

ORGANIZING YOUR DNA RESULTS

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If you have wandered into the realm of autosomal DNA testing you have probably discovered that you aren't alone in the world. In fact you have DNA cousins. Most of you have lots of them. Hundreds, even. In order to make autosomal DNA testing useful to you in your genealogy, we are going to need to figure out how to identify your BEST MATCHES, and then keep track of them.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE: You don't need to keep track of everyone. Only your BEST MATCHES.

Best Matches have one or more of the following genealogical or genetic characteristics:

GENEALOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

- shared surname
- shared location

GENETIC CHARACTERISTICS:

- Share enough DNA that you can reasonably assume that you share a common ancestor at or before 5 generations (meaning that you and your match are 4th cousins or closer). As a VERY general rule, this is a match sharing more than 25 cM.
- Your match shares DNA with a Best Match

START WITH THE KNOWNS

To begin researching your unknowns, you need to first validate your known relationships. Using tools like ThruLines at AncestryDNA or The Theory of Family Relativity at MyHeritage, you can quickly identify matches with a known connection to your family. You can then genetically verify your connection using the total amount of shared DNA and the Shared cM Project tool (for more information see www.yourDNAguide.com/scp).

FIND MATCH GROUPS - GENETIC NETWORKS

Once you have identified just one good match, you will want to start trying to figure out how you are related. Here are the three basic steps for creating a Genetic Network around that match:

1. Use the Shared Matches tool on your first Best Match.
2. One by one you also investigate each of the shared matches to find their shared matches.

3. Ideally, you could also go into the match lists for each of these matches and record their genetic relationship to the members of the network. You can do this easily at MyHeritage and 23andMe, but it requires more effort at other companies.

Once you have repeatedly used the Shared Matches tool to identify a Genetic Network of Best Matches, you will need to organize and prioritize your list and begin your research. Ultimately, your matches will require you to take one of three actions: Dating, Going Steady, or Marriage.

DATING

You date those who have no genealogy listed. Dating mostly involves correspondence. Inevitably, you are going to need to reach out to some of these best matches in order to better understand their family history.

Here are some tips for writing great first-contact notes:

1. Always include the name of the person who you are asking about as many people administer more than one person.
2. Keep it short.
3. Reassure them it's ok if they don't know a lot about genetics or genealogy, or both.
4. Ask a specific question.
5. Provide an easy way out, like "If you don't have time to respond right now, that is ok! Please just write back to let me know you are out there."

For tips on finding a pedigree chart for someone with no chart, see my *Breaking Down Brick Walls with DNA* quick guide, available at www.yourDNAguide.com.

GOING STEADY

These are your most exciting matches. If there is someone who actually does have genealogy information, but no surnames in common with , you should get VERY excited. That means this person could have exactly the information you are looking for.

You will want to capture their pedigree information, and highlight the generation in which you should be looking for your common ancestor. This will help you focus your efforts on the right people, looking for locations in common with your own search.

For a Mac I take a screenshot using Cmd+Shift+4, and then edit in Preview. For a PC you can use the PrtScrn button on your keyboard, and then edit in Paint, or use the included Snipping tool.

Alternatively, you can clip from your computer browser directly into Evernote or OneNote. I like OneNote for its ability to write on and comment on the image itself directly in OneNote. I make a new notebook for every great grandparent couple I am researching. I then make a new section for every Best Match I am investigating, using the Pages to keep track of my research progress.

For example, I will clip, using the in-browser clipping tool, the profile information for my match, making sure to include the total amount of shared DNA. I will next clip any genealogy information

provided, all using the Region clip tool. Then, using the full page clip, I will document the shared matches. Then, for the exciting part! I go into OneNote and make my notes. You can draw directly on the images with the Draw tool, or you can add your own commentary by typing your notes.

WATO

One of the best tools to help you determine your relationship to others is the What Are The Odds tool found on the www.DNAPainter.com website. This tool lets you draw out the relationships that you can see between several of your matches, and then genetically hypothesize about where you might fit in.

MARRIAGE

When you see a match who has genealogy you recognize, you will want to organize them on some kind of chart so you can track and double check genetic vs genealogical relationships. You can use Excel, but you can use other options too, like just pencil and paper, or an online tool like www.Lucidchart.com. Or, just add them into your genealogy software program. The final step in all of this is, of course, to DO GENEALOGY!

Don't forget that the key to most good relationships is patience and persistence!