

Choosing Genealogy Services & Software

Genealogy has rapidly evolved from a paper-based hobby into a multi-billion-dollar industry. Family History Researchers can now choose from a wide range of products and services designed to create family trees, locate records of interest and identify DNA relationships.

This presentation will provide a high-level overview of the capabilities offered by Online Genealogical Services, Genetic DNA Testing Services and Family Tree Software providers with the goal of helping participants make informed choices from the many products and services that are currently available.

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Genealogy Databases

A collection of information of interest to a genealogist.

Genealogical Tree Software

A collection of information of interest to a genealogist.

Genealogy Tree Software

A tool used to record Names, Dates, Places and relationships

GEDCOM

- **GE**nealogy **D**ata **COM**munication
- A standard file format that allows you to exchange information between different Genealogy Tree Software products
- Images/photographs are NOT included in these transfers

Genetic DNA Services

- They will analyze your DNA sample and identify matches in their database.
- There is a cost associated with the initial analysis of the DNA sample.
- They provide tools and resources that can be used to evaluate matches to others who have tested with that company.

Integrated Genealogy Products

Provides Several Types of Services

- Genealogy Tree Software
- Genealogy Databases
- DNA Testing

Choosing Genealogy Tree Software

Software Review Articles

- <https://www.genealogyexplained.com/best-genealogy-software/>
- <https://hobbyhelp.com/genealogy/best-genealogy-software/>
- <https://www.techradar.com/best/genealogy-tools>
- Traditionally judged on interface, Features, Platform, Cost, Support and Product Enhancements
- Technological innovation has introduced new considerations
 - Where is the data stored?
 - Can it be accessed by Smart Phones and Tablets
- Most Popular Software: RootsMagic11 and Family Tree Maker
 - Mac & Windows versions available
 - Provides access to FamilySearch.org & Ancestry.com records
 - Ongoing upgrades & enhancements
 - Can view information from SmartPhone's & Tablets
 - FamilyTreeMaker has advantages over RootsMagic in this area
- Most Popular Software: RootsMagic8 and Family Tree Maker

RootsMagic11

- Has a good user interface & lots of features
- Provides record hints from:
 - FamilySearch.org
 - Ancestry.com
 - MyHeritage.com
- Cost (December 2025): \$39.95
- SmartPhone/Tablet Support
 - Klutzy
 - Create a File on Your PC
 - Transfer it to Your Device
 - Load it
 - One way only: you cannot make changes to information on your Phone or Tablet.
 - When you update the information on your PC you need to go through the whole file copying process again to update your Phone/Tablet

FamilyTreeMaker 2024

- Also has a good user interface & lots of features
- Provides record hints from:
 - FamilySearch.org
 - Ancestry.com
- Cost (December 2025): \$80
- SmartPhone/Tablet support
 - **TreeVault Cloud Service**
 - Requires TreeVault Cloud ServicesSubscription service
 - Free for one year, then \$24 (Basic) or \$48 (Media Plus) per year

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- Then \$19.95/year
- Creates a continuously updated backup of your information.
- You can access your information using the FTM Connect app (free) on your SmartPhone or Tablet.
- One way only: you cannot make changes to information on your Phone or Tablet
- **Ancestry.com**
 - Will synchronize your information with your tree on Ancestry.com
 - Changes can be made on your PC or online on Ancestry.com
 - Synchronization can be:
 - Automatic (when you end your session)
 - Manual (whenever you want to do it)
 - You can access your information using the Ancestry.com App
 - You can edit information from your SmartPhone or Tablet
 - You do NOT need to have a paid Ancestry.com account to do this

Cloud Family Tree Software

Private Family Tree

- Note that none of the products in this category provide the ability to create genealogical reports.
- **MyHeritage.com**
 - Free tree (up to 250 members)
 - You will need to subscribe to add more.
 - GEDCOM files can be uploaded or downloaded
 - You control access by others
 - 84-million-member trees
- **FindMyPast.com**
 - Primary focus: **British Research**
 - Has exclusive relationships with many archives
 - Exclusive coverage of the 1921 census for England and Wales
 - You can upload/create a tree at no cost
 - But you must pay to view records
- **Ancestry.com**
 - You can create a private tree by creating a free Ancestry Guest Account
 - No credit card information required – just an email address
 - No limits on the size of the tree
 - No time limit
 - You can grant access to others
 - You will get record hints
 - You just won't be able to view them

Single Family Trees

- Defined
 - **Goal:** One unique record for every person

Choosing Genealogy Services & Software

- Universal Access (Account Required)
- Records can be created by anybody
- Records can be viewed by anybody (except living persons)
- Anybody can modify a record (except living persons)
- **WeRelate.org**
 - Based on Mediawiki software developed by the people behind Wikipedia
 - Free
 - 3.2 million Users
 - All information is entirely public
 - Does not allow input of any information for any living person (or anybody born before 1750)
 - Every **Person** has a unique page
 - Each **Family** has a unique page
 - GEDCOMs can be uploaded
 - But they will be reviewed (by you and a moderator)
- **WikiTree.com**
 - Based on Mediawiki software developed by the people behind Wikipedia
 - Free
 - 43 million Users
 - Information for living people can only be viewed by person who created the profile plus anybody they add to their “trusted list”
 - GEDCOMs are not imported: You review and add one at a time.
 - DNA Records from any provider can be linked to your profile.
- **Geni.com**
 - 204 million profiles
 - You can create a personal tree at no cost
 - Restricted GEDCOM uploads accepted
 - You control who can access the profiles you create.
 - You can associate DNA records from FamilyTreeDNA to your profile.
 - Purchased by MyHeritage in 2012
 - Geni trees are maintained separately (so far)
 - Geni provides MyHeritage record hints
 - MyHeritage shows Geni matches in their Theory of Family Relativity matches
- **FamilySearch Family Tree**
 - **1.7 billion** ancestral profiles
 - **20 billion** searchable names and images
 - You can upload & download GEDCOMs
 - Follow people in the to receive Record Hints and notifications of changes.

Genetic DNA Services Details

- **23andMe.com**
 - Test Type: Autosomal
 - Family Tree: No
 - Genealogy is not their primary focus...

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- **LivingDNA.com**
 - Test Types: Autosomal, Mitochondrial & Y DNA
 - Family Tree: No
 - Provides granular information for UK matches
 - Relatively few samples in their database
 - Very slow to roll out promised features
- **FamilyTreeDNA.com**
 - Test Types: Autosomal, Mitochondrial & Y DNA
 - Family Tree: Yes, but it has very limited capabilities
 - Partners with **Geni.com** to incorporate DNA in their trees.
- **MyHeritage.com**
 - Test Type: Autosomal
 - Family Tree:
 - Yes: Required for the **Theory of Family Relativity** - A powerful tool for identifying how you might be related to other DNA matches
- **Ancestry.com**
 - Test Type: Autosomal
 - Family Tree: Yes: Required for **ThruLines** - A powerful tool for identifying how you might be related to other DNA matches
- **Specialty Products**
 - **GEDmatch**
 - Allows users to upload and compare DNA matches from any Genetic DNA Service.
 - Free for basic services, fee for more advanced features.
 - **DNA Painter**
 - Provides a variety of tools and resources used to analyze DNA results.
 - Free for basic services, fee for more advanced features.

Integrated Genealogy Products

- **MyHeritage.com**
 - Global collection of 37 billion historical records
 - Birth, marriage and death records from 60 countries
 - 18 billion pages of historical newspapers, dating back to 1803
 - Millions gravestone inscriptions and photos from around the world
 - Complete U.S. and U.K. censuses (and lots of Norway Census records)
 - Birth, marriage, and death records, military, and immigration records, and more
 - Can pay for a Genealogy Tree, Data or Both
 - Lower fee 1st year
 - Strong emphasis on European Records
 - Provides Theory of Family Relativity (Common Ancestor) suggestions if you have DNA results with a linked tree.
 - Can access information from mobile devices using the MyHeritage app.
- **Ancestry.com**
 - 30 - 60 billion Records

Choosing Genealogy Services & Software

- 100 million Family Trees
- Unlimited size tree is free with an Ancestry Guest Account
- Can access information from mobile devices using the Ancestry app.
- Can have PC/Browser access and mobile device access at no cost.
- Add FamilyTreeMaker 2024 to the PC to create a synchronized tree that can also be accessed (and modified) from mobile devices.
 - Use this as your master database
 - Make GEDCOM copies periodically to update FamilyTreeDNA and MyHeritage DNA.
 - Be careful updating MyHeritageDNA: Do not just delete and replace your tree!
 - For more information:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/myheritageusersgroup/posts/1197520120628026/>
- Try access to the database for free for 2 weeks
- Watch for sales around holidays before purchasing data access.

Recommendations:

- Maintain one Primary Family Tree
 - Always make changes and additions to this tree
 - If you need to create a tree/trees on other platforms make a copy of the information from this tree
 - Periodically update the other trees with copies from the Primary Tree
 - If you get hints and suggestions from other sources update this tree
- Avoid **WeRelate**, **WikiTree**, **Geni** (Single Family Trees) until you see tangible value to working in the environment
- Use **FamilySeach**: It is a fabulous source of records
- Use the Family Search Family Tree as a tool
 - This is NOT a good choice to select for your Primary Family Tree
 - Start with yourself
 - Add the next generation so you can begin to receive record hints
 - Only add additional generations after you have done some research and you are confident about the information you provide

Websites referenced in this presentation

- 23andMe.com - <https://www.23andme.com/>
- Ancestry.com - <https://www.ancestry.com/>
- BillionGraves - <https://billiongraves.com/>
- Cyndi's List - <https://www.cyndislist.com/>
- DNA Painter - <https://dnapainter.com/>
- FamilySearch.org - <https://www.familysearch.org/en/>
- FamilyTreeDNA.com - <https://www.familytreedna.com/>
- FamilyTreeMaker 2019 - <https://www.mackiev.com/ftm/index.html>

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- Find A Grave - <https://www.findagrave.com/>
- GEDmatch.com - <https://www.gedmatch.com/>
- LivingDNA.com - <https://livingdna.com/>
- MyHeritage.com - <https://www.myheritage.com/>
- Newspapers.com - <https://www.newspapers.com/>
- RootsMagic8 - <https://rootsmagic.com/>
- The Genealogy Squad - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/genealogysquad>
- WeRelate.org – https://www.werelate.org/wiki/Main_Page
- Wikipedia: *Comparison of genealogy software* - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_genealogy_software