

University of Strathclyde, Centre for Lifelong Learning

Family History Research: An Introduction



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Humanities &
Social Sciences

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WEEK 1: Part 1

Paperwork

Each session you will have:

- a handout of the information on the slides presented with further details included;
- possibly some background papers or documents

You can also access all course handouts and supplementary information online at:
<http://classes.myplace.strath.ac.uk/mod/oublog/view.php?id=728968>

Part 1 - Why are we doing this?

- You are curious about yourself and your roots
- You want your children and grandchildren to understand who their ancestors were, where they came from, what they did, how they lived
- You want to preserve family, local, cultural, ethnic etc. traditions and stories for the next generations.
- You want a family medical history in the case of inherited diseases or defects.
- You want to join a surname, lineage or heritage society.
- You want a family history book, for family members or to sell
- You are interested in facts that others have ignored
- You want to put the record straight
- You like to solve puzzles

Genealogy and Family History...

- Genealogy is the retrieval of vital and familial data from records of various types, and its ordering into meaningful relationship patterns
- Family History is the integration of this with social, economic, political etc. contexts to develop a narrative or story.
- Surname Research concerns itself with the origins, meanings, transmission and continuity of single or linked family names and their variants
- Genetic Genealogy attempts to place individuals within family, ethnic and geographical groupings by analysis of DNA and its expression

Genealogy...

...is from the Greek, and means the study of family history and descent. Genealogies are the recorded descent of a person or family from one or more ancestors. These are sometimes called family trees, lineages or pedigrees.

The most basic objective of genealogical research is to identify ancestors and their relationships. A basic goal is to find and record, for everyone in your family tree, these data:

- **date and place of birth**
- **names of parents**
- **date and place of marriage**
- **date and place of death**
- **names and birthdates of children**

However, depending on where your family came from, this may or may not be possible. Some places have had their parish records destroyed, for example, and thus it will be very difficult to trace people in that area - perhaps not impossible, but much harder. So sometimes, getting back a long way on a family tree is more down to the luck of the draw than how good you are as a researcher. Most genealogists have lines in our family trees that are stuck on a brick wall! I certainly do...

Genealogy is a window to the past

BUT:

- Not all information is available
- Not all information is correct
- Not all information is complete

HOWEVER:

- With judicious research, analytical and problem-solving skills, much can be discovered
- Standards of proof matter!

Remember!

- ALMOST EVERYTHING WE KNOW IS WRONG
- ALWAYS CHECK THE ORIGINAL DOCUMENT
- SOMETIMES, OFFICIAL SOURCES ARE WRONG

How many ancestors do we have?

Generations back	Years (approx)		
1	25	Parents	2
2	50	Grandparents	4
3	75	Great-grandparents	8
4	100	Great-great-grandparents	16
5	125	g-g-g-grandparents	32
10	250	8g- grandparents	1024
20	500	18g- grandparents	1,048,576

Researching ten generations – and that’s only back to 1750 – should give you over 1,000 ancestors - more than enough to keep you busy researching for a lifetime. And that’s not counting cousins!

Family relationships

What is an ancestor?

Strictly speaking, an **ancestor** is someone from whom you are descended – parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, great-great-grandparents etc.

- A **maternal** ancestor is an ancestor on your mother's side of the family.
- A **paternal** ancestor is from your father's side.

Your grandfather's brother (your great-uncle) is not your ancestor!

A family tree traced back through the generations from a single individual is called an **ancestor or pedigree tree**.

Charts and Numbering Systems

Genealogy uses charts and family group sheets to record data. Genealogy software programs can help, and can print out information in a variety of formats, but there is still something to be said for the old paper and pencil.

The two basic forms for recording genealogical information are ascendant charts and descendant charts. An **ascendant chart** starts with you and moves back through the generations of your ancestors. A **descendant chart** starts with you or another individual in your family tree and lists all of the descendants coming down through the generations. On these forms you record the names of your ancestors or descendants and the dates and places of the three major genealogical events (birth, marriage and death). They basically serve as a master outline of your genealogy information and make it easy to see at a glance where you have gaps in your knowledge of people or events.

Ascendant Charts

The chart which most people begin with is the **pedigree chart**, a type of ascendant chart. The most common type of pedigree chart displays five generations of family data on a single page (also known as a five generation chart), but you can purchase paper charts which will accommodate as many as 15 generations. One advantage of working with a four-generation chart is it fits neatly on a standard size page and leaves enough room for data. The first individual named on the left of the chart is the one whose ancestry the tree documents. You should start by placing yourself as person number one on your first pedigree chart. The chart then branches in two to show your parents, then in fourths to show your grandparents and so on. This chart only shows your ancestors - there is no room on a pedigree chart for siblings, multiple marriages, etc.

An **ahnentafel** is another type of pedigree chart in the form of a table or list. The pedigree chart is the more graphic representation of a person's ancestors, while the ahnentafel presents the information in a neat, compact manner. Ahnentafels are not used quite as often today as they were in the past. Ancestors are numbered on pedigree charts and ahnentafels using a system known as the ahnentafel numbering system. You (or the person whose ancestry is being traced) are number **1**. A father is twice his child's number ($1 \times 2 = 2$) and a mother is twice the child's number plus one ($1 \times 2 = 2 + 1 = 3$). The numbers for men are always even and the numbers for women are always odd, with the exception of number **1** which can obviously be either. Notice that the first number for each generation is equal to the number of people in that generation.

Descendant Charts

What is a descendant?

These are your children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and so on. A family tree down from a single ancestor is called a **descendant tree**.

The relationship between you and your ancestors and descendants are known as **lineal** relationships.

You won't find descendant charts to be extremely useful to you as you are starting out, although you should prepare one to include your children and grandchildren if that applies. In general, however, descendant charts begin with a **progenitor** - the earliest proven ancestor in a line. This means that you must do some research first before you can create this type of chart. Descendant charts are most often used to chart all of the descendants (or at least as many as can be found) of a specific ancestor (often an immigrant ancestor or the first one living in a specific area or country).

Family Group Sheets

This is the basic worksheet used for genealogical research. While a pedigree chart identifies your ancestry and serves primarily as a culmination of your work, the family group sheet is how you get there.

There are many different formats available, but each Family Group Sheet is based on a single family unit - husband, wife and children. A family group sheet has space for the basic genealogical events for each family member, including dates and places of birth, marriage, death and burial. For each child on the list, a name of a spouse can be given, along with a date and place of the marriage. There is usually a place for notes where you should record where you got your information (source) as well as make note of any discrepancies in your findings. Family Group Sheets are essential because they 1) serve as a simple means of recording data 2) make it easy to see at a glance what information is known and what is missing and 3) serve as a means of easily exchanging information with other researchers.

Family relationships

What is a collateral relationship?

- This is a relationship between individuals who descend from common ancestors but are not related to each other by direct (or lineal) descent.
- This includes your brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, nieces and nephews, cousins and so on.
- Some genealogical researchers don't bother to trace collateral lines, but often they can provide clues about your ancestors when you hit a brick wall.

Second cousins once removed, and all that:

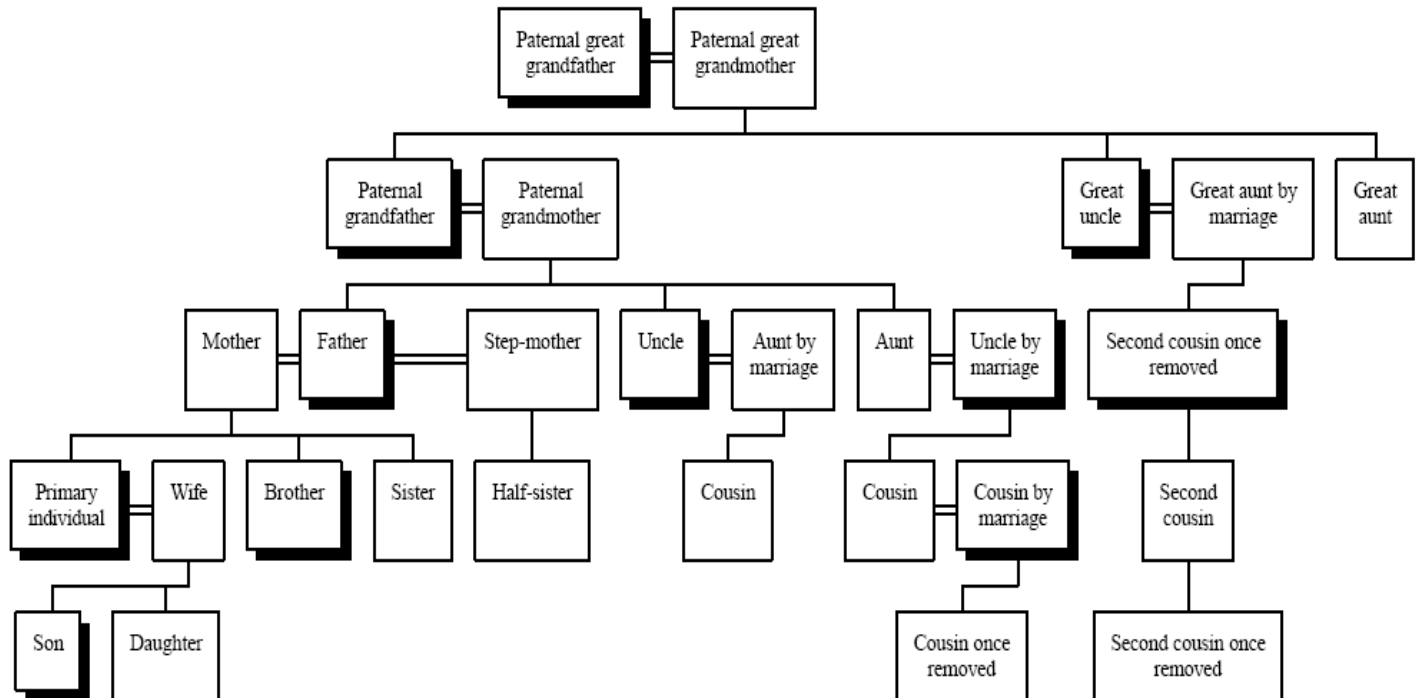
- **First cousins** - have two of the same grandparents.
- **Second cousins** - have two great-grandparents in common, but different grandparents.
- **Third cousins** - have two great-great-grandparents and their ancestors in common.

Cousins descended from common ancestors by a different number of generations are called "removed."

- **Once removed** - a difference of one generation. Your father's first cousin is your first cousin, once removed.
- **Twice removed** - a two-generation difference. Your grandmother's first cousin is your first cousin, twice removed

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Common Ancestor	Son or Daughter	Grandson or Granddaughter	Great Grandson or Granddaughter	2nd Great Grandson or Granddaughter	3rd Great Grandson or Granddaughter	4th Great Grandson or Granddaughter	5th Great Grandson or Granddaughter	6th Great Grandson or Granddaughter
2	Son or Daughter	Brother or Sister	Niece or Nephew	Grand Niece or Nephew	Great Grand Niece or Nephew	2nd Great Grand Niece or Nephew	3rd Great Grand Niece or Nephew	4th Great Grand Niece or Nephew	5th Great Grand Niece or Nephew
3	Grandson or Granddaughter	Niece or Nephew	First Cousin	First Cousin Once Removed	First Cousin Twice Removed	First Cousin Three Times Removed	First Cousin Four Times Removed	First Cousin Five Times Removed	First Cousin Six Times Removed
4	Great Grandson or Granddaughter	Grand Niece or Nephew	First Cousin Once Removed	Second Cousin	Second Cousin Once Removed	Second Cousin Twice Removed	Second Cousin Three Times Removed	Second Cousin Four Times Removed	Second Cousin Five Times Removed
5	2nd Great Grandson or Granddaughter	Great Grand Niece or Nephew	First Cousin Twice Removed	Second Cousin Once Removed	Third Cousin	Third Cousin Once Removed	Third Cousin Twice Removed	Third Cousin Three Times Removed	Third Cousin Four Times Removed
6	3rd Great Grandson or Granddaughter	2nd Great Grand Niece or Nephew	First Cousin Three Times Removed	Second Cousin Twice Removed	Third Cousin Once Removed	Fourth Cousin	Fourth Cousin Once Removed	Fourth Cousin Twice Removed	Fourth Cousin Three Times Removed
7	4th Great Grandson or Granddaughter	3rd Great Grand Niece or Nephew	First Cousin Four Times Removed	Second Cousin Three Times Removed	Third Cousin Twice Removed	Fourth Cousin Once Removed	Fifth Cousin	Fifth Cousin Once Removed	Fifth Cousin Twice Removed
8	5th Great Grandson or Granddaughter	4th Great Grand Niece or Nephew	First Cousin Five Times Removed	Second Cousin Four Times Removed	Third Cousin Three Times Removed	Fourth Cousin Twice Removed	Fifth Cousin Once Removed	Sixth Cousin	Sixth Cousin Once Removed
9	6th Great Grandson or Granddaughter	5th Great Grand Niece or Nephew	First Cousin Six Times Removed	Second Cousin Five Times Removed	Third Cousin Four Times Removed	Fourth Cousin Three Times Removed	Fifth Cousin Twice Removed	Sixth Cousin Once Removed	Seventh Cousin

Family relationships



“German”, Half, Step and “in-law”

- **“Brother-German”** means a true brother (same two parents). Likewise with “Cousin-German”
- **Half relationships** are when there is a common ancestor but descent from different spouses of that ancestor. For example, half-sisters might have the same father but different mothers, or the same mother but different fathers. The children of these half-sisters are half-cousins, because they share only one of the grandparents. Half-relationships are still consanguineous (blood) relationships along the line they share.
- **Step relationships** are relationships through marriage and are not consanguineous (blood). They are, however, an important part of a family tree. For instance, a man with a son marries a woman with a daughter – the children are the step-children of the non-blood parent.
- **“In-law” relationships** also arise from marriage. Your husband’s or wife’s parents are your parents-in-law.

Sources for Genealogy - How far back can we go?

1. Statutory records post 1841/1855
 - 1841 – Individuals identifiable within Census data
 - 1855 – Statutory recording of Birth, Marriage, Death
 - Births index 1855 to 2014, images to 1914 (100 year cut off period)
 - Marriages index 1855 to 2014, images to 1939 (75 years cut off period)
 - Deaths index 1855 to 2014, images to 1964 (50 years cut off period)
2. Old Parish registers 1553 to 1854
 - Births and/or Baptisms

- Banns and/or Marriages
- Deaths and/or Burials - no national name indexes but some extant OPRs exist for some parishes

Roman Catholic birth registers 1703-1908 (not all parish records survive)

Recording Names

Some important conventions

- Record names in their natural order - first, middle, last (surname). Use full names if known. If the middle name is unknown, use an initial.

- Print SURNAMES in upper case letters.

Example: Henry Michael THOMSON; Henry M. THOMSON

- Enter women with their maiden name (surname at birth) rather than their husband's surname.

Example: Mary Ellen FRASER married John DEMPSTER, enter her as Mary Ellen FRASER

- If a woman's maiden name is unknown, give her first (given) name by empty brackets ().

Example: Mary Ellen, maiden name is unknown, married to John DEMPSTER.

Mary Ellen () or Mary Ellen () DEMPSTER

- If a woman has had more than one husband, use her given name as above, with her married names in parentheses (in order of marriages). If the middle name is known then you may enter that as well.

Example: a woman named Mary CLARKE at birth, was married to Jack SMITH prior to marrying Walter LAING.

Mary (SMITH) (LAING) CLARKE

- If there is a nickname that was commonly used, include it in quotes after the given name. Do not use it in place of a given name and do not enclose it in brackets.

Example: Hector "Granpaw" BROWN

- If a person is known by more than one name (due to adoption, name change, etc.) then include the alternate name or names in brackets after the surname, preceded by a.k.a.

Example: Bernard SCHWARZ (a.k.a. Tony CURTIS)

- Include alternate spellings when you find them. Record the alternate usage first followed by the 'more usual' spelling.

Example: Martin ROWLAND/ROLLAND

- Use notes when you can. For example, if a female has a maiden name the same as her husband's surname, make a note of that so that you will remember this when you come back to this couple.

Recording Dates

Some important conventions

- Use the accepted European standard of DAY, MONTH (spelled out) and four digit YEAR.

Example: 30 June 1993

- Americans are used to entering dates using a number format, which leads to confusion.

Example: 02/01/01 – is it February 1 or January 2?

- Spell months out, but there are standard abbreviations you can use. June and July are often not abbreviated.
Examples: Jan. Feb. Mar. Apr. May Jun. (or June) Jul. (or July) Aug. Sept. Oct. Nov. Dec.
- If you only have an approximate date, add "about" (abt.) or "circa" (ca. or c.).
Examples: c. 1851, ca. 1873, abt November 1881
- Also use before (bef.) or after (aft.) a specific date, for instance when you know someone was still living at some time, or was born after a certain date
Example: aft. 12 Jan. 1880, Example: bef. 9 Apr. 1881
- If you can, narrow it down to a specific time span. For instance, if you know the date a will was signed and the date it was recorded or went to probate, it's reasonable to assume a death between those dates.
Example: bet. 3 Apr. 1869 - 12 Jun. 1870
- If you find a date which could be interpreted more than one way, record enter it exactly as it is written and give your interpretation in square brackets [] following the original.
Example: 02/03/71 [2 Mar. 1871]

Recording Places

The general rule of thumb when entering place names into genealogical records is to record place names from smallest to largest location (i.e. town/locality, county/parish/district, state/province, country). You may choose to leave off the country if it is the one in which you reside and the one where the majority of your research lies, but you may want to at least make a note of this in your files. The breakdown of these locations will vary by country. Here are a few examples:

Springburn, Glasgow, Lanarkshire, Scotland
(Village/Hamlet/Farm/Area/District, Town/City; County, Country)

Calluragh, Inchicronan, Clare, Munster, Ireland
(Townland, Parish, County, Province, Country)

If you have additional place name details, feel free to include them. Just be sure to make a note of what it is. For example, you could add the name of the barony (Upper Bunratty) to the above location details for Calluragh, Ireland.

Many paper pedigree charts and even some computer programs do not include enough room to record full place names. Abbreviations may certainly be used as long as they are the ones in standard use. For example:

Co. (County)
Par. (Parish)
Twp. (Township)

Check out this very useful List of Genealogical Abbreviations from Rootsweb for more commonly seen abbreviations (<http://www.rootsweb.com/~rigenweb/abbrev.html>).

Country and place names usually have accepted variations as well. The Roots Surname List of Country Abbreviations gives three-letter abbreviations for countries and for the counties and other subdivisions of many countries (<http://helpdesk.rootsweb.com/help/abbrev1.html>).

If you only know the town or city in which an event occurred, then you should consult a gazetteer to find the county, parish, province, etc. There are also many online sources from which you can obtain information on the county or province in which a town or city is now located. See <http://www.geo.ed.ac.uk/scotgaz/scotland.html>

Population changes, wars and other historic events have caused location boundaries to change over time. It may be something as simple as a town that no longer exists or has changed names or something a little more complex such as a town that was originally part of one country and is now part of another. It is very important to know the history of the area in which you are researching so that you will be able to make educated guesses as to where to find the records for a given time period. When recording a place name for an event, you should always record the locality as it was situated at the time of the event. Then, if space permits, you may also include the information for the locality as it exists today.

Example: Beaufort Co. (now Pitt Co.), NC

If you aren't sure of a location, but you have records that suggest the most likely alternative (i.e. if you know where an ancestor is buried, you may make the assumption that he probably died in that locality), then you can record the place as a "probable."

Example: prob. St. Michael, Bristol, Gloucestershire, England

Keeping records the Strathclyde way!

- Write everything down!
- Use a hardback A4 bound notebook
- Make full use of Research Calendars and Source Summary Sheets
- Keep one (extended) family in a ring binder with:
 - **Pedigree/Ancestral charts**
 - **Family Group Sheets**
 - **Births**
 - **Marriages**
 - **Deaths**
 - **Censuses**
 - **Wills & Testaments abstracts**
 - **Newspaper clippings etc.**
 - **Plastic wallets for documents**
 - **Plastic wallets for photographs**

Or if you have a filing cabinet, you could have a hanging folder for each category.

In each category, file by date first. This means you will not have to make copies of records to file under each name mentioned in the record. You can use your pedigree and ancestral charts and your family group sheets to find out the date of an event and thus where you can find the record in your folders.