

Comparing Genealogy (Family Tree) Software & Choosing a program that's right for you...

The two fundamental requirements for choosing software are as follows:

- A. the program should allow you to record all data that you discover during your research, including conflicting data for the same event, and
- B. you should be able to document where each piece of information that you record was obtained, ie. add a source!

Some Key Features are:

Data Integrity. The program should not create data automatically. If the program adds data such as a 'married name,' the user should have control over the process.

Data Recording — Names. Adequate space and fields should be available for recording names and there should be a means to record all name variants a person might use in his/her life.

Data Recording — Dates. All standard date entries should be accepted and the user should be able to choose the form in which dates are displayed in the program.

Data Recording — Roles. Many events in your database will have more than one participant. Some programs now have tools to link all of those persons to that event and to allow each differing role to be output to narrative reports.

Multiple Parents. Programs should allow linking a child to not only their natural parents but also to adopted parents and handling other non-traditional relationships.

Multimedia. There should be provisions for linking multimedia objects (photos, sound, video) to individuals and events and to be able to incorporate those images into reports.

Source Documentation. You need to record the source of any information that you enter into your database to provide substantiation for your research and to tell other researchers where they can locate the data that you are reporting. Programs should include the ability to record citation detail that links the event to the source and to record the repository where the source was obtained.

Evidence Evaluation (Surety). A provision should exist to enter a surety value so that you can record your judgment about the validity of any data that you enter.

Research Log. Your program should give you the ability to record tasks as you discover what needs to be done and to print a useful report to aid your next trip to a repository.

Data Import. Some programs provide direct import from the databases produced by other software packages and every major genealogy program supports GEDCOM version 5.5 (GEnealogical Data COMmunication), a standard developed by the Family History Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church) to facilitate exchanging computerized genealogical data.

Data Export. GEDCOM data transfer is somewhat limited to only data that fits the specification. Since the higher-end programs can record data for which no explicit provision is made in the GEDCOM standard, there may be limits as to how much of the data that you record in one program can be transferred to another via GEDCOM.

Downloading / Uploading Data to Web Based Services. More and more data sharing and creation of family trees is happening online. This is truly the way genealogy is going. Be sure your software program will allow you to interface with at least one online data resource such as Ancestry or FamilySearch. You can store your family trees online which acts as a data back up in case of your home computer failing. Always check sharing and privacy settings if you do this.

Websites for reviews on Genealogy Software

Ancestry.com's Message Boards on Genealogy Software:

<http://boards.ancestry.com/topics.software/mb.ashx>

Post reviews, questions and answers. Very up to date information, with on going reviews, etc. Good place to look for answers if you have a problem with your software!

Genealogy Software Reviews

<http://www.gensoftreviews.com/>

Great website with up to date reviews on loads of genealogy software packages. Reviews are added by users and you can filter your search by free/purchase/subscription packages; by Windows/Mac/Unix or handheld device software; by overall rating and more. Reviews a total of 938 programs as of January 26, 2016.

Genealogy Software Review

<http://genealogy-software-review.toptenreviews.com/>.

This website is a company offering reviews. There is a handy and easy to read table of what the top 10 genealogy software packages offer. However, there are no in-depth user reviews here; best used in conjunction with the websites above...

Programs that people in Strathclyde classes have used are:

RootsMagic Essentials - <http://www.rootsmagic.com/essentials/>. A **free** genealogy program that contains many core features from the award-winning RootsMagic family tree software.

Family Historian - <http://genealogy-software-review.toptenreviews.com/family-historian-review.html>. A very powerful program which allows you to create your own search terms for your data. Many of our tutors and alumni use this but it has a bit of a steep learning curve.

Family Tree Maker is what I use and it has its good points and frustrations like any software. FTM integrates with Ancestry.co.uk and you can easily download information, images and citations to your family tree from Ancestry. However, this software will no longer be supported after Dec 2016.

Legacy 8.0 - On the computers in the computer lab, we've loaded up Legacy, the standard version of which can be freely downloaded at: <http://www.legacyfamilytree.com/Index.asp>. You can upgrade to the deluxe version for \$29.95 (as of 25 Jan 2016). Legacy integrates well with the FamilySearch website and is a very good program.

Another vendor website worth checking out is <https://genealogysupplies.com/product/Windows-Genealogy-Software/intro>.