

Beginning your Family History - Do It Like the Pros

I Preparation before starting - two questions

1. Where am I going to keep my physical stuff?
(books, pictures, scrapbooks, albums, imp docs)
Set up computer folders & sub folders for small items
Boxes, notebooks, book shelf or closet (everything in one place)
2. Where do I keep my genealogical information?
 - Internet ? Many great places to post family trees and other information
Reasons to use an internet tree:
 - Other people can see it
 - Others can add their information to it
 - Less work - Just one place to keep updated
 - Sources and new information automatically located
 - Personal database?
Reasons to use a personal database:
 - Need a place to keep your incomplete information, unverified sources, personal notes, questions, etc.
 - Some posted trees can be changed by others
 - May be some personal things you don't want to make public
 - Easy access to information on your computer - no internet required
 - Can make quick notes to help you remember what you are doing and help you stay organized
 - Personal database programs have a personal To Do list
 - Easily change/update/correct new information as you find it.
 - Basic (all you need), simple programs available at no cost
 - Completely private--no one can see your information

II Getting Started

Start with yourself

Complete a Pedigree Chart* with you as #1, and Family Group Sheets* for each family on your pedigree (HINT: prepare ahead of time)

Get information and record everything you can from your family and available information

III **Research Cycle** - The proven way to be effective, efficient and accurate

1. Identify known family information (gather, ask, interview)
(Use personal database or Pedigree and FG sheets to record information you find)
2. Decide what information is missing
3. Use a Research Log to make a plan for finding missing information
4. Obtain and search the record (find the record, search carefully)
5. Use the information (
Enter into your personal records and/or post with sources if sure it is correct)

IV **Research Log*** - The key to successful research

HINT: This may seem unnecessary at first; but be assured it will save time, duplicated effort and frustration in the long run.

1. Use **one form** for each person or each search
2. Date and record your **plan** for getting the information (where you will search, who you will call, or where you will get more info)
3. **Implement** your plan, Date and record all progress on your log
4. **Enter** information you have found into your personal database or posted tree
5. **Go to next step** of your plan or begin a new Research Log

* Blank forms are available at: MesaFSL.org/Forms & Aids Forms. (Note: blank paper forms or check interactive form button for computer version)

Additional Help

Mesa FS Library Fabulous Four (Where to search)

FamilySearch.org
Ancestry.com
Find A Grave.com

Google (search for names and places)

Research techniques (how to search)

Tutorials & on-line classes (FamilySearch.org/get help/learning Center)

Mesa FSL.org: Start your FH, Search suggestions, Webinars

FamilySearch Wiki (familysearch.org/get help/Wiki)

