Genealogy for Beginners

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Genealogy: a history of the descent of a person or family from an ancestor. From the Latin/Greek, meaning race or family.

Each person's ancestral search is unique. There is no "one size fits all" approach.

This discussion is intentionally generic and should apply to everybody. Therefore, there is no mention of specific names or countries or locations.

Getting Started

Gather all the info that you have on relatives/ancestors. Letters, pictures, obituaries, bibles, birth certificates, etc.

Talk to parents and relatives. Elicit as much info as possible.

Take good care of old and original documents. Store in an acid free environment and make copies to work from.

Organize your data and information.

What info to keep? Minimum is birth, marriage and death dates and locations.

The ancestors hometown is important because records are often located near where people lived.

Additional info is up to you. Such as: occupation, education, social security number, religion, census, immigration, military service, naturalization, property, wills, etc. Some people like to better understand what life was like in different eras and what might have motivated them to immigrate.

Record the source of all information.

Search Engines

There are many search engines. GOOGLE is probably the best known. However, if GOOGLE doesn't give you the results you want, try others, like: YAHOO, ASK JEEVES, ALTA VISTA, DOGPATCH

Each search engine has it's own search algorithms and the documents they search may be different, so you may get different results.

Learn how to search.
Try the GOOGLE Help Center and study the search guide　　　　http://www.google.com/support

Have a goal when you start and stick to the plan. It's so easy to get sidetracked down interesting, but, unproductive avenues.

Usually the first page or so of results are the most pertinent.
Learn to use "quotes", (+) and (-) signs.
The order of the search terms may make a difference.

Sources of Information

Las Vegas Family History Center, 509 South 9th Street, LV, 382-9695

Family History Room, Lone Mountain Stake, 10100 W. Azure

Clark County Nevada Genealogical Society   http://www.rootsweb.com/~nvccngs/

Jewish Genealogical Society of Las Vegas, (Carole Montello, P.O. Box 29342, Las Vegas, NV 89126)

Clark County-Las Vegas Library District, http://www.lvccld.org

Sun City Summerlin Computer Club Genealogy SIG (4th Monday of the month at 6:30 p.m.)

Summerlin News, weekly article by Stefani Evans.

The Internet:

Family Search   http://www.familysearch.org/
        (individuals, SS Death Index, 1880 US census, 1881 British and Canadian census)

Las Vegas-Clark County Library District   http://lvccld.org/
        (with a free library card can access Heritage Quest: 1790-1830, 1860, 1870, 1880 partial,
        1890-1920, 1930 partial, census)

Cyndi's List   http://cyndislist.com/
        (an index of more than 240,000 genealogy sites)

USGenWeb   http://usgenweb.org/
        (good resource for state and local resources)

National Archives   http://www.archives.gov/
        (military records, how to, index to other records)

Ellis Island records   http://www.ellisisland.org/
        (immigration records)

GenTeach   http://www.geocities.com/genteach2/
        (50 important Internet sites)

GenForum   http://genforum.genealogy.com/
        (individual forums)

Family Tree   http://www.familytreemagazine.com/101sites/2006/
        (their choice of the 101 best sites)

Saving and Presenting

All data should be saved on a computer. You only have to enter the data once.

You **MUST, MUST, MUST**, backup your data anytime that it changes. The backup data must be on a separate device or medium such as floppy disk, CD, DVD, or separate hard drive. Consider off site storage, also. CD in your safety deposit box, email the file to a friend or relative, etc.

Genealogy programs are specialized data base programs allowing individuals to be linked to parents and children.
Allows data to be organized, displayed and printed.
Allows data to be imported and exported using GEDCOM files. This is a common format that allows sharing of info with others even if they use a different genealogy program.
Many programs allow the creation of a read-only CD that displays exactly like your program and can be freely distributed to family and others.

There are many programs available. Some to consider would be:
Family Tree Maker   http://www.ftm2006.com/
Roots Magic (was Family Origins) http://rootsmagic.com/
Personal Ancestral File (PAF)   http://www.familysearch.org/ (click on order/download products).

Skip the fancy options that include CD's with genealogical data. They're often incomplete or obsolete.

These programs allow for a number of charts for presenting your data including pedigree, family group, individual

Large charts can be obtained through outfits such as Kinko's. The width is either 36 or 54 inches and can be any length. Black and white is about $ .50/sq ft. Color is more costly and the charts can also be laminated.

All of the internet sites I have listed are free. Exhaust the free stuff before considering paying for information.

Good luck! And may you find all of your relatives.