

Ancestry.com is home to the world's largest consumer genetic genealogy database, integrating DNA matching with a robust genealogical research experience. This guide takes you through the major components of DNA testing with Ancestry to ensure you are making the most of it.

## Keep your Account Secure

Use a strong, unique password for your Ancestry login. Use 2-factor authentication to further protect your valuable DNA data.

## Plan of Attack

After logging in to your Ancestry account, follow this six-step plan to maximize your DNA test results at AncestryDNA.

### 1. Link Your Family Tree

First, link your DNA results to a public family tree. This isn't just good etiquette. It also enables tools like *ThruLines*, *Common Ancestors*, *Shared Surnames*, and a map of ancestral birth locations. Some features are limited or unavailable without a separate, qualifying Ancestry subscription.

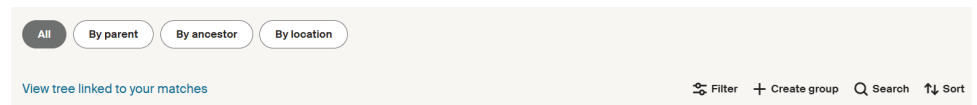
You might not want to share your full family tree online, and that's OK! Many testers create a bare-bones version of their family tree just for DNA matching purposes. Your tree should include the names, birth dates, and birthplaces of as many of your ancestors as possible (living people will not show up). These are key to helping Ancestry's genealogy matching tools do their best work.

To link your DNA to a family tree, the tree must be on Ancestry. If you created a tree in software or on another website, first export/download the tree as a .GED file. Then on the Ancestry main menu bar, click on

*Trees*, choose *Create & Manage Trees*, then click *Upload a GEDCOM file*. Link your Ancestry tree to your DNA test results in your *Account Settings* under the *DNA* tab. Identify your position on the tree. Linking does not affect your family tree in any way.

### 2. Use The Navigation Options

Under the DNA Menu > Your Results Summary, click the *Matches* tab to see your match list. At the top are several options to help you navigate your match page. The purpose of filters is to help you zero in on the matches who are most likely to help you answer your questions. Using the filters effectively and often can save you time as you use your match list to answer your genealogical questions.



**By parent:** If you have an Ancestry subscription, you can sort your match list into two parent groups. You can assign maternal and paternal sides (identify which is which via any known matches from either side). If you have a large number of matches who are matching Both Sides, you may have endogamy or multiple relationships on your family tree.

**By ancestor:** You can use ThruLines technology to see which of your DNA matches may be related to you via each ancestor, up to your 5th great grandparents. Learn more about ThruLines in Section 5.

**By location:** This will show your matches on a map based on where they have reported themselves to be living.

### Filters:

**Unviewed** These are matches you haven't reviewed yet.

**Common Ancestors** Displays common ancestors found in your trees and your matches' trees. Evaluate the suggested connection to your match, as it may not be correct. One way to do this is to check your predicted genealogical relationship against your genetic relationship.

**Notes** See matches you have written notes about (see section C on page 2.)

**Trees** See matches who have trees (private or public) linked to their DNA results or trees not linked to their DNA results. Focus your initial efforts on the matches who have trees.

**Shared DNA** You can filter matches based on the amount of DNA you share with them: close matches, distant matches, or a custom amount of shared DNA.

### How to share your AncestryDNA test results with others

<https://www.yourdnaguide.com/ydgblog/how-to-share-ancestrydna-results>

### How to download your AncestryDNA data

<https://www.yourdnaguide.com/download-ancestrydna>

**Groups** Filter here to particular groups of matches, including by custom labels you create using Ancestry's dot system. (See more below in Section 3E.)

**Search** Search by a known match's username, ancestral surname and/or by birth location to find matches who may be on specific branches of your tree. Search by one field only and then combine them to narrow your results.

**Sort** Sort by genetic relationship (close to distant, measured by shared DNA) or by the most recent matches.

## The Ethics of DNA Testing

Most of us will eventually discover unexpected news as a result of DNA testing. If that happens to you:

*DO understand that genetics are only one part of your family story*

*DO confirm unexpected results with competent research before sharing it with your family*

*DO apply the Golden Rule, and do as you would want done*

[Read more tips for handling unexpected DNA connections](#)

[Read tips for responding to an unexpected birth relative](#)

### 3. Review Match Profile Pages

On the main match page, click on a match's username to bring up his or her personal profile page. This page contains information that will help you evaluate your relationship to this individual.

**A. Predicted Relationship** If one of your biological parents has tested with Ancestry or if you have a qualifying subscription that identifies which side of the family your matches are on, the paternal or maternal side will show here. The range of possible genealogical relationships is based on how much DNA you share. To see all possible genealogical relationships, click on the amount of shared DNA. ([Learn](#) how the length of shared segments may be a clue to use for cases of endogamy.) Narrowing down your possible genealogical relationships, based on your age difference and other known factors, can help you identify your common ancestor (or at least your [generation of connection](#)).

**B. Connect to tree** Connect the match with their spot on the family tree that is linked to your DNA test.

**C. Message** Send a message to your match. [Follow these tips](#) for that initial message to increase your likelihood of getting a response.

**D. Edit Relationship** For known matches, you can identify which side of your family they're on and update their relationship label on your match list.

**E. Add/Edit Groups** Create and assign custom groups to organize your matches by family line. [Watch my tutorial](#) showing my method for organizing matches using this powerful tool.

**F. Add Notes** Here you can note any insights, correspondence or analysis pertaining to this match,

**Diahian Southard and C.H.**  
C.H.'s test is managed by: **M**  
1st - 2nd Cousin | Paternal side **A**  
8% shared DNA: 556 cM across 21 segments

**B** Connect to tree **C** Message **D** Edit Relationship

**E** Add/edit groups  
**F** 9/11/23 |

**G** Trees **H** Ethnicity **I** Shared Matches

How are Diahian Southard and C.H. related?  
**Common Ancestors** **J**  
According to Ancestry member trees, these are the common ancestors that connect Diahian Southard and C.H. View a common ancestor to see the relationship path that connects them.  
Diahian Southard and C.H. could be half aunt through:  
**Merla**  
Paternal grandmother  
1917-1987  
[View Relationship](#)

**C.H.'s Linked Tree** **1,199 People**  
This is a preview of the public tree linked to C.H.'s DNA results. Surnames that appear in both Diahian Southard's tree and C.H.'s tree are marked in green.

**Ernest Ralph Haselw...** 1892-1965  
**Kenneth Dale Haselw...** 1923-1991  
**Louise Clara Rasmu...** 1892-1970  
**Clyde Lewis Palmer** 1889-1955  
**Edith Clarke** 1889-1958

**Thomas William Has...** 1891-1933  
**Sarah Anna Griggs** 1871-1966  
**Hans Peter Rasmuss...** 1862-1936  
**Hattie Sophia Magn...** 1860-1914  
**David Ephram Palmer** 1858-1912  
**Martha Ann Mills** 1864-1927  
**Samuel Clarke** 1862-1927  
**Harriet Louisa Hutton** 1866-1935

**William K. Haselwood**  
**Martha Ann Seehorn**  
**William Douglas Griggs**  
**Etza Jane Tilton**  
**Christian Rasmussen**  
**Lena**  
**Nils Magnussen**  
**Eve Beata Johannesdo...**  
**Thomas S Palmer**  
**Margaret Ann McMillin**  
**Nathaniel Mills**  
**Isabelle Elizabeth (Bell...**  
**William Clarke**  
**Mary Redgriff**  
**John Reid Hutton**  
**Clara Jump**

as shown here.

**G. Trees** View a tree that has been linked to this DNA test, or a tree created by this user that isn't attached to the DNA test.

**H. Ethnicity** This is your match's admixture or origins locations. You may be able to find clues about your connection based on this information. For example, if you are trying to substantiate your connection to an ancestor named Annabelle who had African ancestry, and you see a match with African ethnicity, you can look through the match's tree for a connection to Annabelle.

**I. Shared Matches** Find others who share DNA with you and this match. Learn more below.

**J. Common Ancestors** If Ancestry has provided a hint in the form of an ancestor they believe connects you to this match, you can use the genetic relationship to help verify your genealogical relationship. For example, if Ancestry suggests that you and Mark are 2nd cousins, click on the total amount of shared DNA to bring up the relationship probability table. As long as the probability for second cousins is not zero on this chart, you are probably ok. But if you have multiple matches from this same ancestral couple whose genetic relationships have a low probability, your DNA may be telling you to re-evaluate your genealogical connection to this individual or couple. If you see the line *View more possible connections* under this *Common Ancestors* section, it means Ancestry can see more than one way that you could be connected. Review all of the possible connections.

**K. Shared Surnames** Scroll down to see surnames found in both your tree and your match's tree. Evaluate

by clicking on a surname, which brings up a side-by-side comparison of the individuals in your family tree with that surname alongside those in your match's tree. Then click on the next tab and glance down the full list of surnames for your match to see if there are any other surnames of interest that did not come up in the shared surnames list.

**L. Ancestor Birth Locations Map** Scroll down to see a map of birth locations for the ancestors of you and your match. Use dropdown menu at the top right of the map to see ancestral birth locations for your tree, your match's, or both simultaneously. Click on map points to determine which ancestors were in similar locations and time periods.

**M. View Match's Profile/Send Message** Click on the match's user name (or the user name of the person administering this account) to see his or her profile summary, which might include age range, experience level and most recent login timeframe. You can also send your match a message from this page.

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## 4. Use the Shared Matches Tool

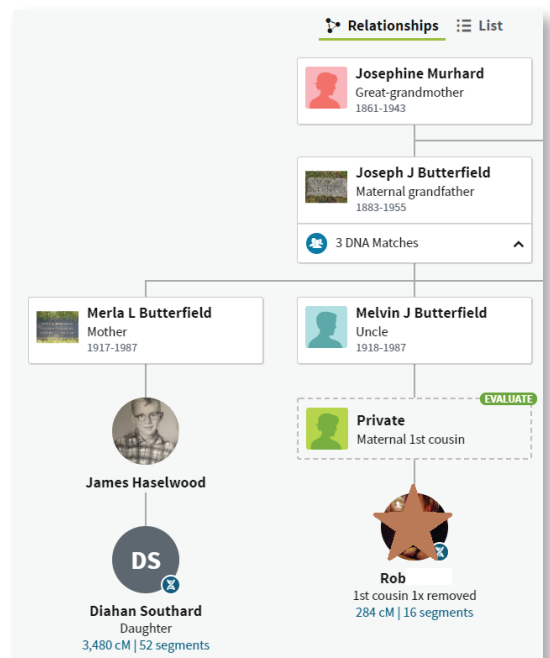
The Shared Matches tool helps you find individuals on your match page who share DNA with you and one other match. Use the Shared Matches tool with any known match to help you find others who may also be related to that known line. For example, if I use the Shared Matches tool with my cousin Jake who shares my great grandparents Myrtle and Matthew, then I will find matches who are likely also somehow related to Myrtle and Matthew. These new people then become Best Matches in my effort to learn more about Myrtle and Matthew. You should use the grouping tool to mark all of these shared matches as *Myrtle and Matthew (M&M)*, even if you aren't sure how you are connected. This will just let you know that they are likely related on this line somehow, either as M&M's descendants or as descendants of M&M's ancestors. With a Pro Tools subscription, you also have access to Enhanced Shared Matching, which allows you to see the amount of DNA Jake shares with each match. With or without Pro Tools, you can use the Shared Matches tool over and over again to identify small clusters of people that will be most able to help you solve your genealogical questions.

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## 5. Explore ThruLines

Ancestry's ThruLines tool gathers information from all available family trees to help visualize how your DNA matches may fit into your family tree. To activate, link your DNA to an Ancestry family tree. For ancestors for whom at least one other match is available, you will see a tree suggesting where your DNA matches fit on your tree.

From the DNA drop-down menu or your DNA homepage, select ThruLines and then an ancestor's name to view a tree showing matches who appear to descend through this person. Carefully evaluate these possibilities. (You and your matches often descend from an ancestral couple, so the couple's diagrams will likely look the same, but check both anyway.) Ancestors shown with dotted lines are suggestions. Click on the green *Evaluate* buttons to review tree data behind each suggestion. If you determine that the information presented is correct, you can click on the green *Add To Tree* button in the *Evaluate* panel to add this person to your family tree.



*Tip: Use this tool to find other DNA cousins who are descendants of an ancestral couple you want to research. We call these matches your Best Known Matches. Once you verify your genealogical relationship using records and your DNA (see page 2, section 3A) use the **Shared Matches** tool to find more matches who are related to these ancestors. Remember cousin Jake, your second cousin related through Myrtle and Matthew (M&M)? As long as Jake has his family tree linked to his DNA results, he will show up in your ThruLines as a descendant of M&M. Confirm that he shares the right amount of DNA with you to be your second cousin. Then use the **Shared Matches** tool with Jake to find matches that may be related through this line.*

## 6. Explore Your DNA Story

Ancestry refers to your ethnicity estimate as your *Origins*, and it is accessible from your DNA homepage. Click on *Origins* to access an interactive map to explore the locations that your DNA has identified should be part of your family story. Remember: Your DNA does not tell a complete history of your family tree. You only have half of your parents' DNA, and only a quarter of your grandparents' DNA. Therefore, your DNA story is incomplete and can't perfectly represent your family history. Having other family members tested can provide a more complete picture of your ethnicity.

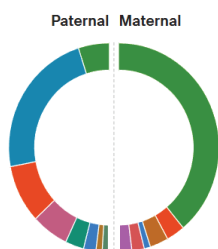
There are two main kinds of locations contained in your Origins: Regions and Journeys.

### Regions

Regions are larger geographic locations that represent where your ancestors were thousands of years ago. You are placed in regions where your DNA is similar to a standard developed by Ancestry to represent that region. Those standards rely heavily on reference populations, comprised of people with a long history from that area, and some really fancy math. This doesn't mean that there absolutely has to be an ancestor from this region on a pedigree chart, just that the DNA is showing similarities with the standards for this region.

### DNA Journeys

Communities are marked on the map with a dotted line and reveal where your ancestors may have been since as early as 1750. You are placed in a Journey when your DNA matches others who all have an ancestor in that location. When you see a community titled *Early Connecticut & New York Settlers* and you immediately think of your ancestors from that place, you might be a bit unimpressed. After all, you already knew that. But please keep in mind as you look at and interact with this tool that all of this information is based solely on your DNA, and not on your family tree. When you see places you recognize, that is actually your DNA validating your family tree.



### DNA Inheritance Plus

If you are a subscriber, you can see your ethnicity inheritance by parent, as well as a chromosome painter that shows the regions associated with each section of your chromosomes. The tool will label your two sides as simply Parent 1 and Parent 2. You can use what you know about the heritage of each of your parents to relabel them appropriately. If you have an Origin that you don't recognize, you can use this tool to see if that location is found on your mother's side or your father's side.

[Click here](#) for more updates and stories about using AncestryDNA to find your family.

