

### *Top Ten Beginning Your Genealogy Tips*

1. **Write Down What You Know.** There are a lot of great pedigree chart templates online. Always begin with yourself, then your parents, and grandparents. If you know the next generations, write them down as far back as you can. Write birth dates, marriage dates, death dates, and notes on these people as well.
2. **Gather questions you'd like to answer.** Where did Mom and Dad meet? Where are such and such buried? Is there a picture of great grandma?
3. **Ask your relatives what they know.** Ask your parents about their parents and grandparents as well as your grandparents about their parents and grandparents. Beginning your family genealogy is a perfect time to start recording or writing down stories. Oral histories are perfect records to begin your discoveries as well as great resources for your family as well as historians in the future. Many stories and tales of long ago are lost within two generations of them being told, as one generation thinks they are important and the next might not.
4. **Simply connect with other genealogists.** Many counties have their own genealogical and/or historical societies. These societies are made up of members, just like you. They began their genealogy for a reason and in many cases, were taught by people who did the same thing. Experienced members who have been researching for a while, usually help pass along tidbit information, help you find hints, and even connect you with family. Societies also have genealogical and historical collections as well as workshops that can guide you along the way.
5. **Search online.** There are tons of free genealogical information online these days. Genealogists use rootsweb to post many of their own family websites as well as wordpress. In addition to these pages, familysearch.org is a free user-friendly site that has many national and federal records online for free. Ancestry and Fold3 are paid websites, but have their advantages when needing more advanced materials such as military records and other information.
6. **Visit family heritage sites.** Take time and stroll through the cemetery where your grandparents are buried. In many cases, more than just your grandparents are there. Visit the old homeplace, or the town in which your family is from. Understanding locations and family relation, might open doors to the past you haven't thought of before.
7. **Visit the Courthouse and/or Archives.** Township, City, and County records are kept at the local level. In many cases, state records such as some birth and death records, are also kept at county level. Know what you are looking for, is a good technique in researching at a courthouse and/or archive. Knowing what records should be available is a key. Research when different types of records were created. An example is Tennessee Death Records were kept at county level from 1908 to 1912, with it moving to the state level in 1914, and no records being kept in 1913.
8. **Check your local newspaper's archives.** Many newspapers are on microfilm and can be accessed at local libraries. Newspapers tell the story of the community, some good and some

bad news. Obituaries are a key find in these pages. Obits tell a story about your ancestor in a different way. Some tells a lot, others tell very little.

9. **Organization is key.** As you research, not only try to remember everything, but organize your information. Whether digital or in print, research should be properly cited and documented. Organizing papers and finds of your ancestor could help unlock the brick wall that keeps you from passing through. Write down questions on these pages, so when you come back to them later, you can either find the answer in another source, or reframe the idea. Three ring notebooks work well for keeping families together.

10. **And Finally... Research the Neighbors...** I have always been told in my own genealogical research and through my own experiences to always research the neighbors. People tend to move in groups, not alone. In the past, wagon trains of ethnic groups moved together. If your family was of the German descent, they probably moved with the German or Lutheran groups. Neighbors in one place, typically, stay neighbors in the new place.