

Family Group Sheets

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You probably have amassed tons of information about your family. You might have interviewed many different relatives several times. After all this information is gathered you must sort it out. You have identified relatives and ancestors and stories about their lives. Researchers can sometimes get confused and distracted dealing with a lot of names. It is often difficult to separate relatives from friends of the family. Therefore, genealogy charts are used to sort out these relationships.

You've heard the phrase, "a picture is worth a thousands words." Well, that's one of the purposes in using genealogy charts. It draws a picture of the family tree.

The first information you will extract will be placed onto a *Family Group Sheet*. A *Family Group Sheet* is used to organize and sort family data. It organizes the vital statistics for a family unit. It also includes notes on where you found the information.

The *Family Group Sheet* includes the names of parents and their children, and the dates and places of birth, marriage, and death of each person. Start with your parents then list you and your brothers and sisters. Record your given name, then your middle name if you have one, and then your surname (last name). Record only the maiden name for your mother. It is also useful to include nicknames which should be enclosed in quotations (i.e. "Butch"). Once you begin to search for your ancestors' names in records, they might be listed by their first name, middle name, nickname, and sometimes merely their initials.

The *Family Group Sheet* includes a space for the names of the parents of the father and mother. Children should be listed in the order of their births, from the eldest to the youngest. If there were other marriages, or other family units, they should be noted on the line that says 'other husbands' or 'other wives,' even if the couple was not married. Then another *Family Group Sheet* should be used to record that relationship. It should note the first marriage (or union) and any children of that relationship.

Once you have the names listed, then record the places of birth, death, and marriage. Be sure to include the city, county, and state where the event occurred. The county is very important.

Dates

Next record the dates of birth, death, and marriage. An event may have occurred on May 21, 1870. If it is recorded as 5/21/70 it could be misleading. In genealogy, the event may have occurred in 1970, 1870 or 1770. Therefore, dates are recorded in military style (21 May 1870), two digits for the day come first, the month is spelled out, and four digits for the year comes last.

If you do not know an exact date, there are several abbreviations which indicate approximate dates. Abt can be used for about (abt. 1910), bef for before (bef. 1910), and aft for after (aft. 1910). You may wish to include a date range. For example, born: 1900 - 1910 to indicate the earliest and latest possible dates.

If you do not have all the dates and places for an ancestor, fill in what you know. For example, suppose your grandmother told you her grandmother's name was Fannie. You would record her first name on the *Family Group Sheet* but not her last name. Since maiden names are recorded and not married names this space remains blank. The blank space helps to remind you that there is some missing vital information. Once the maiden name is found, it is then recorded next to her first name.

You would record the name of the state as a place of birth. If you do not know the city or county where she was born, leave these spaces blank. If your grandmother told you where her grandmother died, but not *when* she died, record the place but not a date.

Once you go through all your records you may realize you do not have some of the information needed to complete the *Family Group Sheet*. Write down follow-up questions to ask your relatives for the missing information. When you contact them, have your tape recorder handy. Asking a simple question like, "Where was Uncle Bob born?" may lead to a half hour discussion. You should fill out two *Family Group Sheets* for most of your relatives and ancestors, one as a child, and another as a parent. If you don't know an ancestor's parents, they should still be listed on a *Family Group Sheet* as a child. The space for the parents' names should be left blank. Then when you locate one of the parents, enter it on the appropriate line.

Documentation

When you gather information, write down where you got it. The information might come from an interview, a Family Bible, a funeral program or an obituary. If the information came from an interview, state the name of the person you interviewed, date you interviewed them, where you interviewed them, if the interview was on the telephone or in person and if you have a video or audio recording. For example, Video interview by Tony Burroughs with Alma Burroughs on 4 December 1975 at her house (101 E. Maple St, Chicago, IL). Place a small superscript number ¹ at the top of the line and record the footnote documentation at the bottom of the page or on the back of the Family Group Sheet.

If the information came from a funeral program record: John Jones' (1930-1988) funeral program.

So extract the vital information from your oral interviews and family papers. Enter them onto your *Family Group Sheets*. Fill out a separate *Family Group Sheet* for each family unit. Footnote the source of each item of information. From here, your objective is to try and fill in all the blanks on your *Family Group Sheets*, and keep them up to date.