



# Golden Rules of Genealogy

The Genealogy Do-Over

<https://www.genealogydoover.com>

- 1. There is No Easy Button in Genealogy.** You will work hard to find your ancestors. Genealogy will require more than passion; it will require skills, smarts, and dedication. Don't believe the hype of instant hints, smart matches, and shaky leaves. If it were that easy, the journey of discovering our roots would have little or no meaning.
- 2. Research from a Place of "I Don't Know."** Your genealogy research will likely run counter to your cherished family stories. It will upend your preconceived notions about certain events and people. It will change the way you think about your ancestors. This can only happen if you research with an open mind and take off the blinders.
- 3. Track Your Work and Cite Your Sources.** When I started out in genealogy, I'll admit I was a name collector and would "dump" almost any name into my database. Years later, I am crossing out entire branches of a tree that never really should have been "grafted" on to mine. Use a research log, track your work, cite your sources, and analyze data before it is entered into any software or online family tree program.
- 4. Ask for Help.** The genealogy community is populated with people of all skill levels and areas of expertise, most of whom want to assist others. There are no stupid questions; we all started as beginners. There is no right way to ask. Post a query on Facebook or ask a question during a webinar or email your favorite genealogy rock star.
- 5. You Can't Edit a Blank Page.** Which means you have to start in order to have something to work with. That project you keep putting off, like publishing your family history, won't complete itself. Commit yourself to move from "obsession" to "reality." Remember: *A year from now, you'll wish you had started today.*
- 6. Work and Think Like Your Ancestors.** While I'm not sure about your ancestors, mine were resourceful and developed tools and skills to get what they wanted. They were not "educated" *per se*, but they had "street smarts" and knew where to go so they could learn new things. Also make sure you have a plan; my ancestors didn't just wake up one day and on a whim decide to come to America and make a better life. They had a plan, they had a network of people to help them, and they made it happen.
- 7. You Do Not Own Your Ancestors.** Researching your roots can create emotional connections to not only your ancestors, but to the actual research itself. Many people become "possessive" of their ancestors and fail to realize that a 3rd great-grandparent is likely the ancestor of hundreds of others. You can't take your research or your ancestor with you when you die; take time to share your research and be open to differences in information and research when working with others.

8. **Be Nice. The Genealogy Community is a Small Place.** While there are millions of people searching for ancestors, genealogists worldwide have developed a community with relatively few degrees of separation. Whether it is online in a Facebook group or in-person at genealogy conference, it is likely you'll already know someone. Being "genealogy nice" is not fake; the connections with other researchers tend to be deep and genuine. We know that all of our roots are inter-locked, and a genealogist can't always go it alone.
  
9. **Give and Be Abundant.** Exchange information freely with other researchers; don't hold data "close" to you or exchange it in lieu of something else. Most genealogists who have heard me speak know my own story of abundance: Don't let your hand keep a tight grip on information. Let it go. Once your hand is free, it can be open and ready to receive the next good thing coming your way.