

10 Ways To Jumpstart Your Genealogy

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Why and How Do We Get Stuck?

We all get in a rut. Stuck in the mud. Overwhelmed. Even in our genealogy pursuits. The equivalent of a “Calgon Take Me Away” day in genealogy is when I’m trying to break down a brick wall, get ready for a genealogy society meeting, write an article for a newsletter, help a fellow researcher with a problem . . . UGH!

Ever want to get off the genealogy merry-go-round and just hide? The problem is that you make no progress with your research. And you don’t enjoy genealogy anymore. Rather than run away or worse yet, succumb to “analysis paralysis” and just return to doing the same things over and over, use these 10 ways to jumpstart your genealogy.

The 10 Ways

There are no secrets in the 10 Ways to Jumpstart Your Genealogy. Many of the resources below are FREE and available on the Internet or through a local archive or library or FamilySearch Center. Simply put, I’ve been able to “curate” hundreds of resources and create a list of recommendations.

The “ways” include: goal setting, embracing change, networking, education, advice, limits, organization, getting out, you and more!

Goal Setting

Put down in writing what you want to accomplish for the New Year is what many of us do in our personal lives, so why not in our genealogy lives? Here are some FREE resources and ways to get started:

- **Goal Tracking Apps and Websites:** Instead of making a list of resolutions for the new year, go 21st century and try one of many different apps! Check out **7 Best Goal Tracking Apps to Help You Reach Your Goals** (<https://www.lifehack.org/855964/goal-tracking-app>)

Remember, you need a road map of where you want to go if you want to arrive at that destination. Set realistic goals and break them down into mini-goals and check in at the end of each month to see what you’ve accomplished.

Embrace Change

Remember, “if you keep doing the things you always do, you’ll keep getting the same results you always get.” Yes we’re talking about expanding your horizons when it comes to how you experience genealogy. Here are some ways that are not just genealogy-focused; they deal with personal growth in general:

- **Dumb Little Man:** weekly tips on a variety of topics including simplifying your life, finances, and productivity (<https://www.dumblittleman.com/>).

- **Get More From Life:** Over 850 articles devoted to makes changes and doing things differently (<http://www.scotthyoung.com/blog/>).
- **Pick The Brain:** a self-improvement site with a focus on personal productivity, motivation, and self education (<http://www.pickthebrain.com>).
- **The Change Blog:** sensible advice on making small or big changes (<http://www.thechangeblog.com>).
- **Unclutterer:** A blog about getting and staying organized. “A place for everything, and everything in its place is our gospel.” (<http://unclutterer.com/>)

Networking

It is way too easy to pursue genealogy and family history research by yourself, especially with the availability of online databases and resources. The old saying “No man is an island” also applies to genealogy: you need to connect with other researchers. Here are some ways to do this, both online and in-person:

- **Message Boards:** while this might seem “so 20th century,” message boards to connect with other researchers is still valuable. Check out the **Ancestry Message Boards**.
- **Mailing Lists:** Just like message boards, mailing lists might seem like a 20th century holdover, but they are still an effective way of interacting with other researchers. **Cyndi’s List** has the most comprehensive list.
- **Facebook:** While Facebook can be a distraction, there are many diverse genealogy groups to be found. Check out **Evernote Genealogists**, **Genealogy – Cite Your Sources**, **Technology for Genealogy**, and **The Genealogy Do-Over** (to start!

Education

There’s only one way to know what you don’t know: educate yourself. With all the resources both online and in-person available to us now in the world of 21st century genealogy there’s no excuse not to take advantage of these resources – especially since so many are FREE!

Many genealogists think education means a week-long institute or a longer set of courses. Not true. The webinar craze has hit genealogy big time! Here are some of the various genealogy education resources you should take advantage of:

- **GeneaWebinars:** Want to know what webinars related to genealogy are being offered when and how to register? Check out **GeneaWebinars** created by DearMYTRLE.
- **Cyndi’s List – Education:** There are so many institutes including **Salt Lake Institute of Genealogy**, **Genealogy Research Institute of Pittsburgh**, **Institute of Genealogy and Historical Research** as well as online programs such as **Boston University Genealogical Research Program**, **ProGen Study Group** and the **National Institute for Genealogical Studies**. Cyndi’s List has these covered and others.

- **FamilySearch Learning Center:** FamilySearch offers a series of popular how-to videos and other resources for genealogists of every level.

Advice

All advice is autobiographical. This is one of the theories put forth by artist Austin Kleon of the book ***Steal Like An Artist***. “. . .when people give you advice, they’re really just talking to themselves in the past.” When giving advice it is “like me talking to a previous version of myself.”

If you’ve accomplished the **Networking** way above, it shouldn’t be difficult to get some advice. Here are some ways to get the advice you need:

- **Genealogy Squad:** “The mission of the Genealogy Squad Facebook group is to provide a positive space for the sharing of appropriate and reliable methods and resources to assist genealogists at all levels. We focus on answering questions and solving problems, while demonstrating best practices in all aspects of genealogical research.”

Limits

With so many resources available to today’s genealogist, living “abundantly” is a great thing but you have to set limits. Many of us equate limits with a loss of freedom or a loss of access. But we’re talking self-imposed limits here, meaning you are the one who decides what stays and what goes. If you want to propel your genealogy forward, you need to decide what to leave out so you can focus on what is important to you.

So how do you still take advantage of everything available to you while at the same time weeding out the “junk?” Here are some resources and ideas:

- **Google Alerts:** Use **Google Alerts** to make Google work for you. Create email or RSS feed alerts (instant or daily/weekly digests) for your surnames and other search terms you use frequently.

Organization

How can you really jumpstart your genealogy and find records and previous research as well as tools if you aren’t organized? This is a task that many of us dread and not just the “clean up” portion but also the maintenance part as well. Here are some resources and strategies for getting organized:

- **Thoughtco.com Genealogy – Organizing Resources:** Kimberly Powell has put together some great articles for getting your genealogy papers and files organized.
- **Cyndi’s List – Organizing Your Research:** Check out the tons of resources available for organizing.
- **The Organized Genealogist** group on Facebook is a group where you can swap ideas on staying organized!

Get Out!

Repeat after me: “Not everything can be found online.” This is not just paying lip service to what some consider an “outdated” method of doing genealogy research. It is a fact: the majority of resources for genealogists are still only available by visiting an archive, library or repository in person.

- **Visit a Genealogy Library: Cyndi’s List** has a list of specific localities Also leverage the power of **WorldCat** to have books routed to your local public library.
- **Join a Genealogy Society:** You don’t even have to be a member to attend most genealogy society meetings and events. Go local with your genealogy! Check out the resources at the **Federation of Genealogical Societies** as well as the resources at **Cyndi’s List – Societies** and at **CensusFinder** to find a society.
- **Attend a Genealogy Conference:** Genealogy conferences come in many sizes and shapes including large events such as those offered by the **National Genealogical Society** and the **Federation of Genealogical Societies** to regional offerings such as the **Ohio Genealogical Society** conference.
- **Take a Research Trip:** One way to combine the Networking way above with an attempt to visit various archives and repositories is to indulge – no, invest – in an organized research trip. The **American Ancestors** has a variety of organized research trips. For trips to the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, and check out the **Salt Lake Christmas Tour**. Check out **Cyndi’s List** for an overview.

You

You are essentially a remix of your parents and your ancestors and that is one of the reasons why we are passionate as genealogists. While you can’t choose your family (but wouldn’t that be great?), you can choose what you let into your life. Another great insight from Austin Kleon: “You are, in fact, a mashup of what you choose to let into your life. You are the sum of your influences.” Be selfish. Go ahead! And don’t be guilty. Being selfish is not necessarily a bad thing as long as you take the right approach.

- **Find out what makes you happy:** Happiness counts in genealogy. Take inventory with the **Goal Setting** way. For those genealogy tasks that you dislike, perhaps source citation, don’t just eliminate them especially if they add value to your genealogy research. Instead, heed the **Embrace Change** way and find a way to do that task that is simple and satisfying.
- **Take care of yourself:** If you’ve been meaning to make changes in your non-genealogy life, why not add them to your list in the **Goal Setting** section? A healthier you means you are better able to be a better genealogist. Focus on the areas that are important to you: mind, body and/or spirit.
- **Ask for help:** It is not a sign of weakness to get assistance. After all, you’re attending this presentation, right? Take advantage of the resources available in the genealogy community. One fun way to do this is to “buddy up” and find a genealogy research partner either online or in-person at a genealogy society or a library. You’ll soon find that “joys are doubled and burdens are cut in half.”

- **Understand the roles of others in genealogy.** This is where the **Networking** way plays an important part. Find value in others who can help you with your genealogy. Is it using people? Not really, it is connecting with other genealogists, sharing and finding out what they can offer.

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Don't wait to master all the ways to jumpstart your genealogy before you exclaim your results . . . track your journey and share it with others in the genealogy community. You have the ability to connect with and inspire many other genealogists, from the beginner to the advanced, by documenting your goals, your projects, and your results.

You can do this in a variety of ways including:

- **Social media:** post update status messages on **Facebook** and other sites.
- **Mailing Lists and Message Boards:** use these sparingly and don't come across as a spammer but still post those resources you think will be important to others.
- **Genealogy Societies Newsletters:** most genealogy societies need articles from members and even non-members on different ways to approach genealogy research. Not only will you be sharing your journey and achievements with a new group of readers, you might even find a new crowd to network with!
- **Speak and Teach:** although you may not have considered it in the past, once you've seen success in jumpstarting your genealogy, the best way to share your experiences is to show others how to do the same. Check out the **Genealogical Speakers Guild** for resources.

What Does It Spell?

Have you been paying attention to all 10 ways to jumpstart your genealogy? Do you know what they spell if we change the order of the categories?

Goal Setting
Embrace Change
Networking
Education
Advice
Limits
Organization
Get Out!
You
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This is the year for you to go out there and not just tackle your brick walls, it is the year to make progress in all areas of what genealogy and family history means to you. Now is the time . . . it is the best time ever to be involved with genealogy.

Resource List

Goals

7 Best Goal Tracking Apps to Help You Reach Your Goals

(<https://www.lifehack.org/855964/goal-tracking-app>)

Embrace Change

Dumb Little Man

<http://www.dumblittleman.com>

Get More From Life

<http://www.scotthyoung.com/blog/>

Pick The Brain

<http://www.pickthebrain.com>

The Change Blog

<http://www.thechangeblog.com>

Unclutterer

<http://unclutterer.com>

Networking

Ancestry Message Boards

<http://boards.ancestry.com>

Evernote Genealogists

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/evernote-genealogists/>

Genealogy – Cite Your Sources

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Citesources/>

Technology for Genealogy

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/techgen/>

The Genealogy Do-Over (Facebook)

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/genealogydoover/>

Education

Boston University Genealogical Research Program

<http://professional.bu.edu/programs/genealogy/>

Cyndi's List – Education

<http://www.cyndislist.com/education>

FamilySearch Learning Center

<https://www.familysearch.org/ask/landing?search=Getting%20Started&show=lessons&message=true>

Genealogy Research Institute of Pittsburgh (GRIP)

<http://www.gripitt.org>

GeneaWebinars

<http://www.geneawebinars.com>

Institute of Genealogy and Historical Research (IGHR)

<http://ighr.gagensociety.org/>

ProGen Study Group

<http://progenstudy.org>

National Institute of Genealogical Studies

<http://www.genealogicalstudies.com>

Salt Lake Institute of Genealogy (SLIG)

<http://www.infouga.org>

Advice

Genealogy Squad

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/genealogy-squad/>

Limits

Google Alerts

<http://www.google.com/alerts>

Organization

Cyndi's List – Organizing Your Research

<http://www.cyndislist.com/organizing/genealogy/>

The Organized Genealogist Group

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/organized-genealogist/>

ThoughtCo.com Genealogy – Organizing Resources

<https://www.thoughtco.com/search?q=organizing+genealogy>

Get Out

CensusFinder – Genealogy Societies
<http://www.censusfinder.com/genealogy-society-directory.htm>

Cyndi’s List – Genealogy Libraries
<http://www.cyndislist.com/libraries/>

Cyndi’s List – Societies
<http://www.cyndislist.com/societies>

Federation of Genealogical Societies
<http://fgs.org>

Federation of Genealogical Societies Conference
<http://www.fgs.org/conferences/>

National Genealogical Society Conference
http://www.ngsgenealogy.org/cs/conference_info

New England Historic Genealogical Society Research Trips
<http://www.americanancestors.org/events/>

Ohio Genealogical Society
<http://www.ogs.org>

Salt Lake Christmas Tour
<https://sites.google.com/site/saltlakechristmastour/>

WorldCat
<http://www.worldcat.org>

You

Gretchen Rubin (The Happiness Project)
<http://www.gretchenrubin.com>

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Facebook
<http://www.facebook>

Genealogical Speakers Guild
<http://www.genealogicalspeakersguild.org>