

# How Just One DNA Match Can Help You Find Missing Ancestors in 2025

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## Set a good research goal: (3X greats or closer)

Your genetic 5th cousins and beyond are just not reliable sources for discovering shared ancestors. There are just too many possible relationships.

## Find one match using ethnicity tools at AncestryDNA

If you have a [qualifying subscription](#), you can see your ethnicity results by parent. You will want to figure out which parent is which, and then label them. Review the Journeys by parent to see if there are any that obviously relate to the branch you are trying to research.

If you can find one, we will use the DNA Compare feature to find DNA matches who share that journey, and thus have a good chance of being related to the line we want to research, making them Best Mystery Matches. (See image on following page.)

However, this method of finding matches that matter is fraught with issues, as there are just so many things you can't control, and you are limited to working within one DNA testing company.

Ancestral Journeys 15					
Central Southern England	✓				
Northeastern South West England & Northwestern South East England	✓				
Oxfordshire & West Berkshire Area	✓				
Early Connecticut & New York Settlers	✓		✓	✓	
Southern Ontario, Northern New York & Northern Pennsylvania Settlers	✓		✓	✓	
Eastern South East England	✓				
Greater London to Brighton	✓				
West Sussex & Surrey	✓				
Northern Mid-Atlantic Settlers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

\* This person has chosen to show only journeys you have in common.

## Follow the Plan to identify Best Mystery Matches

The one match you need in The Plan is your **Best Known Match**. Best Known Matches are the best first step to successfully filtering your DNA match list to find your Best DNA Matches - those matches who are most likely going to help you find that missing ancestor.

Your **Best Known Match** is a descendant of the ancestor you want to research through a different line than your own.



## Finding Best Known Matches

You can find Best Known Matches by using the “cheating” tools available at AncestryDNA (called [Thrulines](#)) and MyHeritage DNA (called the [Theory of Family Relativity](#)).

Verify that your Best Known Match is sharing an appropriate amount of DNA with you, given your genealogical relationship, by [comparing genetics v. genealogy](#).

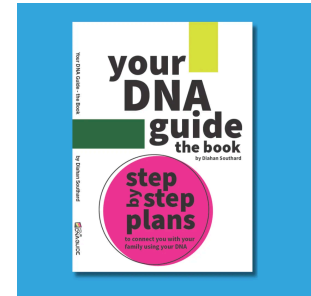
**Need more Best Known Matches?** Test more known relatives! If you need further incentive, [check out this ancestral coverage tool at DNA Painter](#). It can help you see how much of your ancestor’s DNA is currently represented in the database (and will likely inspire you to get more if you can).

# Use Best Known Matches to create a genetic network

- [Grouping and labeling matches with Ancestry.com's "dot" system](#)
- [Grouping and labeling matches with MyHeritage](#)
- If you are adopted or have unknown ancestry, [group your matches and label them using the Leeds Method](#)

Your goal is to figure out how this group of matches is related to each other, which will in turn help you find your missing ancestor.

Learn how to do this, step-by-step, in plain English, in [Your DNA Guide—the Book](#). (If you're at RootsTech 2025 in person, come by our booth for an exclusive discount on the Book.)



## Use Shared Matches of Matches tool

The shared matches of matches tools at your testing company can help you figure out the relationships of your matches to each other. This is a relatively straightforward concept, but actually working with ALL that data you generate by seeing your matches' relationships to each other can be challenging.

Take our [Shared Matches of Matches on-demand course](#) so you can master this crucial tool and use it more productively and efficiently. (If you're at RootsTech 2025 in person, come by our booth because this course has a special offer!)

