

Organizing Your Genealogical Research

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Objective:

To put your research materials where you can access them and find what you are looking for with minimum effort.

One size does not fit all.

We all have different:

- Portability needs
- Budgets
- Space available
- Ways of Thinking
- Amounts of Data

Decisions...

Decisions...

Decisions...

Method

- Paper
 - File Folders
 - Binders
- Electronic
- Hybrid – Combination any of the above

File Folders

You can store your paper research in File Folders. File folders can be organized in:

- File Cabinets
- Cardboard Storage Boxes
- Plastic Storage Boxes made for file storage
- Use both Hanging folders and manila folders



Binders

You can store your paper research records in Binders.

- Binders are available in various thicknesses
- You can use dividers with tabs to separate sections
- You can find binders for legal size documents
- You can put documents, pictures and disks in plastic sleeves
- If you choose to put your documents in sheet protectors, make sure they are of archival quality.

Electronic

- You can keep your research on a genealogy website: Ancestry.com, FamilySearch.com, MyHeritage.com
- You can use a stand-alone genealogy program: Family Tree Maker, Family Tree Builder, RootsMagic.
- You can scan your documents and store them in files.

COLOR

COLOR

COLOR

Colors

- Use colors to quickly find what you are looking for.
- File folders are available in various colors
- Divider are available with different color tabs
- Apple products allow you to change the color of electronic file folders. An add-on, such as Folder Marker Free , will allow you to do this on PC computers

System

- By system, I am talking about the filing hierarchy that you are using. Everyone has a different way of thinking of things, so pick a filing system that matches your logic.
- If you are using a hybrid method, make sure that your filing system is consistent across methods.
- There are many systems that you can use so the following should be considered only as suggestions.

Types of Systems

- Surname
- Couple
- Family Line
- Numerical

Surname

- All information for a particular surname is filed together
- Might be unwieldly if there are a lot of individuals with the same surname
- Can be sub-divided by location
- Can be sub-divided by record type

Couple

- All papers relating to the couple and their children are stored together
- When the child marries, the new couple gets their own file
- A family group sheet or 4 generation tree can be placed at the beginning of the file for reference
- The Ahnentfel number for the couple can also be referenced

Family Line

- All records for a particular family line are stored together
- Most common method is to use four family lines, one for each grandparent
- Within each family line records can be further broken down by surname or couple

Numerical - Ahnentafel

- You are number 1
- Your father is number 2
- Your mother is number 3
- The father in the previous generation is double the number of the person
- The mother in the previous generation is the father's number plus 1 (paternal grandfather is number 4, paternal grandmother is number 5)

Sub-Divisions

Records can be further broken down by:

- Record Type
- Location
- Event

Family Group Sheet



NATIONAL
GENEALOGICAL
SOCIETY®

Family Group Sheet

Name and/or Date	Place
Husband:	
Born:	
Married:	
Died:	
Buried:	
Other Marriage:	
Husband's Father:	Husband's Mother:
Wife:	
Born:	
Died:	
Buried:	
Other Marriage:	
Wife's Father:	Wife's Mother:
1st Child:	Male: <input type="checkbox"/> Female: <input type="checkbox"/>
Born:	
Died:	
Buried:	
Spouse:	Date of Marriage:
2nd Child:	Male: <input type="checkbox"/> Female: <input type="checkbox"/>
Born:	

4 Generation Tree



NATIONAL GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY®

Four Generation Pedigree Chart

YOUR FATHER

Name	
Birth Date	
Birth Place	
Death Date	
Death Place	
Marriage Date	
Marriage Place	

YOU

Name	
Birth Date	
Birth Place	
Marriage Date	
Marriage Place	

YOUR MOTHER

Name	
Birth Date	
Birth Place	
Death Date	
Death Place	

PATERNAL GRANDFATHER

Name	
Birth Date	
Birth Place	
Death Date	
Death Place	
Marriage Date	
Marriage Place	

PATERNAL GRANDMOTHER

Name	
Birth Date	
Birth Place	
Death Date	
Death Place	

MATERNAL GRANDFATHER

Name	
Birth Date	
Birth Place	
Death Date	
Death Place	
Marriage Date	
Marriage Place	

MATERNAL GRANDMOTHER

Name	
Birth Date	
Birth Place	
Death Date	
Death Place	

PATERNAL GREAT-GRANDFATHER

Name	
Birth Date / Place	
Death Date / Place	

PATERNAL GREAT-GRANDMOTHER

Name	
Birth Date / Place	
Death Date / Place	

PATERNAL GREAT-GRANDFATHER

Name	
Birth Date / Place	
Death Date / Place	

PATERNAL GREAT-GRANDMOTHER

Name	
Birth Date / Place	
Death Date / Place	

MATERNAL GREAT-GRANDFATHER

Name	
Birth Date / Place	
Death Date / Place	

MATERNAL GREAT-GRANDMOTHER

Name	
Birth Date / Place	
Death Date / Place	

MATERNAL GREAT-GRANDFATHER

Name	
Birth Date / Place	
Death Date / Place	

MATERNAL GREAT-GRANDMOTHER

Name	
Birth Date / Place	
Death Date / Place	

Back-Up

- You can back-up your paper files by scanning them and saving them electronically.
- If you scan documents Use standard formats. Use .jpg for pictures and .pdf for other documents.
- Back-up your digital files on a separate drive, disks or in the cloud.

Backing – Up you Ancestry.com Data

- If you create a GEDCOM (.ged) file it only contains the data and sourcing in your tree. It does not contain any media images.
- If you have saved images to your tree, they are in the gallery of the ancestor they reference.
- You will need to download them separately if you want to save them.
- Family Tree Maker brings over the media images from Ancestry.com.

Research Log

- Use a Research Log to document where you have looked for information on your ancestors
- The log should show those sources where you didn't find any information as well as those where you did
- There are many research log templates available – Pick one that works for you
- The following is just one example:

https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/img_auth.php/5/50/Research_Log.pdf

Portable Research Kit

- Smartphone or Tablet and charger
- Research Log Forms
- Traveling file folder
- Notebook and pen
- Cash/change for copies
- Photo ID
- List of Contacts
- Sturdy bag to carry it all

Other Useful Tools

- Research Forms
- https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Genealogy_Research_Forms
- Calibre to organize e-books
- <https://calibre-ebook.com/download>
- Flickr to organize pictures and scanned images
- <https://www.flickr.com/>

Questions?