



Getting Started in FamilySearch

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Introduction

FamilySearch, which was founded in 1894 as the Genealogical Society of Utah, is dedicated to preserving the records of the family of humankind. Our purpose is simple: help people connect with their ancestors by providing easy access to historical records and allow people to work together to document and preserve their shared family histories.

The goal of Family Tree is to gather the most accurate, sourced, and complete genealogy of humankind and to make this information freely available to everyone. By sharing this information, we hope to eliminate duplicate research and allow those who are interested in family history to focus their efforts on finding new ancestors. Because FamilySearch has been preserving information for over 100 years, you can trust that this documented genealogy will continue to be available for years to come.

Getting Started in FamilySearch

When you come to FamilySearch.org there are some things you can do without creating an account, but most features require that you are signed in. For example, you can search historical records for deceased persons without being authenticated, but you cannot go into Family Tree. You can see a memory without being authenticated, but you cannot add or modify any memories (photos, stories, or documents).

Register for FamilySearch Account

So the first thing you need to do is register. What you will need to register with FamilySearch:

- An email account you can access or a cell phone number. You will need to respond to an email or text message to activate your account.
- Your birthdate, gender, and country, in case you have forgotten.
- If you are a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, you will need your LDS Church membership number. We use this to help build your tree.

Click on the Free Account button at the top right and start your process. Follow the promptings along the way. Here are a few things you may wonder about:

- What is a username? This is a unique name you will use to login to FamilySearch in the future.
- What is a contact name? This is also a unique name from all other users. It is the name that will be shown to everyone on the system when they see a change or addition that you have made.
- Why do you ask for Male or Female? This is so we can put you in the proper place on the pedigree chart. A standard genealogical pedigree chart has specific slots for male and

females in a family tree.

- Why do you ask for my country? This is so we can comply with the privacy and other laws that certain countries require us to follow.
- Why do you ask for my birthdate? This is to verify your age so we can follow the proper laws of your country for minors and adults.
- Why do you ask for my LDS Church membership number? So we can automatically build your line into the single Family Tree using information from membership records. And to verify that you are an LDS Church member and should see temple information.

So follow the steps and verify your email or mobile number to activate your account. Now we are off to Family Tree!!

Starting your Family Tree Line

Now you want to start your Family Tree so you can begin to experience the discovery of your family history. First you need to know that Family Tree is a shared common tree. The living you enter are private to you, but the deceased are shared with all your relatives so you can all work together on family history. So changes you make to a deceased ancestor can very possibly impact your relatives' lines in the system as well.

Let's get started. Just Click on the Family Tree menu item, when you do, one of the following will automatically happen:

- If you are LDS, then the system will take information from your membership record and construct your tree; or
- The system will take information from your registration and create a tree person for you, with no tree.

Now that you are in Family Tree the goal is to take the living that you know about and get that entered to get you to your deceased ancestors. Because of privacy laws Family Tree cannot provide hints or records for living people (although some states and countries do – and if so, we do to), so you need to enter some deceased ancestors to get things going.

Start entering people at the end of your lines (Father, Mother, etc.) until you have entered some deceased ancestors. When you are entering new people into Family Tree there are only three things you need: name, sex, and living or dead. If you don't know your grandfather's birthday or death date, that is okay. Enter his name, sex and if he is dead or not, then you can go back later and fill in the rest.


Make sure you don't mark someone as deceased unless you know they are! Marking a person deceased will make them visible to all FamilySearch users.

When you add someone in your line the system will automatically check to see if this person already exists in the tree. If it finds a match a list will be given. Carefully check the list and if your person is there – select them. Otherwise, add them as new. Hopefully if your ancestor is already entered into the system, this will bring an entire tree of that ancestor with them.

Remember when you make changes to a deceased ancestor, this can affect your relatives' lines as well because we all share the same tree. We share the same tree so we don't have to keep

researching the same ancestor over and over and when we update add memories or other additions, all are benefited.

Helps

Realize that there is help on tip symbol on many pages in Family Tree. The tip looks like  a lightbulb and is found in the bottom right corner. Clicking on this will open up a set of topics that will help you with what you can do on the page you're on. Clicking a topic will give you instructions.

Got To the Dead Now What?

So now there are several things you can do to adorn, improve, and grow your tree! Let's talk about some of these activities:

Memories

Memories are the images, stories, and documents that you have about your living and deceased ancestors. Memories are a great way to enhance and make your relatives real. And FamilySearch will preserve these memories indefinitely. Make sure you consider what type of memories you want to have for future generations and be wise in selecting those that would be most beneficial. You can add these memories to the system and to your ancestors in a couple of ways:

- Upload them to your Gallery. You can go to your Gallery under the Memories menu and upload folders and files of images and documents. We accept jpg, tif, bmp, png, mp3, m4a, and pdf files up to 15 MB. You can multi-select on your computer and drag them into the gallery and the system will upload them. Files you upload can then be attached to a person in Family Tree.
- Upload them on an Ancestor. You can also go to one of the persons in your tree (living or dead) and click on the Memories tab. From there you can also click to upload memories for that specific person. Memories uploaded on a person will appear in your gallery.

Sources

Deceased person information in Family Tree is editable by all users and when you add a deceased person you need to show why your answers (we call them conclusions) are valid. These can be proven by providing sources. Sources are references to official government documents (e.g., census), testimonials, journals, or information from other publications.

When you add a deceased person into Family Tree, the system begins to start searching through the 5+ billion names we have indexed against FamilySearch records to see if we can find any records that might be about your ancestor. We present them on the person page as Hints. When you click on a hint we show you the person in the record and how it matches up with the person in the tree. You can then examine this carefully, and if they are about the same person, attach the source to the person and possibly update the information on your ancestor from the record. This is what genealogy is about – finding information on various records and coming to a conclusion on the correct information, such as the birthdate.

Three Things To Always Be Doing In Family Tree

There are three things you should always be doing in Family Tree.

One - Explore

You should always take some time when you come to Family Tree to just explore your tree and see what is out there. Some of the most amazing and interesting things about your ancestors are discovered as you wander around your line looking at your deceased ancestors and their descendants and discover what other relatives have added to your common ancestor.

It is exciting when you wander around and find some interesting information. For example, one of my ancestors helped to build the St. George Temple and waited until it was complete to marry his sweetheart. Someone uploaded their 50th wedding anniversary picture and it was amazing to see them.

So, spend some time, each time you come, to just discover new things about your ancestors.

Two - Improve

When you come across an ancestor – improve it. As you are wandering around if you come across an ancestor that has a hint, then resolve the hint and add a source to that ancestor. If an ancestor has a data problem, then fix the problem.

If you have a memory about this person, upload it. If you have a story about this person, then take the time right then to go and add your personal story about that person. Spend some time, each time you come, to discover new things and update some ancestors along the way.

Three – Fix Problems

As you are exploring your tree you will find places where there are oddities. Birth after death, a person with 4 parents, a duplicate out there, and other harder problems. When you get to one of these persons take your time. Look for records to sort out the real answers. Work on this ancestor and their family for a while. When you get a little stuck, take a break. Come back another day and do a bit of One, Two, then get back to Three.

As you continue to discover new things, improve as you go, and solve those harder problems you are constantly rewarded and will always feel successful. Because each of these three activities are wins.

Conclusion

Get started in FamilySearch and Family Tree. Start your line, discover interesting things about your ancestors – come to know them and understand them. Often their struggles will give you a new perspective on your struggles. Family history is about discovering who you are and where you came from. It can bring great joy and help with life's lessons. Continue to come and discover, add, and fix your ancestors with your family and other relatives and your family history will become precious to you and your family.