

10 Ways to Find Your Groove When Family History Is Not Your Passion

Discover the power of easy habit stacks. Choose a family history activity that appeals to you from this list. Give it a try and expect a good experience! Remember, "A little bit of progress is better than none." Give yourself credit for each thing you do.

Once you can comfortably do one of these activities, keep doing it, but add one more thing from the list. This is habit stacking. You can index on the Get Involved app for 15 minutes, and then take 30 minutes to scan a batch of photos and add images to the Memories section for people in the FamilySearch tree.

1st Way: Get Involved App

Check out the Get Involved app, which is like indexing, but even easier. Get Involved is an AI-based program by FamilySearch. Volunteers help check names in records so more people can find their relatives online. It is designed to recognize text in documents and it gives you a bubble to tap and confirm the name. It is simple to do and very fun. If you have an Apple phone or iPad, go to the App store and search for Get Involved. It looks like a white tree on a blue background. If you have a Samsung Android phone, go to the Google Play Store. Type "get involved" into the search field. Press the install button. Once you have the app, sign in to your FamilySearch account. Find names to review and tap a Country or Location. There is an option to put a last name, but you don't have to do that. Press Review Names and then click Match, Edit or Unsure. Try not to go too fast. If the word in the bubble is not a person or there is an incorrect highlight, press the flag icon and press the button that applies. You may choose how many names you want to index at a time: 20, 30 or 50. I recommend you start with 20. Once you have done those, you can choose to do more, or take a break. It's good to set a timer, and maybe set a goal to use the Get Involved app for 15 minutes a day or once a week. When you are comfortable using it, teach other people how to use it.



2nd Way: Scan Photos & Media

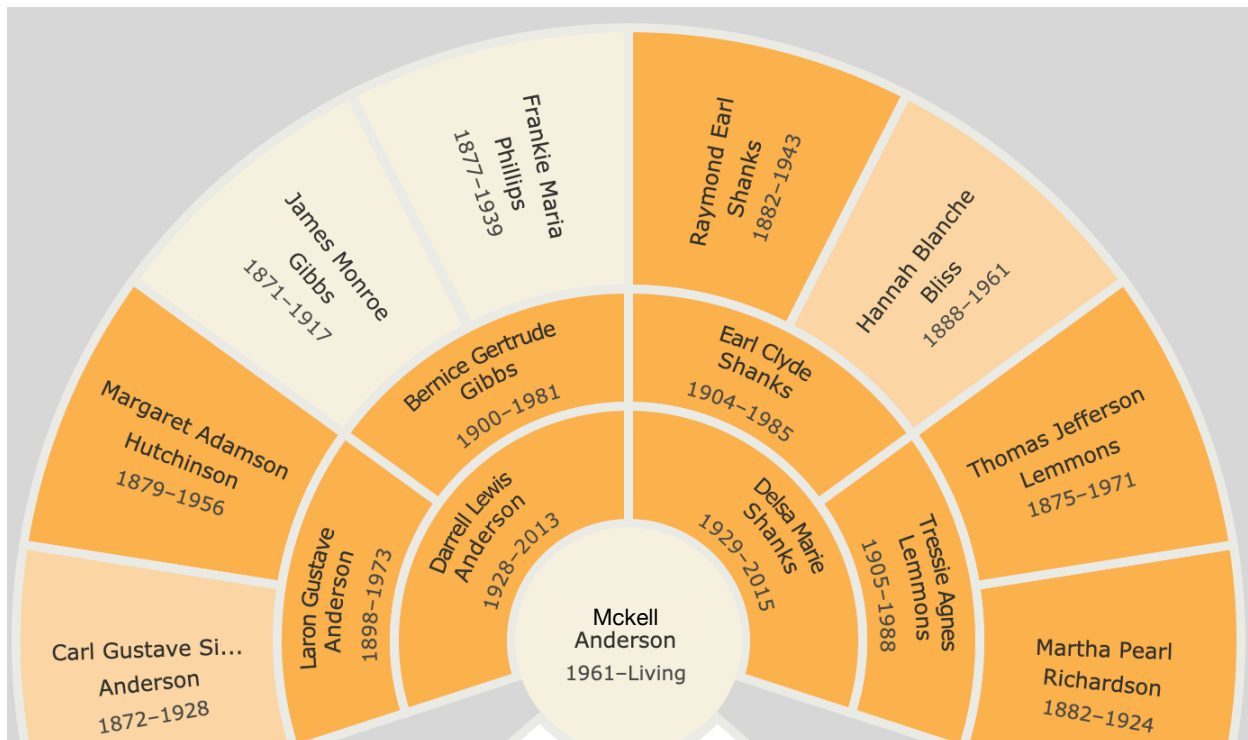
Visit the nearest FamilySearch Center and scan some of your photos or slides, or digitize a family video or family cassette tape. Not every center has every type of scanner, but almost all of them have great photo scanners that are free for the public to use. Make an appointment to scan.

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This is a great thing to invite your neighbors to do with you. First, get some experience on the equipment. Then ask a neighbor or friend to gather some photos or other media they want to digitize and meet you at the FamilySearch Center (or carpool to get there). Help them preserve some of their family memorabilia. If you do not have a FamilySearch Center near you, it is possible to take photos of your documents at your home, or use an easy scanning app on your phone or tablet to digitize photos and documents. Then add some of them to the Memories section for ancestors and relatives on FamilySearch, so more people can see the photos and read or hear the stories. Click these links to read short blurbs for the In-Home Activities on FamilySearch called [Remembering My Photos](#), [Family Photos](#), and [Save a Memory that Could Be Lost](#). Ask a family member to talk about who is in an old family photo and what is happening. Share the photo story as a Memory on FamilySearch. Tap or click “Did It” when you have uploaded at least one captioned photo to a Memories page on FamilySearch.

3rd Way: Check Your Fan Charts

Sample In-Home Activities on FamilySearch and help build a more robust global family tree. You can do activities on your own, or with a genealogy buddy. Elder Quentin L. Cook said in his Roots and Branches General Conference address in 2014, “Our family history centers are now in our homes.” While there are certain records that can only be accessed at authorized FamilySearch centers, there is so much family history you can do at your home or on the go. We have access to a myriad of records and to the global tree on our devices. Go to the [Family Search In-Home Activities section](#) when you’re logged in to FamilySearch. Find Activities under



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the drop-down of your profile picture on our devices. From a laptop or computer, click the Activities tab at the top and then click In-Home Activities. Go to the My Family section and find [Fill in the Blanks](#). Read the short instructions. Now go to your tree and click Fan Chart view. Click or tap the horizontal lines filter to change it to 4 generations and choose Photos. People who are shaded dark orange have a lot of photos. Light orange have some photos. White have no photos. Your mission is to digitize and add more photos for the ones with few photos or no photos. Now change the horizontal lines filter to Stories. The same color coding applies. If the shading is light, they have few stories on FamilySearch. My ancestors have a good number of photos added, but very few stories have been added for my four generations. Adding at least one story for each of my four generations is now on my priority list. Once you have done this, show a friend or family member how to do this. Remember to click "Did It" on the Activity.

4th Way: Community Outreach

Help community members with their family history. Connect with people anytime you are out in the community, whether at the grocery store, walking around the neighborhood or at community events. Most people would like to know more about their family. In Tempe, Arizona, we feature a family history booth at selected community events to help people see how they're related to others in the community. We offer to help them find an ancestor's draft record or other interesting document. We have an [amazing web-app called Connected Tempe](#) that is specific to our area with well-known local, historical people. People do not have to download an app or sign in to anything to try it out, so we have removed potential barriers. Everyone is very excited to find out they are related to historic people in the community they have heard of, but they never guessed they were related to them. Mike and Debbie Ostler are experts on connecting with new people they meet in a natural way and helping other communities set up their own web-app. Reach them with any questions: michaelostler@gmail.com. For those of you at RootsTech in-person, you can find the Ostlers in the Expo Hall in the BYU booth at the Family History Technology Lab table Thursday, February 29th at 12:30 pm, Friday, March 1st at 12:30 pm or Saturday, March 2nd at 2 pm.

5th Way: Family Life Sketches

Capture and share memories. Everyone loves stories. Write down a few memories about one of your parents or one of your grandparents. What are some of your favorite memories about them? It doesn't have to be a tale about a perfect person. In an Emory University study, "Standardized measures showed that children in the families that told the more coherent family narratives had better self-esteem, higher levels of social competence, higher quality friendships, and less anxiety and stress. They also had fewer behavioral problems, as reported by parents." "When we don't know what to do, we look for stories about how people have coped in the past," Robyn Fivush, Emory University psychologist and Director of the Family Narratives Lab.

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Run your story by a few other relatives, recognizing that each of you will remember things from a different perspective. Enter the story in the Memories section on the FamilySearch profile. You can always go in and edit it later, if you need to clarify anything. I have about 12 mini-biographies written by my dad's father and others about different people in their family. These life sketches are so precious to me. I have known about them since I was a teenager, but I get different things from them at different times. Enter these stories into the Memories section on FamilySearch for each person. Once you have done this yourself, you can show other people how to enter Memories on FamilySearch. My mother-in-law writes one story a year of an ancestor for Christmas for her posterity. She started with her own life from birth to age 18, then the next year she wrote about her young married years, then her middle years, and then her senior years. She also wrote the life stories of her husband and of each of her parents and her grandparents. She writes them on her computer in a Word document, adds a few photos throughout the story and then she prints them and staples them together. They are about 20 pages long. These life sketches or biographies can be uploaded to the Memories section for any relatives who are deceased. Related activities on FamilySearch In-Home Activities: [Weakness to Strength](#) in the All About Me section. [We Bounce Back](#) in the My Family section.

6th Way: Test Drive AI

Sign up to play with the free version of ChatGPT and put AI to work for you. There are countless ways to use AI for family history. My aunt died several months ago and my cousin asked me to help her write her mom's obituary. I gathered information from my cousin on details of her mom's life. I sent my cousin a set of questions, so I would not miss anything. Then I wrote an obituary that was fully fleshed out. But I was curious. What would happen if I put the obituary in the free version of ChatGPT and asked for a rewrite? I did that and I was so impressed by the results that I incorporated a few of the suggestions into the obituary I had already written. My cousin asked me to add the obituary to Find-a-Grave, so I did that, just deleting the names of living people. I also added the obituary to my aunt's profile on FamilySearch, in the Memories section. I highly recommend Steven Little's presentations to learn more about ways AI can help you with family history.

7th Way: Artifacts Backstories

Experience the [Touch What They Touched](#) In-Home Activity on FamilySearch. Take pictures of family artifacts, heirlooms, portraits, dishes and memorabilia to identify how old they are, who they belonged to, and the history of the item. Also, try making a video or audio recording on your phone as you talk about what you know about the family artifacts. Upload some of the photos (and any audio you record about artifacts) to an ancestor's Memories section on FamilySearch. Do you know of other family heirlooms kept by your extended family? Several years ago I got a message on FamilySearch from a woman asking if my grandmother was Bernice

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Gibbs Anderson. Her father loves to go to the Deseret Industries thrift store, and one day he noticed an antique Bible being placed in the special items display case. He bought it for \$50 and they found my grandmother's name inside. They checked on FamilySearch and saw that I had contributed to my grandmothers's FamilySearch profile. They contacted me and asked if I was interested in the Bible. We met at a gas station for the exchange on one of my rare trips to Utah. I don't know how the Bible ended up at Deseret Industries, but I am very grateful that these people retrieved it and got it back into our family.

8th Way: Medical History Tuneup

Give your family a gift of better health outcomes by discovering medical risk factors. Compile a comprehensive family medical history for your 1st-degree to 3rd-degree relatives. Obtain copies of all the death certificates you can, or find your relatives' causes of death in other records. 1st-degree relatives are your parents, children and full siblings. 2nd-degree relatives are your grandparents, grandchildren, aunts and uncles, half-siblings and any double first cousins (share both sets of grandparents). Third-degree relatives are 1st cousins, great-grandparents, grandaunts, granduncles, half aunts and half uncles. Make a list of these relatives and list their cause of death, age of death, what diseases and ailments they have had and approximately how old they were when they had serious medical events. Share this information with your doctor to determine when you should have screenings. [Click here for my free Medical History Map template](#). It is a Google Sheets form, so it is best to open it with a Google account. Open it fully by clicking the blue "Use Template" button. Do the In-home Activity on FamilySearch called [My Records and Their Records](#) to learn more about finding vital records.

9th Way: DNA Match Evaluation

Explore your DNA results to find additional relatives who are not in the FamilySearch tree. Look at your DNA matches you have identified as your 2nd, 3rd or 4th cousins where you can often identify your common ancestors. On ancestry.com use Thru Lines to see dependents from a common ancestor. Check their Tree Gallery for photos. Look for deceased family members in their tree who are not in the FamilySearch global tree. See if your matches have any photos of ancestors or relatives that you don't have. Ask them to take a cell phone photo of rare photos, or scan them and send you the images. Share family history information with them, too. If you paid extra for a DNA test that gives you some health information, take a look, but remember it is not destiny. It is just showing you some things you might need to screen for and discuss with your doctor. Healthy habits and your outlook on life are also factors in your physical health and mental health.

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10th Way: 5-a-Day Project

Try out the BYU Record Linking Lab 5-a-Day Project. “A tree-extending hint is a record hint on FamilySearch where some people in the record are on the global family tree and others are not. We set up these hints so that the parents are on the tree, but the child is not. By doing the 5-a-Day hints, you'll be able to add 5 new people to the Family Tree everyday. As a group, we (are) able to add 60,000 people to the the tree in two weeks. This will allow lots of people to find their grandparents on the Family Tree when they use FamilySearch for the first time.” Use this link to sign up to receive an email with 5 of these record hints each weekday:

fiveaday.rll.byu.edu

Next Steps

If you have one idea today at RootsTech that lights a fire in you, and you take action on it tonight or next week when you get home, that's a win for you! Take action on at least one thing, and then the second time you do it, it will be easier. You will catch on, and it will become second nature. You will be able to feel confident enough to help a friend or neighbor learn how to do the same interesting family history activity. You do not have to be a family history expert. You just need to have a willing heart and schedule a regular time to work on an activity that helps build and improve the FamilySearch global family tree. You can do most of these things from your home or anywhere. Go and do!

Resources:

1. *BYU Record Linking Lab*. Volunteer opportunities, <https://record-linking-lab.byu.edu/volunteer> : accessed 20 February 2024.
2. Clark, Carol. “How family stories help children weather hard times.” *Emory News* (29 April 2020). E-journal. https://news.emory.edu/stories/2020/04/esc_covid_19_family_stories/campus.html : accessed 20 February 2024.
3. Clear, James. *Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones (Tiny Changes, Remarkable Results)*, 2018.