



THE GENEALOGY GUIDE

7 FREE EASY WAYS TO DISCOVER YOUR ANCESTRY

By Owain Couch



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7 Free Easy Ways to Discover Your Ancestry

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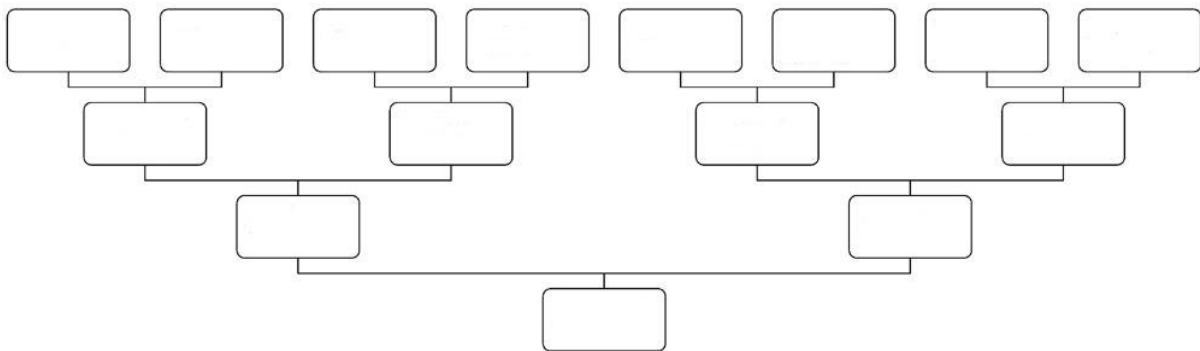
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1. Start With Yourself

Focus on yourself and then work backwards to your parents, grandparents, great-grandparents. At this initial step you will just **write down what you do know**.

You can hand-draw a family tree chart. This will be a draft copy of your tree, so please do not worry if it gets messy. Later when you buy a genealogy software program this tool will allow you to easily create attractive charts. But for now as you are beginning your research and getting a feel for this exciting hobby a hand-drawn chart will suffice.



Ideally use an A3-piece of paper that will be placed lengthways in front of you. This size of paper I feel will allow you enough room to write in details about yourself and your ancestors. You can start with yourself at the bottom and work up towards the leaves of your family tree.

Fill in what you know:

- Start with yourself (name, date and place of birth / baptism / marriage)
- Then your 2 parents (names, dates and places of birth / baptism / marriage / death)
- Then your 4 grandparents (names, dates and places of birth / baptism / marriage / death)
- And then your 8 great-grandparents (names, dates and places of birth / baptism / marriage / death)

Don't worry if you don't know all of the details, as you will uncover more about your ancestors over time. A chart like this will help you to identify what information is missing, and what areas of research that you need to concentrate on. It can give you a good overall picture of what you know and what you can expect from your new-found hobby.

2. Look Around Your Home

Search around your home for anything that can help you. These sources of information could be in any room, and maybe under your bed, in boxes, bags, cupboards, drawers, up in the loft, or even down in the basement.

There are many different sources of information that will contain details about your ancestors. Double-check any source as you could likely miss out on key information. You may wish to ask your parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, or any other family member for help with this task. Maybe they have something in their homes that can assist you. Ideally, you will want to find anything with genealogical value that can give you details about your ancestors.

A typical home source can help you to fill in what you don't already know for your partially constructed tree. The following sources of information are typically found around your home:

- **Birth, marriage, death certificates** will have vital details such as names, dates, and places.
- **Family bibles** will also have details about key events in your ancestors' lives.
- **School reports** can help you later when you write your family history book.
- **Photographs** where there may be key details written on the back.
- **Letters or postcards** can show addresses where your ancestors once lived.
- **Scrapbooks** can include interesting details about your ancestors.
- **Diaries or journals** will be interesting when you document their lives.
- **Newspaper clippings** can show key events in your ancestors' lives.

Carrying out this hunting and gathering task may save you from purchasing documents, or records that you, or your relatives already have. Therefore, this task can ultimately save you both time and money. You can see by conducting this exercise what is missing from your research.

As you carry out this task you will want to document what sources of information that you have gathered from family members. You can detail what you have learned from each item, and who they belong to so that you know who to return them to later.

As you collect information and materials about your family's past it would be beneficial for you to **work from a central workplace**. A central workplace is ideal as moving from one room to another will obviously slow you down. And it can also distract your concentration from the task in hand if you are moving a lot.

3. Ask Relatives

Family members are an invaluable lifeline when it comes to helping you with your genealogy research. They can help you fill in missing details in your family tree, and they can provide you with records, certificates and documents. Your relatives can give you clues to help you on your journey. So, you should try to get as much as you can from them.



This assistance can save you a lot of money. And if a family member has previously carried out research then they could save you a considerable amount of time and expense. You may obtain letters, stories, and old family photographs along the way as well. These sources may not have even been recorded, and so they will be extremely priceless.

Ideally you will want to **interview your relative in person**. When you make contact for the first time, or if you haven't contacted your relative in a long time, you will need to explain who you are. You can then state how you two are related.

For telephone interviews you will need to arrange a certain time for you to call. Also, you may find that a single phone call may not be enough, and so you may need to arrange for more than one call.

Email exchanges will allow you time for your relative to respond. And it can give you time to think of more questions to ask. You may want to print out your email correspondence for easy reference.

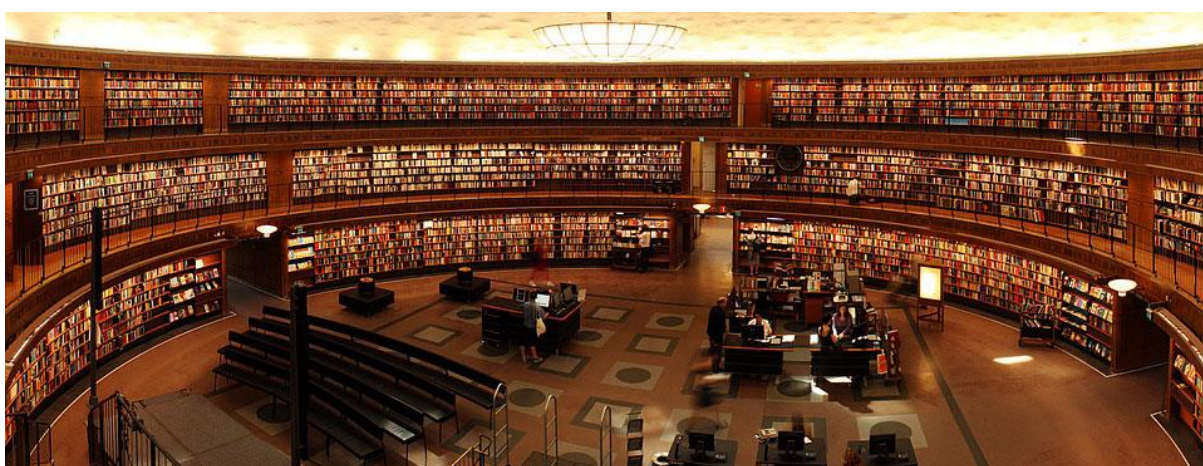
If all other methods aren't feasible then you may need to interview your relative by letter. You can enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope for them to reply to you. This will make it easier for them, and they will be more willing to respond to you. It will also be a kind gesture on your part, particularly as you are wanting information about your ancestry.

4. Visit Your Local Library

Your local library can help you immensely with your genealogy research. They will have a variety of facilities that can be very useful, and the best part about it is that it is all free for you to use.

There will be genealogy books that can guide you on every aspect of ancestry research. There should also be a local history section which can give you an insight into the life of the region and its people as well. This is a great way for you to become more connected to the area.

Magazines will also be available at your library, and hopefully there should be some genealogy magazines for you to borrow. If there isn't then you can always inquire about them at the desk.



Computer access to genealogy sites should also be available. These days every library has several computers where you can log on, and check out a few genealogy websites, such as Ancestry and FindMyPast. You can use these sites for free, and get some of your ancestor's records from these sites. Access to records will be somewhat limited from a library though.

The library should also have **their own genealogy group** where they may hold weekly classes. Here you can get help from the librarian that is in charge of the group, and meet other family historians. This is a great way for you to learn from others, and maybe also break down any brick wall that you may be facing.

5. Visit Cemeteries

Visiting cemeteries can help if your ancestors' graves have not been digitized and indexed on the many genealogy sites. And if they have, there may be errors in the transcription. For those two reasons it does help for you to visit a cemetery. First check beforehand that they are in fact buried there.



When it comes to a cemetery visit **you will need to be prepared**. Take someone with you who can help with your research. Proper footwear and clothing is essential, as well as garden shears and gloves if you need to cut any vegetation or grass, and a bag or box to put that in. Bring a hand brush and water so that you can clean your ancestor's grave, but refrain from using wire brush.

A camera, pen and notebook is essential for you to record details about the cemetery and your ancestor's graves. It would be helpful to take several photographs. You can also take a note of when you visited the cemetery.

At a cemetery you can possibly find the following information:

- **Name** – Their full name, with maybe a middle name, or a nickname as well.
- **Relation** – Often the stone will say who the person is related to, for example, husband of ...
- **Burial/death dates** – Be sure that you do not mix up the burial and death dates when recording this information.
- **Age at death** – Helpful if no birth year is recorded.
- **Other family members** – There maybe more than one person in the grave.
- **Quote** – Not particularly helpful, but regardless it is something to note.

6. Free Genealogy Sites

There are plenty of free genealogy sites available where you can discover so much of your rich heritage. But with free there are limitations as to what you can find. My advice is to try the free stuff first before you start to think of where you will need to spend your money.

Here are ten free websites that you can check out:

1. [Access Genealogy](#) – Contains the largest collection of free genealogy material in the United States.
2. [Billion Graves](#) – Contains images of headstones submitted by users from around the world, mostly the US though. There are incentives for a monthly or annual subscription.
3. [DeadFred](#) – Contains thousands of old photos that have been submitted by its users.
4. [FamilySearch](#) – The world's largest free collection of genealogical records. Great to check out this site before you head on over to Ancestry.
5. [FindAGrave](#) – Similar to Billion Graves, but contains fewer graves. Still worth checking out.
6. [FreeBMD](#) – For finding your British ancestors. Vital records such as birth, marriage, and death certificates can be found here, although the whole of the UK is not yet covered.
7. [FreeCen](#) – A fabulous collection of 1841 to 1891 UK Census records.
8. [RootsWeb](#) – There are family trees, records, message boards, search engines, and databases to check out here.
9. [USGenWeb Project](#) – Helped by the many volunteers that use this site you will be able to discover where you can find information about your ancestors.
10. [WikiTree](#) – Research your ancestry through family trees that have been submitted to this site. You can upload your family tree and your raw DNA data as well.

7. Paid Genealogy Sites

The chances of finding useful information on free sites is not so great compared to paid genealogy search websites, such as Ancestry and FindMyPast. That is because there are **billions of records** to be found on these kinds of sites. With this many records available at your fingertips it is no wonder that you can find just about any kind of information about your ancestors.

The many different kinds of records include birth, marriage and death vital records, parish records, Census records, electoral rolls, land records, military records, convict records, passenger lists, immigration and naturalization records, and newspaper archives.

But you're probably thinking how can you access these records for free?

1. Free Records

Some sites will have a collection of records that are completely free for you to access. By checking out these records you will get a taste of the site, which may mean you will want to take out a subscription. Typically, you will find various U.S. and U.K. Census records freely available.

2. Free Trial

Often popular with the paid sites are 14-day free trials where you can get free unlimited access to everything within their databases of records. You will need to cancel your trial a few days before the period ends to make sure that you do not subsequently get charged.

[Ancestry US](#) | [Ancestry Canada](#) | [Ancestry UK](#) | [Ancestry Australia](#)

[FindMyPast US & Canada](#) | [FindMyPast UK](#) | [FindMyPast Ireland](#) | [FindMyPast Australia](#)

3. Free Weekend

During the holiday's genealogy sites will open the gates to their records for free. Although access may be to particular sections of their database, such as military records for example.

4. Local Library

As I pointed out earlier your local library is a great way for you to log into to the well-known genealogy sites. By doing so you will get free access to their records which you can use for your research.

About The Author



Owain Couch has been researching his family tree since 2010. After listening to his father's many fascinating family stories while growing up as a boy he knew that he would have to put pen to paper, (or rather fingertip to keyboard), and record those stories in a book before they were lost in time forever.

As he started to type all these tales and exploits of his ancestors he soon realized that he needed to structure what he had. Compiling all of these stories that his father could remember saw his simple project grow into something more substantial than he could have imagined.

Owain turned his attention to genealogy software so that he could build his family tree so that he could add charts to his stories, so anyone reading could see the relationship between ancestor and author of his book. Then came the family photos, pictures of heirlooms, and maps of his ancestors' travel.

This book became so much more than what was intended. But the love of genealogy did not wane as he collected new information and facts about his ancestry, and watched his family tree grow and grow.

After discovering so much of his heritage, Owain knew that he had to give back to the genealogy world. And so he created his own blog website, [The Genealogy Guide](#). From his site he gives his guides, tips, and tricks that he has learned and acquired over the years so that anyone can start to discover their ancestry.

There are also plenty of reviews on the site for genealogy products and services. It was only natural that in time a guidebook would be written so that anyone could learn the steps that he had taken on his own genealogy journey.

Please check out Owain's 167-page book, '[Trace Your Genealogy and Family History in 9 Simple Steps](#)'.

In his guide book he shows how you can follow a path that will help anyone wanting to learn as much as possible about their ancestry.

There is so much free advice provided that will help any family historian to save both time and money. Through this book you will learn how and where to find information about your ancestors.