

POLISH GENEALOGY CHEAT SHEET

COMPILED BY LISA ALZO AND ANDREW KOCH

GEOGRAPHY QUICK GUIDE



RECORD OFFICES	
English name	Polish name with archive location(s)
National Archives	Naczelną Dyrekcja Archiwów: Warszawa/Warsaw
Regional archives	archiwum państwowe: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Białystok ■ Bydgoszcz ■ Częstochowa ■ Elbląg ■ Gdańsk ■ Gorzów Wielkopolski ■ Kalisz ■ Kielce ■ Koszalin ■ Kraków ■ Leszno ■ Łódź ■ Lublin ■ Olsztyn ■ Opole ■ Piotrków Trybunalski ■ Płock ■ Poznań ■ Przemyśl ■ Radom ■ Rzeszów ■ Siedlce ■ Suwałki ■ Szczecin ■ Toruń ■ Warszawa/Warsaw ■ Wrocław ■ Zamość ■ Zielona Góra
Regional archives branch	oddział: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Numerous, located in towns surrounding regional archives
Local vital registry office	urząd stanu cywilnego: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Numerous scattered throughout country

Administrative Divisions

HISTORICAL	
Division	Notes
powiat (plural: powiaty)	County
województwo (plural: województwa)	Voivodeship (province); modern Poland has 16 voivodeships
AUSTRIAN PARTITION	
Division	Notes
powiat (plural: powiaty)	County
RUSSIAN PARTITION	
Division	Notes
guberniya (plural: guberniyas)	Province/governate
ujedz (plural: ujezdys)	County
PRUSSIAN PARTITION	
Division	Notes
kreis (plural: kreise)	District

THE PARTITIONS OF POLAND



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	1772	1793	1795
Prussia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Royal Prussia minus Gdańsk/Danzig and Toruń (<i>becoming West Prussia</i>) northern Great Poland north of the Noteć River (<i>becoming the Netze District</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the cities of Gdańsk/Danzig and Toruń the rest of Greater Poland (<i>becoming South Prussia</i>) part of Mazovia (<i>becoming South Prussia</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the rest of Mazovia, including Warsaw (<i>becoming South Prussia and New Silesia</i>) Lithuania west of the Neman River (<i>becoming New East Prussia</i>)
Russia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all areas east of the Dvina and Dneiper rivers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lithuanian Belorussia western Ukraine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Courland Lithuania east of the Neman River the rest of Ukraine
<i>(All becoming part of new or existing guberniyas; many incorporated into Congress Poland after 1815)</i>			
Austria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little Poland south of the Vistula River Podolia west of the Zbruch River Galicia <p><i>(All becoming the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria)</i></p>	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the rest of Little Poland (<i>becoming New Galicia, then transferring to Russian Poland after 1815</i>)

LANGUAGE QUICK GUIDE

ALPHABET	
Uppercase	Lowercase
A	a
Ą	ą
B	b
C	c
Ć	ć
D	d
E	e
Ę	ę
F	f
G	g
H	h
I	i
J	j
K	k
L	l
Ł	ł
M	m
N	n

ALPHABET	
Uppercase	Lowercase
Ń	ń
O	o
Ó	ó
P	p
(Q)	(q)
R	r
S	s
Ś	ś
T	t
U	u
(V)	(v)
W	w
(X)	(x)
Y	y
Z	z
Ż	ż
Ź	ź

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE		
Letter(s)	Sound	Example
ą	om, on	home
c	ts	rats
ch, h	kh	ba <u>ke</u>
ć, cz, ci	ch	ch <u>erry</u>
dz	j	ju <u>ry</u>
ę	em, en	se <u>nse</u>
j	y	ye <u>s</u>
ł	w	w <u>alk</u>
ś, sz, si	sh	sh <u>ow</u>
ź, zi	zh	plea <u>sure</u>

THE LANGUAGE OF RECORDS

The language used in Polish recordkeeping varied by time and by which Partition your ancestor lived in. Here's a quick list of which languages were used in each Partition's recordkeeping:

- Prussian Partition: Mostly German/Latin, but some in Polish
- Russian Partition: Latin/Polish (before 1868); Russian (after 1868)
- Austrian Partition: Mostly Latin, but some in German/Polish

NUMBERS		
	Cardinal (one, two...)	Ordinal (first, second...)
1	jeden, jedna	pierwszy
2	dwa, dwie	drugi
3	trzy	trzeci
4	cztery	czwarty
5	pięć	piąty
6	sześć	szósty
7	siedem	siódmy
8	osiem	ósmy
9	dziewięć	dziewiąty
10	dziesięć	dziesiąty
11	jedenaście	jedenasty
12	dwanaście	dwunasty
13	trzynaście	trzynasty
14	czternaście	czternasty
15	piętnaście	piętnasty
16	szesnaście	szesnasty
17	siedemnaście	siedemnasty
18	osiemnaście	osiemnasty
19	dziewiętnaście	dziewiętnasty
20	dwadzieścia	dwudziesty
21	dwadzieścia jeden	dwudziesty pierwszy
22	dwadzieścia dwa	dwudziesty drugi
23	dwadzieścia trzy	dwudziesty trzeci
24	dwadzieścia cztery	dwudziesty czwarty
25	dwadzieścia pięć	dwudziesty piąty
26	dwadzieścia sześć	dwudziesty szósty
27	dwadzieścia siedem	dwudziesty siódmy
28	dwadzieścia osiem	dwudziesty ósmy
29	dwadzieścia dziewięć	dwudziesty dziewiąty
30	trzydzieści	trzydziesty
31	trzydzieści jeden	trzydziesty pierwszy
40	czterdzieści	czterdziesty
50	pięćdziesiąt	pięćdziesiąty
60	sześć dziesiąt	sześćdziesiąty
70	siedemdziesiąt	siedemdziesiąty
80	osiemdziesiąt	osiemdziesiąty
90	dziewiecdziesiąt	dziewiecdziesiąty
100	sto	setny

LANGUAGE QUICK GUIDE

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

aunt	ciocia/ciotka
bride	panna młoda
brother	brat
child	dziecię, dziecko
cousin	kuzyn (m)/kuzynka (f)
daughter	córka
father	ojciec
granddaughter	wnuczek
grandfather	dziad/dziadek
grandmother	babka
grandson	wnuczek
great-grandfather	pradziadek
great-grandmother	prababa/prababka
groom	pan młody
husband	mąż, małżonek
mother	matka
parents	rodzice
sister	siostra
son	syn
uncle	stryj (paternal), wuj/wujek (maternal)
wife	Żona, małżonka, zameżna

VITAL EVENTS

baptism	chrzest
baptized	ochrzony (m), ochrzona (f)
birth	urodzin, urodzony
birthplace	miejsce urodzenia
burial	pochowanie, pogrzeb
certificate	świadcstwo/akt
death	zgon/śmierć
died	umarł/umarała
marriage	małżeństwo
married	żonaty (m)/mężatka (f)
marriage banns	zapowiedź
married couple	małżonkowie



DAYS OF THE WEEK

English	Polish
Sunday	niedziela
Monday	poniedziałek
Tuesday	wtorek
Wednesday	środa
Thursday	czwartek
Friday	piątek
Saturday	sobota

OTHER USEFUL TERMS

community	gmina
first name	imię, imion
Jewish	żydowski, starozakonny, izraelici, mojżeszowy
occupation/social class	stan/zawód
parish	parafia
Protestant	ewangelicki, reformowany, protestancki, luterński
Roman Catholic	rzymsko-katolicki
religion	wyznanie
surname	nazwisko
village	wieś
year	rok/lat

MONTHS

English	Nominative (standard)	Genitive (possessive)
January	styczeń	stycznia
February	luty	lutego
March	marzec	marca
April	kwiecień	kwietnia
May	maj	maja
June	czerwiec	czerwca
July	lipiec	lipca
August	sierpień	sierpnia
September	wrzesień	września
October	październik	października
November	listopad	listopada
December	grudzień	grudnia

TIP: GET FAMILIAR WITH POLISH SPELLING

Note that the letter *q* is a separate letter from *a*. Therefore, in proper Polish, *ą* follows *a* in alphabetical listings. This is most important when reading gazetteers—for example, *Baz* comes before *Bąq*. The *s* is sometimes written like an *f* in the old cursive style found in church records, as in *Morofki* for *Moroski*, or *Sasfów* instead of *Sassów*.

When looking at English or other non-Polish documents, watch for certain changes in translation. The Polish letter *ł* (which sounds like the English *w*) is transcribed into English like an *l* or like a *w*. You may find it as a *t* because a non-Polish speaking clerk misread it. The Polish nasal vowels *ą* and *ę* sometimes get transcribed into English simply as *a* and *e*. Or because of the sound heard by a non-Polish speaker, *ą* may be transcribed as *an*, *on*, *am*, or *om*. Likewise, *ę* may appear as *en* or *em*.

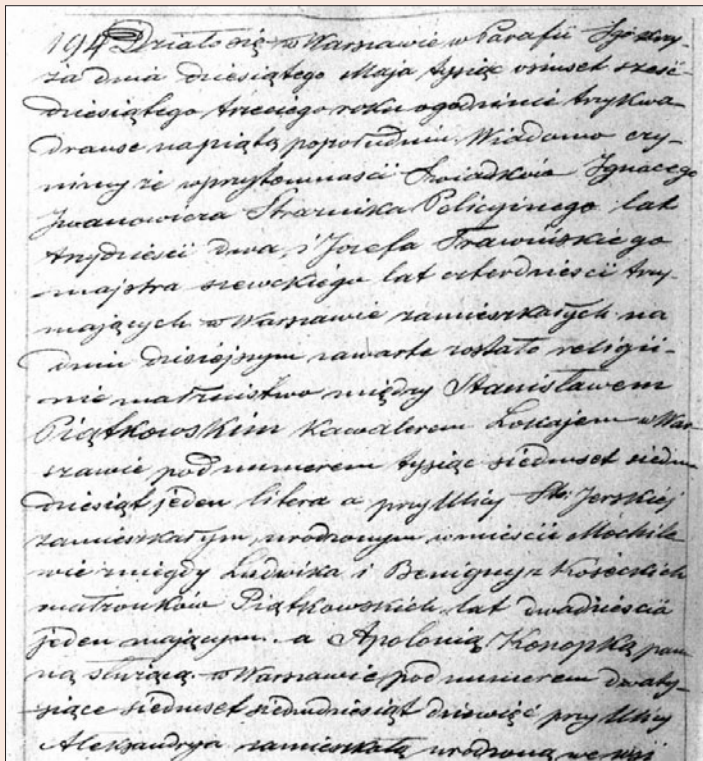
HISTORICAL TIMELINE



966	The Polish nation is born.	1868	Russian officials ban the Polish language.
1569	The Polish Parliament (Sejm) unifies Poland and Lithuania into the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth	1870s	Russia and Germany each attempt to eradicate Polish culture; Galician Poles in the Austrian partition retain some autonomy.
1655–1660	Sweden invades Poland, resulting in the death of 40 percent of Poles.	1874	Separate civil registration is introduced in Prussian Poland.
1772	Russia, Poland, and Austria seize 30 percent of Poland's territory in the First Partition of Poland.	1880	Poles emigrate in massive numbers.
1792	Russia and Prussia take more than half of Poland's remaining territory in the Second Partition of Poland.	1900	The Polish Falcons of America, one of the largest Polish-American fraternal organizations, is founded.
1795	Russia, Prussia, and Austria carve up the remaining Polish territory in the Third Partition of Poland.	1914–1918	Poland becomes a fighting ground in World War I. After the war, Poland gains independence.
1803–1815	The Napoleonic Wars engulf Europe, leading to territorial bartering of partitioned, formerly Polish lands. Napoleon forms the semi-independent Duchy of Warsaw out of Prussian Poland.	1918	The Second Polish Republic is founded
1806	Serfdom is abolished in Prussian Poland.	1926	Józef Piłsudski makes himself dictator after a coup.
1815	The Congress of Vienna partitions the Duchy of Warsaw between Prussia and Russia. Russia incorporates much of its formerly Polish territory into a semiautonomous state known as "Congress Poland."	1939	A second wave of Polish immigration to America begins.
1848	Serfdom is abolished in the Austrian Empire.	1939–1945	Nazi Germany invades Poland, triggering World War II. Many Poles, including 90 percent of the country's Jewish population, are deported to labor camps.
1852	The Democratic Society of Poles in America, the first Polish-American ethnic organization, is founded.	1945	The Soviet Union sweeps in from the east, driving out the Nazis and establishing the Polish People's Republic.
1854	Galicia is ravaged by a cholera epidemic.	1946	Poland establishes universal civil registration.
1861	Serfdom is abolished in Russia.	1989	Communist rule in Poland ends.
1865	The first wave of Polish immigration to the Americas begins.	1999	Poland joins NATO.
		2004	Poland becomes a member of the European Union.
		2010	In the US federal census, ten million Americans report having Polish ancestry.

RECORDS AT A GLANCE

VITAL RECORDS			
Record Type	Polish name	Description	Typical contents
Birth register	akta urodzin	Lists of all births in a region, kept by the government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> date of birth/data entry child's name place and date of birth parents' ages and residence parents' religion (until mid-twentieth century) name of witnesses (until mid-twentieth century)
Baptismal record	akta chrztów	Records of the religious rite of baptism in Christian churches, kept by parishes or archdioceses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> date of baptism name of the child name, occupation, and age of the child's father place of birth/parish where baptism occurred date and time of birth mother's given name and/or age names, village, and relationship the child of the sponsors (e.g., godparents) if the father was deceased name of officiant mother's maiden name parents' house number witnesses' occupations
Confirmation record	akta konfirmacja	Records of the religious rite of confirmation; kept sparingly (and many have been lost to time or war)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> names of the confirmed child and his father child's age or date of birth family's residence
Marriage records	akta małżeństwo, akta ślubów	Record of a marriage ceremony, kept by either the church performing the ceremony or the civil government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> date and place of marriage names, religion, and residences of the bride and groom groom's occupation names of parents and witnesses name of the officiant (church only) names, occupations, and statuses (e.g., alive, dead, widower) of the bride's and groom's fathers and mothers (church only) information about previous spouses, if any (church only) ages and birthplaces of the bride and groom (church only) bride's occupation (church only)



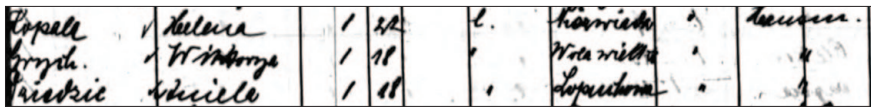
Marriage record, 1863. Courtesy of Donna Pointkowski.

RECORDS AT A GLANCE

VITAL RECORDS			
Record Type	Polish name	Description	Typical contents
Death register	akta zejść, akta zgonów	List of all the deaths in a region, kept by the government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ date of death ■ description (age, occupation, marital status, etc.) of the deceased ■ information about the deceased's father (if deceased was a child) ■ information about the deceased's spouse or surviving children (if deceased was married) ■ woman's maiden name ■ residence of the deceased ■ information about the deceased adult's parents ■ cause of death
Burial record	akta pogrzebów	Records of the religious rite of burial in Christian churches, kept by the parish or archdiocese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ date of burial ■ date of death ■ description (age, occupation, marital status, etc.) of the deceased ■ information about the deceased's father (if deceased was a child) ■ detailed information about the deceased's spouse or surviving children (if deceased was married) ■ woman's maiden name ■ residence of the deceased ■ information about the deceased adult's parents ■ cause of death ■ time of day when the death occurred ■ funeral sermon

OTHER RECORDS		
Record Type	Description	Typical contents
Draft lists	Information compiled to fulfill draft requirements; each partitioning power gave different dates for mandatory conscription: Prussia in 1816, Russia in 1874, and Austria in 1868	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ name, occupation, level of education, marital status, health condition, and residence of recruit ■ names of recruit's parents and female relatives (e.g., wife)
Household tax registers	Lists of individuals and a summary of their belongings, used in taxation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ names of heads of households who own taxable property
Military muster rolls	Records documenting ancestors' service in the armed forces; typically reside in the archives of the partitioning powers (Germany, Russia, Austria)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ name, birth date, birthplace, and residence of soldier ■ date and place of muster
Parish censuses	Population counts taken by local parishes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ names and ages of heads of households ■ names and ages of residents in a house (including servants and farmhands) ■ birth, marriage, and death dates ■ accounts of military service ■ accounts of immigration

RECORDS AT A GLANCE

OTHER RECORDS		
Record Type	Description	Typical contents
Passenger lists  <small>Entry from the Hamburg Passenger List collection on Ancestry.com</small>	Records of immigrants who passed through a particular port of departure; for Poles, this was typically from Hamburg, Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> names, ages, occupations, last residences, relationships, and birthplaces of immigrants
Population registers	Records taken by the government that registered citizens' place of residence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> names, birth dates, and birthplaces family relationships and marital status parents' names
Yizkor books	"Books of remembrance" published after World War II to preserve the Jewish communities devastated by World War II and the Holocaust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> names of residents histories of Jewish communities

RESOURCES

Websites

- **About.com: Polish Genealogy & Family History**
<genealogy.about.com/od/poland>
- **AGAD Polish State Archives Online**
<www.agad.gov.pl/inwentarze/testy.html>
- **BASIA**
<basia.famula.pl>
- **Civil Registration Offices: Poland**
<www.usc.pl/zasieg>
- **Cyndi's List: Poland**
<www.cyndislist.com/poland.htm>
- **FORGEN Genealogical Forum**
<www.forgen.pl>
- **Genealogy and Poland: A Guide**
<donhoward.net/genpoland>
- **Geneteka**
<geneteka.genealodzy.pl/index.php?op=se>
- **GenPol**
<www.genpol.com>
- **Ksiegi-parafialne**
<ksiegi-parafialne.pl>
- **MasterPage (Facts About Poland)**
<www.masterpage.com.pl/imieniny.html>
- **Moikrewni genealogy**
<www.moikrewni.pl/mapa>
- **National Digital Library**
<www.nac.gov.pl>
- **Parishes and Dioceses**
<www.opoka.org.pl/struktury_kosciola/diecezje>
- **Poland GenWeb**
<www.rootswb.ancestry.com/~polwgv/index.html>
- **PolishOrigins**
<polishorigins.com>

- **Polish Roots**
<www.polishroots.com>
- **Poznan Marriage Project**
<www.poznan-project.psnk.pl>
- **RootsWeb: Poland**
<rootswb.ancestry.com/~polwgv/maillists.html>

Books

- **Dictionary of Surnames in Current Use in Poland at the Beginning of the 21st Century**, compiled by Kazimierz Rymut (CD, Polish Genealogical Society of America, 2002)
- **The Family Tree Polish, Czech, and Slovak Genealogy Guide** by Lisa A. Alzo (Family Tree Books, 2016)
- **First Names of the Polish Commonwealth: Origins and Meanings** by William F. Hoffman and George W. Helon (Polish Genealogical Society of America, 1998)
- **God's Playground: A History of Poland, Vol. I: The Origins to 1795, revised edition** by Norman Davies (Columbia University Press, 2005)
- **God's Playground: A History of Poland, Vol. II: 1795 to Present, revised second edition** by Norman Davies (Columbia University Press, 2005)
- **Going Home: A Guide to Polish-American Genealogical Research** by Jonathan D. Shea (Language & Lineage Press, 2008)

- **Polish Roots, second edition** by Rosemary A. Chorzempa (Genealogical Publishing Company, 2014)
- **Polish Surnames: Origins and Meanings, second edition** by William F. Hoffman (Polish Genealogical Society of America, 2001)
- **Sto Lat: A Modern Approach to Polish Genealogy** by Ceil Wendt Jensen (2009)

Articles

- "A Guide to Researching Indices to Jewish Records of Poland" compiled by Stanley Diamond (JRI-Poland, 2012) <jri-poland.org/brochure/jri_guide_2012en.pdf>
- "The Keeping of Vital Records in the Austrian Partition" by Jonathan D. Shea (Pathways and Passages, Vol. 9, Winter 1992) <www.hagal.com/vitalrecordsaustria.html>
- "Pole Vault" by Lisa A. Alzo, (Family Tree Magazine, May 2007) <www.familytreemagazine.com/article/pole-vault>
- Polski Krok po Kroku by Stempek, et al. <polskikrokpokroku.pl>
- "Vital Records in Poland" by Warren Blatt (JewishGen, 2013) <www.jewishgen.org/infofiles/polandv.html>