

# The Research Process for Beginners

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## Basic Instructions

1. Record what you know. Start with yourself.
2. Choose what ancestor you want to learn something about.
3. Select a record that may contain that information.
4. Search the record.
5. Analyze the record and record what you learned.
6. Record findings in a research log with complete citations.
7. Repeat from step 2.

## Record what you know

1. On a pedigree chart and family group sheets, record what you know about the whole family, not just direct ancestors. Record all the children, cousins, aunts, uncles, etc.
2. Gather information from your home, parents', grandparents' home to fill in the blanks (See Family and Home Information Sources Checklist).
3. Ask family members what they know about your ancestors (See Questions for Interviewing Family Members).

## Choose what ancestor you want to learn something about.

1. Choose someone from your pedigree chart that you want to learn about.
2. Choose an event from that person's life. Note where and when that event might have occurred.
3. Create a research question you want answered.
4. Begin a research log.

## Select a record to search

1. Look at a record selection table for the info you wish to find. (See Record Selection Table).
2. Choose one of the record types.
3. Search a Research Wiki or Locality Guide to find out where to locate those records.
  - a. Wiki = a website where users collaborate and share information and hopefully sources for that information.
  - b. See numbers 3-7 in the bibliography
4. Enter the information on your research log.

## Search the record

1. Go to the repository or its website where those records are held.
2. Search their catalog for the record.
3. Find the record and copy the documents.
4. Create a proper citation and write it on the copy of the document.
5. Record the information in your research log.

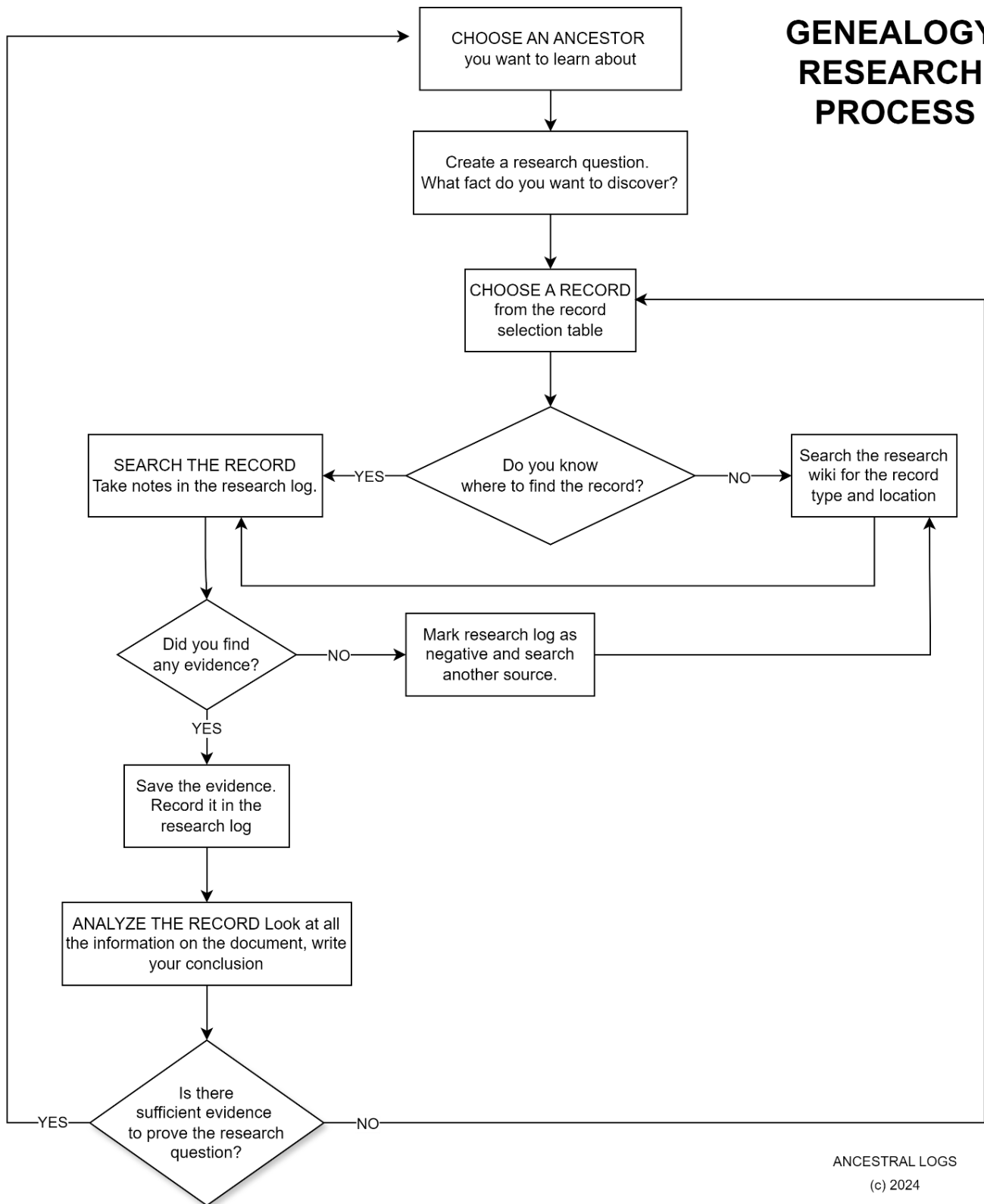
## Analyze the record and record what you learned

1. Review the purpose of the document. Why was this document created? Can the information be trusted? Who provided the information given?
2. Review each part of the document and ask yourself What details do I learn from this?
3. Is the information relevant to your research question?
4. Is the information from a reliable source?
5. Write your findings and conclusions on your research log.
6. Write your questions and future sources to search on your research log.
7. Organize and preserve your documents and findings. Make a backup.
8. Is this enough evidence to prove without a doubt the answer to your research question? If not, search another record.

## Bibliography:

1. BYU TV Ancestors series, 25-minute episodes.  
Season 1 <https://www.byutv.org/ancestors>  
Season 2 is on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/@vhsdip/playlists>
2. *Ancestors: companion teacher's guide* (Provo, Utah : KBYU Television, c1996).
3. Ancestry Wiki: <https://Wiki.rootsweb.com>. Contains Ancestry's Red Book, Ancestry's The Source Book
4. FamilySearch Wiki: <https://www.familysearch.org/wiki>. Contains resource guides from the Family History Library, Genealogical word lists in foreign languages, for the whole world, search by place, topic, record type, event, etc. clickable maps, more user friendly,
5. MyHeritage Wiki: <https://www.myheritage.com/wiki/Home>
6. The Family History Guide: <https://thefhguide.com>
7. *The Handybook for Genealogists: United States of America, 11<sup>th</sup> Edition*. Logan, Utah: Everton Publishers, 2006.
8. Genealogy Research Forms  
[https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Genealogy\\_Research\\_Forms](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Genealogy_Research_Forms)
  - a. Pedigree Chart
  - b. Family Group Record
  - c. Census Worksheets
  - d. Military Draft
  - e. Correspondence Logs
  - f. Deed Index Worksheets
  - g. Passenger List Worksheet
  - h. Heirloom inventory, etc.
  - i. Research Log
  - j. Timelines

# GENEALOGY RESEARCH PROCESS



ANCESTRAL LOGS  
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## Family and Home Information Sources Checklist

Use this checklist as a guide to sources of information you might find in your home or the home of a relative.  
Check each source you find.



### Sources of information about ...

#### ... Birth

- Baby Book
- Adoption Record

#### ... Marriage

- Wedding Announcement
- Wedding Book
- Anniversary Announcement

#### ... Divorce

- Papers

#### ... Death

- Obituary
- Funeral Book
- Will
- Memorial Cards

#### ... School

- Report Cards
- Honor Roll
- Awards
- Graduation Diplomas
- Transcripts
- yearbooks

#### ... Religious Activity

- Blessing
- Baptismal Record
- Christening Record
- Confirmation Record
- Ordination Record
- Ministerial Record

#### ... Every Day Life

- Journal
- Diary
- Biography
- Letters
- Photographs
- Autograph Album

- Publications/ newspaper clippings (about the person)
- Scrapbooks

#### ... Employment

- Social Security Card
- Apprenticeship Records
- Citations
- Achievement Awards
- Disability Records
- Pension Records
- Membership Records
- Income Tax Records
- Union Records
- Severance Records
- Retirement Records

#### ... Military Service

- Selective Service Records
- Pension Records
- National Guard Service Records
- Citations
- Disability Records
- Service Medals
- Ribbons
- Insignias
- Discharge Records
- Sword
- Firearms
- Uniform

#### ... Land and property ownership

- Deeds
- Land Grants
- Water Rights
- Mortgages
- Leases
- Tax Notices
- Abstracts of Title
- Estate Records
- Financial Records

#### ... Civil and Legal Activity

- Bonds
- Summons
- Subpoena
- Guardian Papers
- Contracts
- Bounty Award

#### ... Family

- Bible
- Lineages
- Genealogies
- Histories
- Bulletins/ newsletters
- Coat of Arms

#### ... Health

- Hospital Records
- Medical Records
- Immunization Records
- X-Rays
- Insurance Papers
- Vaccination Records

#### ... Household Items

- Engraved Items
- Dishes
- Silverware
- Stitched Sampler
- Tapestries
- Quilts
- Needlework

#### ... Licenses

- Business
- Occupation
- Professional
- Hunting/Fishing
- Firearms
- Drivers
- Motor Vehicle

#### ... Citizenship Papers

- Naturalization Papers
- Alien Registration
- Deportment Papers
- Passport
- Visa

# Questions for Interviewing Family Members

Interviewing members of your family may help you gather information about your ancestors. It's a good idea to start with the oldest members of your family and work forward. People may remember important details or have family heirlooms, records, or photos that can help you. We recommend recording the interview.

These questions can help you get started:

1. Who were the oldest members of your family that you knew personally?
2. Do you know their whole names? Birthdates?
3. Did your parents talk about any of their ancestors when you were growing up?
4. Did anyone who wasn't related to you live with you when you were a child?
5. Where did you grow up?
6. For how long did your family live in the area(s)?
7. How many siblings did you have? What were their names and ages?
8. What were your siblings like?
9. Did other family members live in the area? If so, who?
10. Did you live on a farm? If so, what kind of crops did you grow?
11. Did you keep livestock or other animals?
12. Did you have any pets?
13. What was your house or apartment like? How many rooms were in it?
14. What kinds of amenities did your home have? (indoor plumbing, electricity or gas, phone, television)
15. Do any items or rooms from the house stand out in your mind as favorites?
16. What was your neighborhood like?
17. Did your town have a railroad? A post office? Stores?
18. What was your family's religious affiliation?
19. Where did you go to church?
20. What religious ceremonies did you take part in?
21. Did you have godparents or sponsors?
22. Where did you go to school?
23. What level of education do you have?
24. What was your favorite subject in school?
25. Did you have any special interests when you were growing up?
26. What kind of games did you play?
27. What was your favorite toy?
28. What did you do for fun?
29. Did your family ever take trips or go on vacations?
30. Do you speak any foreign languages?
31. Did you have family reunions?
32. Who were your friends when you were growing up?
33. Can you tell me about some close friends of the family?
34. Can you describe the personalities of your family members?

35. Are there any physical characteristics that run in your family?
36. Were there any illnesses in your family?
37. Do any illnesses run in the family?
38. Did your family have any traditions?
39. Can you remember any stories that were told to you as a child (fictional, folklore, or real life)?
40. What events stand out to you from your childhood?
41. What inventions or developments changed your life, and how?
42. What were your parents' occupations?
43. Where did your parents work?
44. Did you work? Where?
45. Did anyone in your family serve in the military?
46. Did anyone in your family hold a public office?
47. Did anyone in your family play a musical instrument?
48. What was your favorite song?
49. What were your family's favorite meals? Are there any special family recipes?
50. Did you eat or avoid eating some foods on certain occasions?
51. Were you ever mentioned in a newspaper?
52. What kinds of organizations did your family belong to?
53. What special skills do you have?
54. How did you choose your profession?
55. When did you move away from home?
56. Have you ever been married? If so, to whom? When?
57. (If partnered) Where did you meet your spouse or partner?
58. What qualities drew you to them?
59. Did you exchange any special gifts?
60. (If married) How long did you date before getting married?
61. Where did you get married?
62. Who participated in your wedding?
63. Did you have a reception? Was there music? Which songs were played?
64. Do you have a copy of your wedding invitation?
65. Was there an announcement in the newspaper? Which paper?
66. How many children do you have?
67. How many are still living?
68. What stories did you tell your children when they were growing up?



## APPENDIX C

# RECORD SELECTION TABLE

Use this table to determine which records would be useful in finding information about your ancestors. The first column lists important types of information about your ancestor and events in your ancestor's life. The second and third columns show groups or organizations that may have created records about your ancestor. Check for records listed in the second column before checking for records listed in the third column.

Event	Look for These Records First	Then Look for These Records
<b>Birth</b>	<b>Government:</b> Vital records <b>Family:</b> Bible records <b>Church:</b> Parish records, membership records <b>Other:</b> Cemeteries	<b>Government:</b> Census, military, taxation <b>Newspaper:</b> Obituaries
<b>Birth, foreign</b>	<b>Government:</b> Census, emigration, immigration, naturalization, citizenship <b>Family or library:</b> Bible, biography, genealogy	<b>Church:</b> Parish records, membership records <b>Newspaper:</b> Obituaries <b>Library:</b> Histories, maps, gazetteers
<b>Death</b>	<b>Government:</b> Death, probate <b>Newspaper:</b> Obituaries <b>Church:</b> Parish records, membership records <b>Other:</b> Cemeteries, funeral homes, hospitals	<b>Newspaper:</b> Articles <b>Government:</b> Military, court, land and property
<b>Marriage and maiden name</b>	<b>Government:</b> Vital records <b>Church:</b> Parish records, membership records <b>Newspaper:</b> Announcements, obituaries <b>Family:</b> Bible records	<b>Government:</b> Military, probate, land and property, nobility <b>Family or library:</b> Biography, genealogy <b>Other:</b> Cemeteries
<b>Divorce</b>	<b>Government:</b> Court records, divorce records	<b>Newspaper:</b> Articles <b>Government:</b> Vital records
<b>Immigration, emigration</b>	<b>Government:</b> Immigration, emigration, naturalization, citizenship <b>Family or library:</b> Genealogy	<b>Government:</b> Census <b>Library:</b> Biography <b>Newspaper:</b> Articles <b>Church:</b> Membership records
<b>Family members</b>	<b>Government:</b> Vital records, census, probate <b>Church:</b> Parish records, membership records <b>Newspaper:</b> Obituaries	<b>Family:</b> Bible <b>Government:</b> Immigration, emigration, land and property
<b>Place of residence</b>	<b>Government:</b> Census, land and property, military, vital records <b>Family or library:</b> History, genealogy <b>Church:</b> Parish records, membership records <b>Other:</b> Directories	<b>Government:</b> Taxation <b>Newspaper:</b> Obituaries
<b>Religion</b>	<b>Church:</b> Parish records, membership records <b>Library:</b> History, biography <b>Government:</b> Civil registration	<b>Family or library:</b> Bible records, genealogy <b>Newspaper:</b> Obituaries <b>Other:</b> Cemeteries

## Types of Records and Where to Find Them

When looking for this information	Look for these records first	Look for these records second
Age	Church: Parish records, membership records Family: Bible records Government: Vital records (birth, marriage, death certificates)	Government: Census Newspaper: Obituaries Other: Cemeteries
Birth	Church: Parish records, membership records Family: Bible records Government: Vital records Other: Cemeteries	Government: Census, military, taxation Newspaper: Obituaries
Birth, foreign	Family: Bible, biography, genealogy Government: Census, emigration, immigration, naturalization, citizenship, passports	Church: Parish records, membership records Library: Histories, maps, gazetteers Newspapers: Obituaries
Death	Church: Parish records, membership records Government: Death, probate Newspaper: Obituaries Other: Cemeteries, funeral homes, hospitals	Government: Military, court, land and property Newspaper: Articles
Divorce	Government: Court records, divorce records	Government: Vital records Newspaper: Articles
Religion	Church: Parish records, membership records Government: Civil registration Library: History, biography	Family or Library: Bible records, genealogy Newspaper: Obituaries Other: Cemeteries
Family members	Church: Parish records, membership records Government: Vital records, census, probate Newspaper: Obituaries	Family: Bible Government: Immigration, emigration, land and property
Immigration, emigration	Government: Immigration, emigration, naturalization, citizenship Family/Library: Genealogy	Church: Membership records Government: Census Library: Biography

		Newspaper: Articles
Living relatives and adoptions	Family: Bible records, court records Government: Vital records Newspapers: Obituaries	Church: Parish records, membership records Government: Census, probate records
Maiden name	Church: Parish records, membership records Family: Bible records, genealogy Government: Vital records Newspaper: Announcements, obituaries	Family or Library: Biography, genealogy Government: Military, probate, land and property, nobility, naturalization, citizenship Other: Cemeteries
Marriage	Church: Parish records, membership records Family: Bible records, genealogy Government: Vital records Newspaper: Announcements, obituaries	Family or Library: Biography, genealogy Government: Military, probate, land and property, nobility, naturalization, citizenship Other: Cemeteries
Occupation	Government: Census, immigration, emigration Other: City Directories	Government: Court records  Library: Newspaper
Physical description	Government: Military records Other: Biography Family: Photos	Family: Genealogy Government: Vital records, naturalization, citizenship, emigration, immigration
Place finding aids	Libraries: Gazetteers, maps	Library: History, periodicals
Place of residence	Church: Parish records, membership records Family or Library: History, genealogy Government: Census, land and property, military, vital records Other: City Directories	Government: Taxation records  Newspaper: Obituaries
Places family has lived	Family: Genealogy Government: Census, military, vital records Other: City Directories, online phone directories	Government: Military, taxation  Newspaper: Obituaries
Prior research (genealogy)	Family or Library: Periodicals Other: Societies	Library: History, biography

<b>Social Activities</b>	Church: Parish records, membership records Communities: Societies Library: History, biography, newspapers	Government: Town records  Newspaper: Obituaries  Other: Cemeteries, directories
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