



Roots Tech 2023

March 2, 3, 4, 2023

Free

200 Online classes

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REBOOT YOUR RESEARCH

TIPS TO ORGANIZE AND REFOCUS YOUR RESEARCH



YOU HAVE BEEN AWAY FROM YOUR RESEARCH AND WANT TO RESTART IT.

- ❑ Do not just plunge in and start checking those hints.
- ❑ Focus your research so you do not waste time.

FIND OUT WHAT INFORMATION YOU ALREADY HAVE

- Create a timeline. A timeline can be as simple or as elaborate as you want it to be.
 - Focus on one person at a time.
 - List the major events in a person's life:
 - Birth
 - Marriage
 - Residence
 - Birth of Children
 - Death

WORKING WITH INFORMATION YOU MAY ALREADY HAVE

- You might have information on military service, immigration, or the purchase of land if applicable.
- Include the date of the event and location
- Mark if you have a source citation for every event.

ANALYZE YOUR TIMELINE

- Look for gaps of information in your facts. For example, you may be missing the date of their marriage.
- Look for inconsistencies in your timeline. For example, the date of immigration is after the family is noted in a Census. They can not be in the U.S. before they sailed here. More research is needed.
- Look for any event that does not have a source citation.
- Create a list of events that have missing information, are inconsistent, or do not have a source citation.

CREATE RESEARCH GOALS

- Now you know what information you have, what inconsistencies exist, and what information has been documented.
- The next step is to create a list of specific goals for your research. Creating goals allow you to focus your research and to use your time effectively. Instead of thinking that you need more information about Grandpa Pete, you should be thinking that I need to find out the dates he served in the military or when he moved the family to California.
- Start with the simplest goal. The more current the information is, the easier it is to find it. Also search for information on events that occurred in the United States before researching overseas.
- Find the source citations that you are missing.

RESEARCH LOG

- Create a research log and use it.
 - The purpose of a research log is to document where you have sought information and when.
 - Using a research log prevents repeated visits to certain sites, thus wasting time.

EVALUATING THE INFORMATION

- Now you have your specific goals, you can start researching. As you find new information, you want to evaluate it.
 - Does the information make sense and reasonably fits with your previous information?
 - Do the dates make sense?
 - People did not get married at age 8.
 - Women did not have children when they were in their 60's.
 - People did not live to be 110.

DEALING WITH CONTRADICTIONARY INFORMATION

- Sometimes, you may find contradictory pieces of information.
 - It could be as simple as differences in the spelling of a name or a small difference in dates.
 - It could be as big as one published family history contradicting another family history.
 - Further research often can correct the difference or at least explain the difference.
 - Sometime this conflict can not be reconciled. Note it in your research.

SOURCE CITATIONS

- Make sure you have a source citation related to your information.
 - Make sure you have an authoritative source relating to your information such as a census record, birth certificate, or a passenger list. Most genealogy programs automatically input the source citation for you but make sure that it is there.
 - If the information comes from a family story, note that but continue to research to verify the story.
 - Someone else's family tree is not a quality source. Look at the citations.
 - Beware of someone else's interpretation of the information. Check for yourself.
 - Never assume that a "hint" applies to your person.

THE GENEALOGICAL STANDARD OF PROOF

- You want your research to meet the Standard of Proof.
 - There should be reasonably exhaustive research with multiple records using both primary and secondary sources.
 - If a single source is used, determine its reliability.
 - There is a citation for all sources.
 - There is careful analysis and correlation of the information. Do the facts fit together with other facts on the family tree? Does it make sense?
 - Have all discrepancies been resolved?
 - If there is a troublesome fact, show how you have drawn your conclusion.

"SPELING DUSN'T COWNT"

1 Back in the day folks couldn't spell and many could barely write, so how a name sounds is more



important than how it's spelled. Use wild card or Soundex searches to help find variant spellings of names.

ASSUME NOTHING

2 Check all your facts, don't assume that any particular document is right or wrong, and always try to find other independent sources to corroborate your facts as much as possible. Verify, verify, verify. For instance, don't assume that:

- your ancestors were married
- census information is accurate
- vital (or other) records were correct
- your ancestor's life events were recorded
- ancestors had the same name as their enslaver

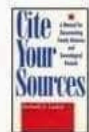
USE DISCRETION

3 **Never lie** in your genealogy reports, but use discretion when reporting family information, especially when it involves living relatives.

ALWAYS DOCUMENT YOUR SOURCES, NO MATTER HOW MUCH THEY CONTRADICT ONE ANOTHER

4 Over time, you will compile more data and those once seemingly contradictory pieces of evidence may prove to be just the pieces of the puzzle you need to prove or disprove your theory. Be consistent as you cite your sources. There are standard citation formats, but

even if you just make up your own format for listing your sources, be consistent with it. You want your descendants to be able to retrace your steps, so you always cite your sources.

**MOST DATES ARE APPROXIMATE**

5 It's okay to state that someone was born "abt. 1845," or died "May 1915" if you don't have an exact date or where various documents have different dates. Which date is "correct?" They all are.

**IF UNSURE, SAY SO**

6 Future researchers will thank you for being honest if you simply say that you cannot prove a specific fact, yet you "suspect" such and such is true. Don't fudge the facts. Ever.

**YOU CANNOT DO IT ALL ONLINE**

7 Yes, we love doing research online and there's nothing better than using the computer to find new sources, view digital images of original documents and even connect with relatives. For genealogists, the internet will never replace the wonderful work of libraries, county courthouses, archives, and historical societies. Do as much as you can online, then turn off your computer and hit the bricks!

**JUST BECAUSE IT'S ONLINE DOESN'T MEAN IT'S TRUE**

8 The internet is a wonderful thing but it's filled with oodles of bad information. Don't make the mistake of believing anything you find online at face value. Verify against other sources, even if you paid for the information you found online. Consult the original source whenever possible.

PASS ALONG YOUR RESEARCH

No matter how many decades you spend researching your family, your research will never be done. Plan on passing along your research to the next generation's



researchers. Leave excellent notes, cite all your sources, explain your shorthand ... in essence, leave your research the way you'd have liked to have found it.

DON'T DIE WITH YOUR STORIES STILL IN YOU

10 Giving credit to Dr. Wayne Dyer for his "Don't die with your music still in you," we want to remind you to tell the stories as completely and as accurately as possible. Genealogy isn't about just doing research. Genealogy is about telling the stories and ensuring that your ancestor's legacies live on for generations to come. Without the stories, the research won't do anyone much good. The legacy of your ancestors rests in your capable hands. Doing the research is fine, but always remember that you have been chosen to **tell their stories**.

**DNA IS NOT A TRUMP CARD**

11 DNA is just one of **many** possible sources of information you can use to verify or deny a relationship. Human error occurs when the results are transcribed, thereby providing false information. DNA results should **always** be used in concert with other sources.

ANYTHING YOU POST ONLINE WILL BE "BORROWED"

12 You need to accept the fact that any family information you post online will be "borrowed" or outright stolen, and you will probably not get credit for all your hard work. This is the nature of the beast... the internet. Get over it.

SPREAD THE WORD

You have our permission to use/publish these *Golden Rules* as much as you like. Just give us credit for them, okay?

LINKS

- Click the links below to access files used in this presentation.
 - Click [here](#) for the Research Log
 - Click [here](#) for the Golden Rules of Genealogy