

HOW TO SEARCH ANCESTRY.COM'S VAST COLLECTION

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The most efficient way to search Ancestry.com is by using the main search form. This allows you to receive results from all collections rather than from only a single record set. Follow these steps to search for an ancestor:

1. Point your web browser to the Ancestry.com home page and click the "Search" button in the toolbar at the top of the page.
The Search page appears.
2. In the Search section at the top of the page, type a name into the first, middle and last name fields.
In this example, the name of Uriah Helm has been entered in these fields.
3. Type a place where your ancestor lived in the field labelled "A Place Your Ancestor May Have Lived."
Because this field is a type-ahead field, it suggests locations as you type letters into the field. To select a location, scroll down to the location and click it to enter it into the field.
4. If the name you are searching for is common, you may want to add optional information to distinguish one person from another.
You can add life events (such as births, marriages, and deaths) by clicking the "Add Life Events" link again.
5. Click the down arrow to open the "Any Event" drop-down menu and choose the appropriate event type. Enter the year and location of the event.
You can add additional events by clicking the "Add Life Events" link.
6. If you know family members who can be found via your ancestor (such as a parent or spouse), click the optional "Add Family Members" link.
Select the type of family member from the "Choose" drop-down menu and complete the individual's first and last name fields. You can add additional people by clicking the "Add Family Members" link.
7. To add more search criteria, fill in the other optional fields available on the search form.
You can limit search results to the exact spelling of the name by selecting the "Match All Terms Exactly" check box at the top of the screen.
8. Click the "Use Default Settings" link under the first, middle and last name fields, if you want to configure more search options.
The options described in these lists restrict the search on the name.

- *Phonetic Matches: The Ancestry.com search engine contains algorithms that determine whether a name sounds like the name you entered into the field.*
- *Names with Similar Meanings or Spellings: This option is helpful when you search for common first names that are often shortened. For example, Richard is often shortened to Rich, Rick, or Dick.*
- *Records Where Only Initials Are Recorded: (This option is under the First and Middle Name(s). Use "Default Settings" link) Use this handy option when you search for people who are often referred to by their initials in records, such as A.J. rather than the full name.*
- *Soundex Matches: The "Last Name" field has an additional choice to restrict the result to Soundex matches- for a way of coding names according to the way their consonants sound.*

9. Click the "Use Default Settings" link under the "Location" field if you'd like to restrict the search to only the location you entered.

This option is helpful when you're searching for a common name and you know the location where your ancestor lived. The search then focuses on that person in the context of the location, greatly reducing the number of results.

When you type a place-name in the field, additional choices appear, including limiting your search to the county, county/adjacent counties, state, state/adjacent states, or country. Using adjacent counties is particularly helpful when you're searching counties that were later divided into other counties. The "Adjacent-Counties" search picks up the new counties if they're adjacent to the old county.

10. Enter a term into the "Keyword" field, if you want to limit your search to a specific criterion.

You can use a keyword to search specific items not covered in the other fields. For example, if you know that your ancestor lived near a specific post office or served in a specific regiment, you can enter that term into the field.

You can further limit the search to the exact term by selecting the "Exact" check box next to the "Keyword" field.

11. Click the down arrow in the "Gender" field and select the appropriate gender, if restricting the search this way is beneficial to you.

Choosing the gender is useful when you're searching for an ancestor who has a name that can be either male or female, such as Kelly.

12. Complete the Race/Nationality field, if race or nationality is a helpful factor for your ancestor.

This field is helpful when you search census records in which, depending on the census year, either race or nationality was recorded.

13. Set the "Collection Priority" by clicking the arrow on its drop-down menu, if you want to set preferences for some of the search criteria.

The “Collection Priority” menu tells the search engine to give preference in the results to records from a particular country or ethnic group. You can use this option when a ancestor immigrated to a particular country and you want to focus the search on the new country.

14. Use the check boxes under the “Collection Priority” to limit searches to only certain resource types, if you desire.

You can use the “Restrict To Functionality” to limit searches to only historical records. This way, the results contain only records that you can use as evidence- rather than to someone’s interpretation of a record in a family tree.

15. After you finish setting all search options, click the “Search” button.

The search results page appears.

