



# 10 Tips for starting your family history

## 1. Work backwards in time

It's easier to work methodically from a fact that you know about such as the date of birth or a marriage of a relative than to try and trace down from a person you don't know much about.

## 2. Ask the family

Ask other relatives what they remember about their family history. Make a note of any nicknames name changes. Ask them to tell you any family stories, what their ancestors did for a living, what they looked like. Find out what was happening at the time when they lived.

## 3. Take notes and get organised

You never know what information will come in useful in your family history research so get into the habit of taking notes on what you have looked for and what you found. There are many useful computer software packages that will help you keep your records in an orderly manner and help draw up pedigrees and family groups sheets so you know who you are dealing with.

## 4. Check out the Web

The Internet can be a useful tool for contacting relatives and finding data. The Society of Genealogist website has useful free information leaflet with guides to starting your family history and links to useful websites <http://www.sog.org.uk/leaflets/starting.pdf>





## 5. Meet other family historians

Family Historians are incredibly help to each other. There is a network of local societies with regular meetings up and down the country. Here you can meet like minded people with the same interests and local expertise. The Society of Genealogists [www.sog.org.uk](http://www.sog.org.uk) is the largest UK family history society with a remarkable library and education programme.

## 6. What's been done before?

It's worth checking if anyone else is doing research into your family history before you start. Many people publish their family history on the Internet so start by putting a name into an internet search engine The SoG free information leaflet on starting your family history

<http://www.sog.org.uk/leaflets/starting.pdf> has useful links to Social network sites where people can register their research interests and could be a way of finding information. The Society of Genealogists library collects published and unpublished family histories and research notes. It's free library catalogue can be found on its website which also list the names in its various collections

## 7. Read up on the subject.

There are many good books and magazines devoted to family history. You will find many in your local library and the Society of Genealogists' online bookshop has plenty of family history titles to help you.

<http://www.sog.org.uk/acatalog/index.html>

## 8. Ask questions.

Who are you dealing with? You must at least know a name. Where did your ancestors live? Most family history records are associated with a place. When were they alive? Records and research will differ depending on the period you are interested in. What did your ancestors do in their lives and will that affect what information you can find?

## 9. Get some documentary evidence

Your family history will be drawn from myriad of records and sources throughout history in which your ancestors will be mentioned. Birth, marriage and death records, censuses 1841-1911, wills, church records occupational records, education and apprenticeship, military service records, tax records, criminal records, poor law, newspapers, trade directories, ecclesiastical licences, church court records, tombstones etc might all throw up valuable information.

## 10. Stay focussed

It's easy to get overwhelmed with all of the information that's available to family historians. Remember to have a clear idea of what you are looking for and why you started the search in the first place. Family history is fun and thoroughly absorbing. If you like detective stories and have a mind for solving puzzles then it's definitely the hobby for you. Good hunting.