

First Steps in Beginning Family History Research

1. **Start with what you have.**

Make a list of everything you have, including all certificates of birth, christening, marriage and death; keep and review obituaries, photographs, letters, cards, passports, newspaper clippings.

2. **Talk** to living family members early, and BEFORE it's too late!

Take every opportunity to ask questions. Do informal interviews of senior family members. Keep a tape recorder at hand and turn it on whenever family members gather.

3. Begin with one **family line** (one parent of your mother or father) that will be easy to work with.

The chosen line may be easier because: members live near you, the search area is familiar, you know the language, a family record has already been started, or work has been done on people from that area.

4. **Organize** your records early in the process.

Record places you have searched, even if you didn't find anything. (Keep an up-to-date research log.) A binder and loose pages are recommended. Eventually you will need a binder for each family line.

5. Take the most **direct** route - site visits and writing letters comes much later.

A lot of information can be obtained while in your own home town, do all that you can locally before you plan a trip to visit areas where ancestors lived or write letters that are purely "fishing expeditions."

6. **Postpone** choosing a home **computer program** until you have some experience and know what each of them offers.

There are many genealogy computer programs available so look at several before you choose. Some are even capable of producing a book with index etc.

7. Use the **Internet** with knowledge; random searches are not a good use of your time.

Carefully choose the sites you visit and bookmark the ones that show possibilities. Message and chat rooms are not always productive but some people enjoy spending their free time this way.

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