

Free Websites For The Beginner In Genealogy

There are so many websites now for genealogists of all levels of expertise and experience. Remember that your local Library may well carry a public version of commercial fee-based program(s) for you to use FREE! Also, your local Genealogical Society may also offer free access to certain programs or websites, as well as historybooks, genealogy books, and other helpful information. Much is available if you ask. *Ask!*



Here are some of my favourite free websites for Beginners. I suggest you go to the site, immediately click "Help" and read through that section, plus look for other sources of information on how to use the site. Then bookmark the site so you can find it easily next time you are online doing research.

#1 Cyndi's List www.cyndislist.com My personal favourite site. This list is highly categorized and is also cross-referenced, so you will find the same sites showing up under various categories if relevant. Not only will you find information and web links for genealogy of your county, country, documents, books, ships, etc., you will also find wonderful hints for beginners, on the first landing page, under "Beginners". Cyndi is a real person who, over the last 10 years, has put these web links together with brief explanations, and updates it on a regular basis! You will also find helpful forms, message boards, and tips on researching in over 180 countries! Start here.

#2 Family Search – www.familysearch.org The genealogy library of the Church of Latter Day Saints (LDS, or Mormon Church). This is by far the largest collection of genealogical material available online, and the resources are held in huge underground safe vaults near Salt Lake City Utah where the main Library is housed, free for all to access. With helpful hints, the site will guide you through your searches. There are Family History Libraries all around the world, and likely there is one near you; each has access to the entire library, and can request specific microfilms of particular countries and records to be sent to your local F.H.Library for a minimal fee (roughly \$6 per film). Every day, over 100 cameras are taking photos of documents and records all over the world for FamilySearch, so if your ancestors came from Germany, France, England, Scotland, or went to Australia or elsewhere - there are likely to be excellent records available online, or at the F.H.Libraries.

#3 Find A Grave www.findagrave.com Just as it says, this free site allows you to find gravestones or burial information on ancestors; mainly for North America and the U.K. I have been thrilled to search for ancestors in the north-east part of the US and find whole families buried in specific cemeteries with photos of stones and information added as well. You can search for specific surnames, with or without maiden names, or you can do a separate search for the name of specific cemeteries around the area where your ancestors lived. Volunteers in the region are happy to take photos of your ancestors' graves for you, if they are not available on the listing, and as they are local to the area, they may be able to offer further interesting information.



#4 Automated Genealogy <http://automatedgenealogy.com> Note that there is no 'www' before the name when you are trying to get on the site. If you have ancestors in early Canada, you will be thrilled to find this site, with censuses from 1851/1852, 1901, 1906, 1911. Volunteers have transcribed these records, and a few errors in reading handwriting etc. have crept in of course. However, you can also look at the specific image on a split screen with the typed list as well, for each page. This is so helpful to look at possible ancestors with variant spelling of their surnames and first names as well! Look over the landing page to see how many other Canadian records are also available for you to search. One fascinating and helpful part of the site: if you find your ancestor in an early census, their name may be linked to later censuses, making your searches so much easier, as you find them across time in Canada.



#5 Free BMD (birth, marriage, death) U.K. www.freebmd.org.uk This is a site for the U.K. covering England and Wales, for birth records, marriage records, or death records from 1837-1983. The actual records would be registered at the local government office or GRO (General Register Office); click through the Information button, then scroll down to Certificates - what they are and how to order one. Once you are sure you have your ancestor's record, use the page and volume information from your original search to go to the local GRO to order a registration record. The cost is less than \$18 each. And the registration record contains a great deal of helpful information for genealogists to use in further research. FreeBMD is part of a larger group which includes FreeCEN (free census), and FreeREG (free parish registers).



#6 Google Book Service <http://books.google.com/books> There is no 'www' before the name, by the way. This fascinating site will keep you searching for "just one more" book, page, family name, county, village, etc. I immediately came across a book called "A Genealogical Dictionary of the First Settlers of New England" by James Savage, published 1861. Oh my, that kept me busy for over an hour, looking up several of my ancestors' names. Make sure you are looking in the center section, as the right hand column is for paid advertisers. It can be a challenging site to search in, but very rewarding! If you find helpful information, go back to the first pages of the book(s) and copy out the Source information (name of book, author, date published, by whom; plus the page numbers of any information you copied). Don't lose your Source and Citation material details!



Enjoy these six helpful free sites - each has much to offer to beginners, and the more you use them, the easier it becomes to find exactly what you are looking for on your ancestors' lives. Happy searching!

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