

=> <http://www.The-WOW-Experience.com>

Always something NEW on the horizon. Always something for YOU to use to grow your business!  
That's what WOW is all about. Your success is our ultimate goal and our reason for growth.