

Hints and Tricks to Make *ancestry.com* Work for YOU!

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Ancestry.com is a *wonderful* website, but it is SO big, with so MUCH information that it can be overwhelming. Today we will show how to set up your home page and site preferences. We will talk about some shortcuts and hints to make creating and building your family tree a little easier. We will talk about some strategies for getting the most and best results from your searches and last, we'll talk about some exciting new tools for making sense of your DNA results. LOTS of information so let's get started.

YOUR HOME PAGE

Your home page will always have some 'featured' items on it - SEARCH, FAMILY TREE, and (if you've tested) DNA RESULTS. You may be able to "*customize*" your homepage.

SITE PREFERENCES

Click on your user name in the upper right hand corner of the page. You will get a dropdown box that will allow you to further customize: Member Profile, Your Account, Site Preferences, Email Preferences, and Your Alerts. These are self explanatory, but here are a few ideas about the "Site Preferences" page.

- FIRST, you should **uncheck** the box next to "Display Ancestry Member Tree hints..." if you do not want to get a zillion hints from somebody else's tree that has no sources except your tree! If you want to go look at other trees, you still can.
- SECOND, you could turn off the hints completely (but I wouldn't) and select which trees you want to receive hints for.
- You can tell ancestry how or IF you want other members to contact you in "Community Preferences".
- In "Search Preference" you can choose to permanently get all your search results in the 'Category' format rather than the 'Record' format.
- You can choose from five colors (including dark grey) for your background.
- "Activity Preferences" will let you tell ancestry who will see what you post and how much of it they will see.
- "Public Profile Preferences" allow you to determine what others will see on your profile page about the public family history information you share and about your message board activity.
- Next you should go to that Profile Page. Add as much (or as little) information about yourself and your tree as you are comfortable with.

ANCESTRY TREE

We will be covering a lot of information about trees and some of the neat stuff you can do with them. In the bottom right corner of any 'Profile' page you will see a little "Tutorials" box. Click on it for a 1-5 minute lesson on just about every and any aspect of how to work your page.

One of the new features is that you can add 'tags' to anyone in your tree - DIRECT ANCESTOR, IMMIGRANT, ADOPTED INTO FAMILY, MILITARY SERVICE, BRICK WALL, VERIFIED, HYPOTHESIS - these are just a few of the tags in the list. OR you can create a custom tag or two!

SEARCHING

There are day-long seminars about how to effectively search on ancestry.com. What we will discuss today are just some VERY basic tips about how to search (thank you to the ancestryinsider.com and Anne Mitchell of Ancestry.com).

- Start basic from your homepage – First name, last name, a date and place. You can narrow the search by adding more details later.
- Using wildcards can make or break a search – Anne uses G*L*S*P* when searching her maiden name (Gillespie)
- When you type in a place name, you will get a drop-down list – be sure to *select the correct place from that list* – it will make for a more effective search.
- When searching a census and you know the County, put that in the ‘lived in’ field but be sure that it *was* that county at that time period (remember they may have lived in the same house for 30 years and lived in FOUR counties in that time period)
- You can search a specific data collection – by national focus, or collection type – or you can choose to NOT search some types of databases (trees, photos, stories, publications)

From the homepage, when you enter your information, you can check the “exact” box under each field. When you do this you will get a dropdown box that will allow you to say just HOW exact you want the search to be. When you get your results, you can use the ‘sliders’ in the upper left-hand corner of the page to change these parameters. *One thing to remember is that searching from the home page will get you results from a limited number of the most popular databases at Ancestry. For the best results, you really need to dig deeper.*

You can also search from the “SEARCH” tab at the top of the home page. This allows you to search in the databases for a SPECIFIC geographic area. You can even search in a specific County or just in one database. You can search the CARD CATALOG for a specific database or type of database.

DNA-Tested with Ancestry? There are new features to help you sort by family, search for specific family names or geographic regions, color code each branch of the family and lots of other ways. Ancestry will always be updating their DNA database as more people test with them. Be sure to check your results as they will change over time.

Again, these are a VERY few ideas and tips – many more are available online at the ancestry channel at YouTube as well as at ancestry.com. Click on the ‘Help’ tab and select “Support Center” to get started. From there you can choose what part of ancestry you have questions about (family tree, searches, DNA, etc.) . Have fun!