

HELPFUL HINTS FOR GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH

1. **Always use pencil when filling in pedigree charts and family group sheets.** You WILL be making changes.
2. **Always read the information in the front of each source you use.** Introductions, Prefaces, Lists of Abbreviations, etc. are important to understand what you are looking at. This information will explain what you can expect to find in the source, how to use the book to best advantage, clarify abbreviations, etc.
3. **When making photocopies, copy the title page of the source, and be sure to get the publication or copyright date of the book.** Also write down the name of the library, archive, or repository where you found it. You may need this source again months or years later and if you know where the source is located, you may be able to get the information you need with a phone call or letter. You should also photocopy the abbreviations and introductory or prefatory information so you are clear about the criteria used in compiling the work (titles can sometimes be ambiguous or misleading).
4. **When making photocopies of census records, copy the entire page and be sure to include the line numbers on both sides of the census page and the information from the top of the page.** It may take more copies, but you won't have to come back and recheck something because you don't have it on the copy.
5. **Write down stories, memories, scraps of information, etc. while you are talking to people so you can get the details correctly.** If possible, record on audio tape, but only with the interviewee's permission. The details from that conversation or interview may be the only clues to unlock a mystery.
6. **Start a system for organizing your research at the beginning.** You will be able to find what you are looking for and you won't spend months organizing it later.
7. **Always cite your source completely and correctly.** *Evidence! Citation and Analysis for the Family Historian* by Elizabeth Shown Mills is a great

guide. Using complete and correct citations will save you time and frustration later.

8. **Join a local genealogical society and attend their meetings and workshops.** You can never know everything in genealogy, and always must keep learning.
9. **Double check your information and your conclusions.** Once you assemble your evidence and formulate your conclusion, you should rethink them carefully and look for gaps or holes in your evidence. In addition to your basic conclusions double check your evidence, especially things like dates and ages.
10. **When you go to do research at a repository, decide what you're looking for in advance and stay focused.** Some advance planning and a research worksheet of some kind can help with this.
11. **Take change and small bills when you go to a library, archives or other repository to do research.**
12. **Share your information with other researchers and they'll probably share with you.** Just be clear with them as to what you are willing to have them share with others. Extend the same courtesy to them by asking what you may share.
13. **Do not share information from others without their permission. It is their property; they did the work.**
14. **Be aware of copyright and do not violate.** This is really important both legally and ethically.
15. **Expect to do your own research.** Librarians, archivists, and county records personnel can direct you to information and sources, but it is not their job to do your work.