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## Roadmap to Family History

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### **Joke:**

Not all Ancestors are as crazy as they seem, sometimes they're even worse!

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### **Principle:**

Take things a step at a time.

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### **What could possibly go wrong?**

Jake was interested in Family History. He'd originally tried to get involved, but found he didn't know enough to make any inroads, so he thought he needed to become more knowledgeable. However, after a year of reading articles and advice, he realized that he had learned a lot, but had not yet done very much. All of the information seemed jumbled and disorganized as a whole. He still really didn't know how to be proficient in it.

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## Summary:

If you truly want to be effective in Family History, one of the most important things to do is to take it a step at a time. Many people get excited about Family History like kids wanting to swim for the very first time and decide to jump in the deep end of the pool without first learning how to swim. Although some can learn this way, it is far better to start in the shallow end and progress until the deep end is obtainable. Once the deep end has been mastered, other specialties can then be mastered, such as using the high dive or competitive water sports, etc.

There is a temptation to get enamored with the latest and greatest software in the market without first learning important principles that will lead to success. Software is an important part of doing Family History, but it is not the objective. It is a tool to reach the objective and it is not even the most important tool in the toolbox. More important is to gather a set of tools, both electronic and manual to help you on your journey. Each tool addresses a different aspect of the effort. Some tools do similar things and can be used in similar situations, others cannot. Some tools are inexpensive, others are not.

As in other endeavors, it is useful to follow a road map that will help you gain proficiency in the tools of most value to you. Different situations may require different configurations of tools and you need to be able to envision and decide which will be most useful. You may even need to modify the tools you use and possibly get new ones as the need arises. In other words be flexible. This lesson will give you a broad overview of the map to follow to be able to construct the backbone of the knowledge you need. It is not all encompassing, but nothing is. It is the start to your journey and should be used as the springboard you can use to flesh out the rest of the structure as you go. Building the whole structure takes longer, but not starting with a firm foundation limits what you can do.

One of the most important concepts to begin with is that you learn best when you put the knowledge you gain into practice. Don't try to eat the whole elephant in one sitting, it doesn't work that way. Take things a step at a time. Take the time needed to accomplish the objective and then go to the next step. Yes, I know you may be itching to use that slick new set of software, but unless you understand the concepts and gather the other tools needed, as the old saying goes, garbage in = garbage out. Here are the steps.

- Ask Your Relatives
- Collect the Clues
- Learn the Jargon
- Organize Yourself
- Save Your Data
- Use Repositories
- Verify the Data!
- Ask Others for Help
- Learn How to Research
- Join an Organization
- Learn about DNA Testing
- Go to the Location
- Become Certified

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## **Detail:**

There are many different specialties in the area of Family History and the body of knowledge in this area has been growing rapidly in the last couple of decades. It is expected to grow in depth and breadth, and even gain legal status in many areas. Already we are seeing it's entrance into forensic criminology.

The objective of this report is to give you a picture of the lay of the land. Although it is not a detailed list of everything involved in Genealogy, it is always better to get the big picture of a project upfront than to try to build the big picture from minute details. Building from details is time intensive and error prone. This report contains a list of the areas of knowledge needed to become functional in the field. The list starts at the most essential and simple things to build a foundation and then continues from there. Not everyone will need or even want to go all the way through to becoming Certified, but understanding the what Certified Professions do is important, especially if you want to user their services. You don't use a map to ensure that you go to every city in a nation, you use it to find out how to get to the address you want to go to.

The objective of this report is to provide a quick understanding, while avoiding many of the traps along the way. One of the biggest traps in Family History is spending too much time learning and not enough doing. Instead of learning all you can before doing something, let your objectives (what you want to accomplish) drive the training you need to accomplish them. Another big mistake ANY project can make is not to clearly define the objectives desired up front and to keep them in mind throughout the project until it is completed. Many projects fail because of getting sidetracked, cost overruns, scope creep, and a failure to understand what the true objective was to begin with. People tend to drift aimlessly across the whole family tree structure, and while luck can strike every once in a while, it is far better to be organized and disciplined in how you approach your research. One of the best ways to do that is to plan the projects you wish to undertake and start working them one at a time.

Here are the CRITICAL things to remember when searching for your ancestors:

- Start with clues given by others which have first-hand knowledge
- Document the information
- Search for More clues
- Verify the information
- Repeat

It is important to remember is that this is an adventure. You don't know what you will run into, so you need to be flexible and keep an open mind about who your ancestors were and what they did. Some families have Presidents, some have Villains, and some have a mixture of both. Remember that what you are looking for is the TRUTH, not fairy tales. Don't try to rewrite history for convenience.

### **– Ask Your Relatives**

Asking your relatives should be your first step. The best point to start at is with those closest to you. They can provide you with hints and clues you may not have thought of. Once you tell others in the family you are interested in Family History, many times they'll give you information about the family they won't give others. This is solely because you have shown you are interested while others have not. Wouldn't you be more interested in giving decades of research to the Grandkids that are interested in it than those that may just throw it away at your passing? Get the word out that you are interested.

### **– Collect the Clues**

The next step is to use the information collected to look for clues to additional information. Collect as much information as you can. It could be in the form of Family Group Sheets, or Pedigree Charts, or Autobiographies, or Family myths, stories, or even just notes of what they are saying. Whatever it takes, collect as much as you can. Time is precious, and the longer you delay, the greater the chance that a relative which has an enormous amount of information about the family will die and take the knowledge with them. Remember, at this point you are not as concerned about the accuracy of the information as the fact that you can obtain it. A mine can bring many riches, but there may be a lot of digging through the rubble to find the gold.

### **– Learn the Jargon**

In any endeavor, one of the quickest means of becoming proficient is to get up to speed on the terms being used. For medicine, it is probably important to know what a heart is, along with the liver, the lungs, etc. If you don't understand the terms of anatomy, it will be difficult to make correct decisions about how to solve problems the body encounters. The same with Family History. Seekerz has provided a list of terms used in Family History on the website, [Seekerz.net > FAQ > FAMILY HISTORY TERMS](#). Over time we will attempt to expand the list. If you are not familiar with Family History, take a few minutes to get up to speed on these terms. Getting up to speed on terms quickly will greatly help you in any field of endeavor.

### **– Organize Yourself**

Another way to get a quick start, even if you have been involved in Family History for some time, is to organize the information you have. The difference between an unorganized mess and alphabetized files can be great indeed. Disorganization will take you far more time to find and resolve issues than organization. Since time is the most precious thing we have, I strongly urge you to organize the information you have. Receiving information from your relatives is a great first step, but if your relatives give you lots and lots of it, it's volume will make it difficult to locate what you are looking for and almost impossible to find all the information about a given individual without wasting a lot of time in the search. Better to organize by Person and by Family.

Your raw data collection may include many duplicated Family Group Sheets, misnumbered Pedigree Charts, random Family stories, random documents and a lot of papers having nothing of genealogical content in them. And remember your relatives may not have had the convenience of a computer when they did their research, so their method of organization may be far different than what you are used to. That may even be true if they did have a computer.

Whether or not you have yet been able to collect a lot of information from your relatives, organizing yourself first will make things much simpler to find in the future. As you get new information, you can simply file it away being assured that it will be easy to find when you start looking for it again. And be sure to be flexible enough to be able to change your method of organization over time as you recognize better ways of organizing.

### – **Save Your Data**

If you have organized your documents as suggested in the last topic, the next step is to purchase Personal Computer Desktop software and enter your Family data into it. If you don't have a computer you can still collect and record genealogical information and then ask for help to put it into a computer, or into a Web Repository such as FamilySearch. However having your own computer and software is preferable, even if you also put the data in a Web Repository. This way you'll have a personal copy of your data that you know is clean. The software will allow you to enter the data, define relationships between your relatives, document the events in the individual lives and marriages, and provide reports of what was entered. Remember, the computer is only as good as the information you put into it, Garbage in = Garbage out. Seekerz has provided a list of some of the top desktop software vendors at [seekerz.net](http://seekerz.net) > FAQ > TOOLS > Desktop. There are many more, and in the future, we will be expanding the list and adding information to it, but it is an excellent place to start.

Having a personal version of your Family Tree in your own computer allows you to avoid missteps created by others that may not have been as careful in their research. If there is a conflict, you'll be able to distinguish between the version you are using and that of others. Be careful not to blindly accept what others have, they are only human and may not have the best information available. Having a personal copy gives you the confidence that you know what you have is right, or at least the most correct you have, regardless of others.

The computer can be a great way to help save and organize your data, just make sure you back it up against the day that the computer will eventually break down. One Dentist found that out the good way, when his professional office was able to restore data from a backup after a crash, while other professionals in the same office were not. The dentist that had the backup was able to restore and continue without interruption. The others had to manually reenter all of the information into the computer from all of their client charts collected over all the years, a very expensive proposition.

Don't forget to back up the data periodically.

### – **Use Repositories**

Once you have entered the information you received from your relatives, the next step is to attempt to get additional information from the internet. The reason is simple. It is far less expensive to get information from the internet than to go to the location itself to get it. Start with the least expensive means of getting information and work toward the more expensive. Some of the websites require an annual fee (such as Ancestry.com) and others do not (such as FamilySearch.org). Some have the ability to search extensive databases of Census, Birth, Marriage, and Death, and other records, such as the two above. Others do not. This, of course, assumes that the information on the internet is correct, it may not be. There are hundreds if not thousands of websites dedicated to family history. You can view them on Cyndi's List and other websites. Seekerz does not intend to duplicate that effort. Our efforts are in helping you the student get up to speed as quickly as possible.

### **– Verify the Data!**

As mentioned above, data is not useful unless it is clean, meaning it is correct. It is essential that not only do you gather the data, you also verify it. The best and only way to do so is to collect documents proving the information you have collected. It is understood that at times it may be difficult to find the proof that a particular event occurred, but wherever possible, you need to do it. Documentation comes in many different flavors and shades of reliability. For example, a marriage certificate would be the best way to document a marriage, but if you don't have that, a wedding announcement is better than nothing.

A marriage certificate is a different document than a wedding announcement. They document the same event, but have very different priorities when it comes to proving that the event occurred. Normally a marriage certificate has a higher priority than the wedding announcement. The wedding announcement is nice, but doesn't prove that the wedding actually occurred. The announcement may have been printed, but the wedding later canceled.

The researcher with the BEST documentation wins the argument. And many of these documents can be discovered by searching databases of websites that have digitized them. Be careful though, some kinds of documentation, such as birth certificates, did not exist in certain countries during specific periods, so during that period, christening records would have been higher priority than birth certificates. As you can see document priorities can change over time depending on the location.

### **– Ask Others for Help**

Once you have asked all the relatives you can for as much information as you can, and you have entered it and verified it, you can expand your search to include others that are knowledgeable about Family History, such as Family History Consultants from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. This service is free and available to all at designated locations. Note that while at the facilities, you have free access to all of the millions (about 400 million at the time of writing) of records that have been digitized and indexed by the Church. You can find the nearest Family History Library by going to the following internet address: <https://www.familysearch.org/help/fhcenters/locations/>.

However, there are many more organizations you can get help from. Family Organizations may have websites; County Records Libraries, Grave Yards, National ports of entry, etc. are also available. These organizations have been formed to help others find information pertinent to them. For example, if you wish to locate a relative you know is buried in a specific graveyard, the personnel of that graveyard can probably help you find the grave you are looking for by researching their records without you physically being there. There are many others, and some specialize in particular countries or regions of a country you may be interested in. Don't be shy, ask around to see what help is available.

### **– Learn How to Research**

As you go from step to step, you are building knowledge on how to do research. First, you reach out to Family, then to the internet, then to specialists that are trained in the area and next to yourself. By this, I mean, you are starting to obtain the information you need to learn on how to research on your own. Others have helped you to this point. Now you're all grown up and need to learn to go out in the Family History world by yourself. The best place to start is where you left off. Meaning that up to this point, you have been able to collect and verify information that others have given you. You have entered it into your personal database on your PC and have researched the information on searchable websites to collect the documents needed to prove your ancestors' events. Now you need to find clues hidden in the research you have done that will lead you to find information on other relatives you have not yet found.

For example, if you found an ancestor and discovered that they were in a census record as a child, that same record may tell you who the father is. It may also tell you who the other siblings were that were living with the Parents at the time of the census. (Censuses are great for helping you find relationships to other ancestors.) The same could occur in a Marriage Record, if a Parent of one of the Married Couples were there as a witness.

Be creative! Look for clues that have been overlooked. If one kind of record doesn't pan out, go to another, such as land or title records. One researcher was able to use information from a religious index to connect to 466 new relatives. Once the Mother's name was found, a search was done on a searchable database to see if the Mother could be found in another person's family tree, and luckily it was. The researcher was able to link into the other family who had already done the work back in time.

### **- Join an Organization**

Joining other Family Organizations can be helpful. For example if you were from a Family that emigrated from England, there may be a Family Organization in England that has people that are willing to look for your ancestor's records for you, instead of you having to go to the parish yourself. And you may be helpful to them in finding what happened to a line in the family that immigrated from England and was lost to their knowledge.

There are many types of organizations that can help support you in your research. Some Family Organizations support the descendants of one particular ancestor, other organizations support research in a particular country or region and yet others support the storage and retrieval of documents for a particular purpose, such as archives. Become actively involved in those organizations which have the most promise in helping you achieve your goals, it increases the probability you will be able to do so.

### **- Learn about DNA testing**

DNA testing has become an increasingly used methodology in the field of Genealogical research. It is yet another way to add to a body of evidence needed to prove Genealogical relationships. DNA, just as any other form of evidence has strengths and weaknesses and care needs to be taken in choosing the test needed to solve a particular Genealogical issue.

In order to choose the appropriate test it is important to understand the nature and abilities of the tests available. Different tests resolve different questions and it is possible that one test may have absolutely no ability to solve your particular question. So blindly taking DNA tests can be counterproductive.

Currently there are four different kinds of DNA testing: 1) Mitochondrial, 2) Y-chromosome, 3) Autosomal and 4) X DNA. Before sending off for a DNA test with a popular testing facility, first learn the differences between the four kinds of tests.

### **- Go to the Location**

For those that have done research, but still come up empty-handed, the next best thing is to go to the location. For example, if you know that your ancestor died in a particular city because you have county death records that say so, and there are few cemeteries in the city, you may want to visit them and see if you can find the grave yourself. Many graves have been cataloged on findagrave.com and other sites, but not all, and it may be worth your while to go there. Note before you go, you'll probably want to contact the cemetery first to see if they can locate the grave from their records, but if not, go anyway. A picture or a charcoal rubbing may be a good way to document the grave if and when found.

Realize, that each location has its own rules and procedures. There are many locations you could go to in addition to graveyards, such as libraries, archives, county records, etc. Some allow you to take

copies of the records, others do not. Some allow copies of some of the records, but not others. Some will research the record for you and give you a certification of their findings, others will not. Prepare before you go, or you may be frustrated when you get there.

### – **Become Certified**

Of course, the very best way to do research is to become a trained professional in the field. Not everyone has the ability, time, or interest to do this, but if you are so inclined, you may be able to pick up many valuable tools to help you in your own research. And you will be able to help many others with theirs. As you share your talents with others, solving their problems may lead you to a missing link on yours. Some call it karma, some divine intervention. Whatever you call it, it is a reward for helping others. A reward for paying it forward.

### **Wrap up**

I hope this article has been helpful. The training Seekerz LLC provides is Top Down. We start with the Framework scaffolding and then fill in the pieces. This article is only a brief glimpse into the wonderful world of Family History. But hopefully you can see that there is a structure to it and a sequence in the progression of knowledge along the path.

Getting a glimpse at the framework is only the beginning of the journey. This report shows the big picture, an overview of how to approach Family History. Now you may want to dig a deeper into each of the topics discussed above. Get involved in the effort as soon as you can, and get help while you are doing it. Combining “on the job training” with practice and mentoring, will get you up to speed far more quickly and with better results than otherwise.

For those wanting to learn the details behind the Roadmap, Seekerz LLC is offering a full 12 week course which will not only guide and help you learn, but also help you practice what you learn. Half of learning is training, the other half is practice. As you practice the skills, you build muscle memory. Understanding a roadmap is important, but when the rubber hits the pavement, you need to have the right tools. There is a large difference between a bicycle and a stock racing car. Both have tires that hit the pavement, but different tools to do it with. For a limited time Seekers is offering this course for only \$197.00. After the introductory period the price will be \$397.00 and you will no longer be able to take it for the introductory price. Those that buy now will be given all of the materials of the finalized course, up to and including videos. It will give you some of the most important tools you'll need in Family History and help you practice what you learn.

Add to the knowledge you've gained here. Take the next step and start filling your toolkit by delving more deeply into each of the steps of the scaffolding discussed above.

Click here to purchase the course: [Buy Now](#)

## Just for Fun

### Word Search – Concepts

See if you can find the following Family History Concepts in the puzzle below.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
1			T	E	E	H	S		P	U	O	R	G		Y	L	I	M	A	F	E
2		M	I	P	E	D	I	G	R	E	E		C	H	A	R	T			A	T
3	S	A	T	S			Y	H	P	A	R	G	O	I	B	O	T	U	A	M	A
4	G	R	L	C	M	T	S	U	R	T	L	A	U	D	I	V	I	D	N	I	C
5	N	R	E	I	E	I	S	E	E	K	E	R	Z	H	U	N	T	Y	E	L	I
6	I	I		T	C	N	C	Y	R	A	U	T	I	B	O	O	R	T	W	Y	F
7	D	A	R	S	A	O	S	R	L	E	T	T	E	R	E	A	A	H	S		I
8	E	G	E	I	G	C	U	U	O		J			D	R	C	O		P	O	T
9	E	E	C	T		R	I	N	S	F	A		I	B	I	B	L	E	A	R	R
10	C		O	A	F		A	F	T		I	V	I	F		S		P	P	G	E
11	O	C	R	T	H	G	A	V	I	Y	L	L	I	N	D	E	X	I	E	A	C
12	R	E	D	S	S	M	S		E	T		T	M		A		C	R	N		
13	P	R	S		I	L	A	N	O	S	R	E	P		Y	R	O	T	S	I	H
14		T		L	R	D	N	S	S	E	E	E			F	C	E	U	R	Z	T
15	T	I	Y	A	A	A	R	H	C		C	T	C		A	H	T	R	E	A	A
16	R	F	L	T	P	T					O	S	H		T		A	E	H	T	E
17	U	I	I	I	A	E	H	O	I	B	R	U	I	D	H		B	S	T	I	D
18	O	C	E	V	T	T	D	E	E	D	D	R	L	N	E	T	O		O	O	H
19	C	A	N		R	S	W	I	L	L	S	T	D	A	R		R		M	N	C
20	S	T	S	I	L		R	E	G	N	E	S	S	A	P		P	I	H	S	R
21		E	B	D	R	O	C	E	R		Y	R	A	T	I	L	I	M	B		A

Arch(ives)	Death Certificate	Index	Newspaper	SSN (Death Records)	<<Bonus>>
Autobiography	Deed	Individual	Obituary	Story	
Bio(graphy)	DNA	Jail Records	Parish	Title Records	
Birth Certificate	Family	Liens	Pat(ents)	Trust	(Family) Bible
Census	Family Group Sheet	Letter	Pedigree Chart	Video	Birth Certificate
Child	Family Organizations	Library	Personal History	Vital Statistics	Boo
Chr(istening)	Father	Marriage Certificate	Pictures	Who	Seekerz
County	FGS	Microfilm	Probate	Will	Trust
Court proceedings	Grave	Military Record	Search		
Date	Hunt	Mother	Ship Passenger Lists		