

Finding Common Ancestors

Y-DNA, mtDNA, and atDNA

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Man-made records are at the heart of genealogy, but because man has created them, there is always the potential for errors. Many of our records in the early years were recopied. Clerks copying deeds, wills, etc. were paid by the page so it is no wonder that errors exist. This is more the reason for various surname spellings within a single document. I also know of deeds with the wrong description which were discovered only at a person's death when the land was to be sold.

It is very important, not only to use multiple records for any one fact, but to understand which parts of a record could easily be in error. We all know that a birth date or parents' names could be wrong on a death certificate, but I have also found the death date on a death certificate varies from the obituary. Both recorded near the time of the event. Even the parts that seem reliable can be wrong.

Having a robust pedigree chart can be helpful in many ways. You need to gather data on all the descendants of your direct lines, from at least the fourth great-grandparents to the present. Include full dates and locations for Birth, Marriage, and Death. If you create a Timeline for each person you can easily see what information is missing. If you have done or plan to do a DNA test, upload your pedigree to all testing companies you use. Regardless, creating Ahnentafels for sections of your pedigree will make sharing your information with either your DNA matches or the people you contact for genealogy much easier.

Traditions and oral family history passed down from generation to generation may contain some grain of truth, but are often distorted by time and tinted by emotion and imagination with each telling. It can be more difficult to verify these stories than to research using some known or suspected fact about the person. Any goal of a good researcher will be to prove or disprove these traditions and oral history with documented facts.

Genealogical Proof Standard

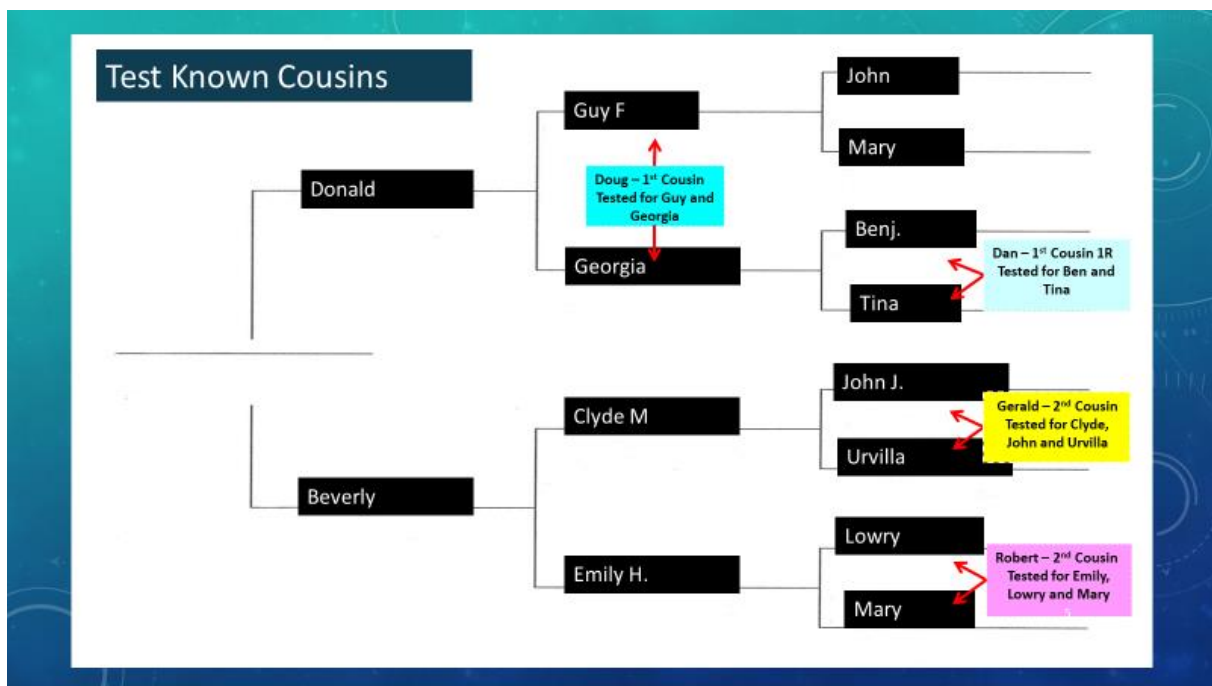
- Reasonably exhaustive research has been conducted.
- Each statement of fact has a complete and accurate source citation.
- The evidence is reliable and has been skillfully correlated and interpreted.
- Any contradictory evidence has been resolved.
- The conclusion has been soundly reasoned and coherently written.

Robust Pedigree Chart

- Gather data on all your ancestors' descendants back about nine generations.
- Include full names, dates, locations of birth, marriage and death
- Include the same data for spouses.
- Be consistent with your format, using good genealogical methods
 - Maiden/birth full names
 - 5 June 1943
 - City, county, state

Thorough Testing

- Test at the highest level you can
 - Y-67 or higher
 - Full mtDNA)
- Test at all the companies for atDNA
 - Test relatives including 1-4th cousins
 - Understand how to determine the half-identical regions (HIRs)



Finding Common Ancestors for Y-DNA and mtDNA

- Compare all-male or all-female lines of your pedigree with the closest matches first.
- Remember, the match can be on siblings of the direct line, but always all-male or all-female due to the type of test.
- Contact more recent matches first.
- Share genealogies.

Finding Common Ancestors for atDNA

Create Matches Segment Spreadsheet (all companies except AncestryDNA)

- Download your matches list and your matches' segments list into separate spreadsheets
- Keep the originals; make a working copy of each; add needed columns
- Order the segments list by centimorgans from largest to smallest
- Remove any cMs below 5.0

Find Half-identical Regions (HIRs) (all companies except AncestryDNA)

- Order your matches' segments list by chromosome, then start and end positions
- Locate clusters who appear to share the same segment.
- Email each member of the cluster to see if they all match each other in the same location on the same chromosome. (Triangulating)
- Those who match each other share a common ancestor(s)

AncestryDNA – No Chromosome; Use Dots and Stars

- Under GROUPS, choose at least four colored dots, one for each grandparent or as many as you wish for whatever category you wish
 - Note that some matches may connect on two branches of your pedigree (i.e., two grandparents)
- Click on the Star
 - To indicate you have found the common ancestor...or...
 - To indicate you are close and working on finding the connection

Ancestry Notes

- Use your NOTES field in a consistent manner
- Use the NOTES for clues to yourself
 - EX: has Trent in Breckinridge Co, KY
 - EX: has a shared match with cousin Doug Doolin
- If you have tested cousins or have determined a relationship to a match, place them with the correct dot and add a note
 - EX: 2C; Common Ancestors: Benjamin F. Williams and Tina May Simpson via Georgia; Tester: female (nee Smith)
 - EX: 2C 2R; Common Ancestors: Rice Robertson and Eliza Lane via George; Tester: Darla Jones (nee Sherrill)

Ancestry Pedigrees in Stages

- Click on Match's tree for small version
- Click on EXPAND
- Click on FULL TREE
- Click on a person in the FULL TREE and then on PROFILE to see the sources for that person in your match's tree

Ancestry's SEARCH

- **Under SEARCH**, enter one of your closest or most uncommon surnames in **Surname in matches' trees**. Working on one surname at a time helps you retain the surnames you have in your chart and those you see in your match's chart.
 - That surname for some matches may not connect to your line; you may match that person on a different line.OR....
Your records are incomplete for finding the common ancestor.
 - Sometimes the surname is an unconnected line in the match's pedigree. Enter the name in TREE SEARCH on the match's full pedigree. Try connecting it via good research.
- Also search on **Match name** and **Birth location in match's tree**

Ancestry's Shared Matches

- Check your **Shared Matches** and the Shared Matches of your Shared Matches

Contacting Matches

For all Matches

- Closest matches may be easier to find in your family tree
 - Genetic Difference of 0 is a perfect match for Y and mtDNA
 - For atDNA chose the matches with the largest cMs; NOT total cMs and determine HIRs
- Newest matches may be excited about their DNA experience and finding connections
 - They may expect others to find the connections
 - In activity breeds boredom (no quick or easy results)
- Share the lineage information you created...or ...madly create it now!
- Ask your match to share the same information
- Compare surnames, dates, and locations to narrow the pursuit
- Share personal emails, address, and phone when possible. (People can change emails often!)

Not Getting Email Responses?

- Match tested for family genealogists and may not be interested
- May not understand DNA testing
- May not understand where to find messages on the DNA site
- May be new to genealogy and has a sparse tree
- May only be interested in finding their ancestral origins
- May only want medical information
- May have moved and did not update contact info
- May be in a home or have died

Perhaps you not making the most of your emails to them?

Making the Most of Your Emails

- Mention the company where you tested
- On which test (and level if Y-DNA and mtDNA) do you match
- State the name of the tester you match (many people manage more than their own test)
- For atDNA name the others with whom you and your match share the same DNA Segment
- Provide the chromosome, Start and End position and cMs where possible.
- Explain where your pedigree chart is located if online

Bouncing Emails?

- Email new matches right away
- Remain in frequent contact (monthly?)
- Ask the FTDNA administrator to forward a letter
 - Include an SASE
 - Send this to the administrator to open and address the letter to the match

Better Communication

- Update your profile at the testing company
- Add your GEDCOM to the company site
- Create draft email messages for initial contact
- Send Ahnentafels for segments of your pedigree chart and for X-chromosome inheritance
- Offer to help the match understand DNA results; you may know more than they do
- Check their pedigree chart often; new information could be added
- Obtain “real” emails if on AncestryDNA, 23andMe, or MyHeritage

Recording Your Common Ancestor

- Use the NOTES section at each company for recording the common ancestor
- For atDNA
 - You will arrive at an ancestral couple unless you have divided that couple by testing a cousin that relates to only one of them.
 - Your common ancestor may be determined, but the segment came from that person’s ancestors as well.
 - Record the common ancestor in a new column on the working spreadsheet.
 - Example: RGG1811/HS1812 OR Gilmore-Storrier

Additional Tips for Finding Your Unresponsive Match

- Search on Facebook or other social media
- Use PeopleFinder, Whitepages and other online directories
- If match has their own photo, put it into Google Images as they may be found on other webpages

- Search using an email or their cryptic name with various email endings (i.e., gmail.com)
- Check the names of those adding photos and data to Find A Grave as some can be your match. Click on their name and email them.
- Check online for other pedigrees that contain the same name as you find in your match's pedigree to gather more data. Contact the pedigree owner as they may know your match.
- Always check lines that go back farther in the past that you assume the match's relationship to be.
 - EX: if you are a 4-5th cousin, check the lines for earlier connections (7-9 generations from you).
- Do not trust any genealogical paper trail, unsourced book or general knowledge. USE GPS.

Resources

Ahnentafel Explained

<https://blog.eogn.com/2014/12/16/ahnentafel-explained/>

<http://www.jaydax.co.uk/family/ahnentafel.htm>

(Know that most genealogy programs do this automatically. I suggest you adding dates and places along with children)

Books

Aulicino, Emily D., *Genetic Genealogy: The Basics and Beyond*, AuthorHouse, (www.authorhouse.com), pgs. 251. ISBN: 978-1-4918-4090-0; ISBN: 978- 1-4918-4089-4 (e) (Also available at Amazon.com and Barnes and Noble or order from your favorite bookstore.)

Bettinger, Blaine T., *The Family Tree Guide to DNA Testing and Genetic Genealogy* (Cincinnati, OH: Family Tree Books, 2016).

Blogs

DNAeXplained by Robert J. Estes

<https://dna-explained.com/category/blogs/>

Top 50 DNA Blogs for 2020

https://blog.feedspot.com/dna_blogs/

Emily's Blog Articles

atDNA Testing: Who can Test and How can it Help your Genealogy?

<http://genealem-geneticgenealogy.blogspot.com/2016/02/atdna-testing-who-can-test-and-how-can.html>

X-Chromosome: The X-tra Special Chromosome

<http://genealem-geneticgenealogy.blogspot.com/2016/02/x-chromosome-x-tra-special-chromosome.html>

Resources, con't

Y-DNA or Who's My Daddy?

<http://genealem-geneticgenealogy.blogspot.com/2015/05/y-dna-or-whos-my-daddy.html>

To SNP or not to SNP, That is the Question

<http://genealem-geneticgenealogy.blogspot.com/2016/07/to-snp-or-not-to-snp-that-is-question.html>

Big Y is rolling on...

<http://genealem-geneticgenealogy.blogspot.com/2014/03/big-y-is-rolling-on.html>

mtDNA or Who's Your Mommy? Part 1 by Emily Aulicino

<http://genealem-geneticgenealogy.blogspot.com/2015/08/mtdna-or-whos-your-mommy-part-1-by.html>

mtDNA or Who's Your Mommy? Part 2 by Emily D. Aulicino

<http://genealem-geneticgenealogy.blogspot.com/2015/08/mtdna-or-whos-your-mommy-part-2-by.html>

Cruizing the Gedcoms

<http://genealem-geneticgenealogy.blogspot.com/2014/01/cruizing-gedcoms.html>

Genealogical Proof Standards

<https://bcgcertification.org/ethics-standards/>

https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Genealogical_Proof_Standard

Various Online searches for Living People

AnyWho: White Pages: www.anywho.com

People Search, Public Records and Reverse Phone: www.peoplefinder.com

Free People Search: www.whitepages.com

ZabaSearch: www.zabasearch.com

Spokeo People Finder by Name: <http://itools.com/tool/spokeo-people-finder-by-name>

Webinars – FREE

Family Tree DNA: Under LEARNING CENTER at the bottom of the homepage, enter WEBINAR in the search box

Put any topic followed by YOU TUBE