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HOME LIVING | FAMILY

Trace your Ancestry

Tracing your ancestry is a worthwhile project that will help you come to better understand yourself and your family, and allow you to pass that knowledge on to your children or grandchildren.

Tracing one's roots used to be a much more laborious process, with the need to locate paper records and source documents that were often tricky to find. Modern technology has made it much easier, with the ability to search online databases for records, and even to have a DNA test performed to get insights into one's ancestry going back as much as a thousand of years and be connected with living relatives.

Before you get started, make contact with any family members you're aware of who have researched your family history. There likely exists a cache of your family's documents or even memoirs or existing family trees. If there's any existing information, whoever collected it is likely more than happy to discuss with you the work they've done and how you can get started.

USE AN ONLINE SERVICE
Online services such as 23andMe.com and Ancestry.com use DNA tests to get your



ancestry search started. You can choose to make the results of your test available to others so you can make connections with relatives and learn from their ancestry research, which will help you build your family tree. These paid services provide access to billions of historical records, such as birth, death and Census records, property records, news articles, photos and more.

DO IT YOURSELF

If you're looking for more of a hands-on approach to tracing your ancestry, AncestralFindings.com offers a list of ways to take matters into your own hands. They include visiting relatives and interviewing them, taking a vacation to a place significant to your family's history, organizing family photos, organizing a family reunion, locating a family cemetery and planning a visit, or

making genealogy gifts for family members. Read the list at bit.ly/2VIGFqa.

LEARN THE ROPES

You will need a bit of an education about how to trace your ancestry before you get started. Searching online documents is an art, as even small changes to the phrases you use to search can yield huge differences in results. Learn the basics of Boolean searching. You'll also

need some basic technological savvy, as online genealogy programs use a common file called a GEDCOM file that can be exchanged between programs. Each online platform has its own user interface, so use the site's how-to videos to get started. If you're stuck on a part of your family tree for which you just can't find the data you need, you can even hire an expert to tackle those parts of the project for you.

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