

KISS GENEALOGY

Keep It Simple Simon (KISS) Genealogy is simple genealogy and research entry at the basic level. It increases productivity and documentation by focusing on the basics. You do not need a fancy genealogy program or paid subscriptions for KISS Genealogy. Your goal is to maximize your research time and document what you find properly the first time.

This paper assumes that the reader is somewhat familiar with the reasons for basic genealogical research.

Remember that your **primary goal is research** and not the final cleaned up product of your research. So, KISS!

The goal of KISS GENEALOGY is to show how to enter, document and track your research. By focusing on the basics, you will be more efficient and accurate in your genealogy. KISS can help the beginner and others with its concepts.

We will cover the following basic areas to make you more efficient and accurate during research.

- Basic organization
- Genealogy programs
- Proof
- Sources
- Notes
- Entry fields
- Pictures
- Search tabbing
- GEDCOM
- Book style reports

Your goal is to learn how to KISS!

Basic organization

Getting organized sounds simple, but is harder to do than most people realize. It takes forethought and adding to your routines rather than creating new ones.

The main areas that researchers miss in organization are ...

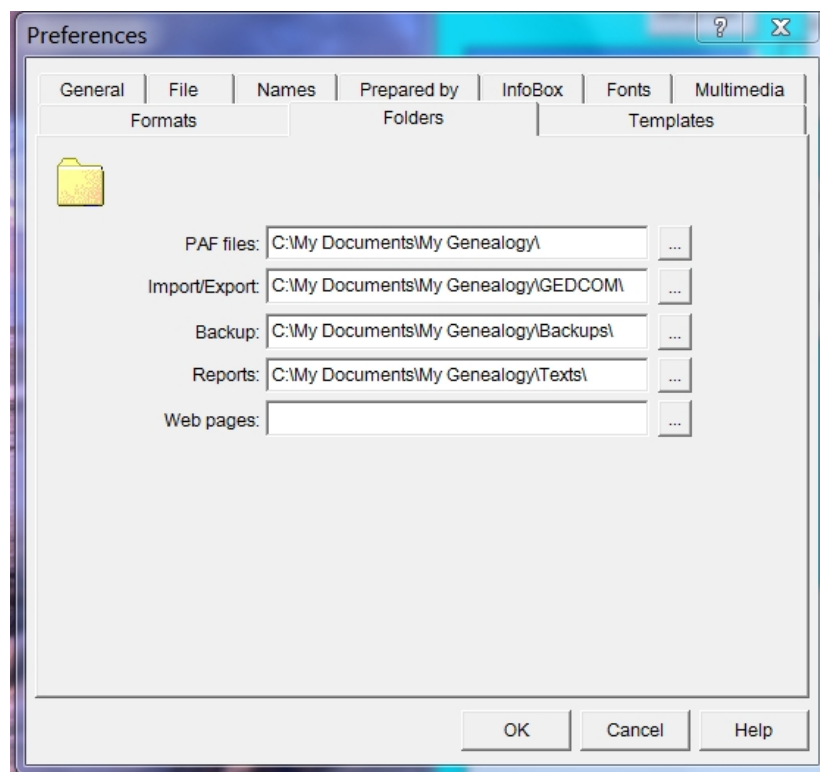
1) Having **one data file** instead of a different file for each line is more efficient and with consistent regular backups it is safer. The days of genealogy programs with a maximum number of names and lower computing power is in the past. Today the free genealogy

programs allow almost unlimited data. And the cheapest computer today is far more powerful than just a decade ago.

2) Keep your genealogy files **where you back up your data** more frequently. If you back up just your documents, then place your Genealogy folder (My Genealogy or similar name) there.

Your Genealogy Folder should contain the minimum sub-folders. Backups, GEDCOM, Text, & Pictures. This simple organization is missed by most researchers.

Most Genealogy programs will allow you to designate where your backups, GEDCOM, text and pictures will be kept. These may be under Tools and/or Preferences or something similar. The following example is from PAF.



Why are these sub-folders important? Besides grouping, think clean up. Eventually you will have to remove older material to save room and backup space. Deleting the contents of a folder or the older portions is far safer. In addition it lessens the clutter and allows you to focus on your task.

3) BACKUP – The main cause of loss of data is the lack of or not enough backups. In addition to having a standard back up routine, share your data. Most data files and backup files can be emailed. Make an arrangement with a friend to hold their back up data if they hold yours. Then email them a joke, comment or such with an attached data file or backup file on a weekly routine.

Why have **multiple dated back ups**? Imagine you deleted some data (names, notes or such) two weeks ago and now have realized you really need it. What to do? Go to your backups and find a version that you can use. Then use GEDCOM, copy & paste or compare (newer feature) to update your current data file.

An example of a data file name: CEPAF5-2013.paf -----> Name, type, year & extension (paf)

An example of a dated backup file: CEPAF5-2013Dec06.zip ----> Name, type, month, day & extension (zip)

And yes, you can have your own format!

Remember: **BACKUP, BACKUP AND BACKUP!!!**

Genealogy programs

Why use a genealogy program? Why not use an online collaborative tree? The answer is simple. **You control your data and your research.**

You are not allowing others to dictate what you accept or force changes upon your genealogical line. A genealogy program provides the structure of the search and entry in a logical manner. A genealogy program forces you to become the researcher not a copier or linker of data.

All genealogy programs do the same basic things. You enter data, create marriages, add children, link families and document where you got the material. For a researcher, gathering and showing what you have found in relationship to other data **establishes your credibility**. Genealogy without proof or sources is basically worthless because you can not duplicate or confirm what was done and how conclusions were made.

Your genealogy is yours. You may share and you may later post your data on a collaborative tree. But when you do, you have hopefully fixed your mistakes and typos. You will have organized your material so that it stands on its merits.

Once the research is completed to a level to be shared, then the quality of the genealogy program comes into play. Some are better at printing, some are better at web pages and some have neat little features others do not have. Those are personal choices AFTER the research. And that is part of another lesson.

Hint: One data file on a portable Flash Drive allows you to transport a copy of your data so you can use it where you research. The FHC has copies of the most commonly used genealogy programs so you can open your data file there and use it. Many of the newer genealogy programs have a version you can put on and use from your Flash Drive on any computer!

Proof

What is proof? Proof is a set of qualifiers that label it as proof. This is after a relatively exhaustive search and your level of proof must be clearly indicated or stated.

Here are some basics;

1) Proof is often that **key document** that lists that person A is related to person B with enough information to identify A & B. There are primary and secondary documents. Primary is the original birth, marriage or death record or a direct copy of such. Secondary is a report of such compiled from primary documents. Having the primary is the goal. For the DAR, three levels of primary proof are asked for. These are Birth, Marriage and Death.

Remember, the farther back in time we go, this higher level or burden of proof often can not be found.

2) Proof can be a **preponderance of the evidence** that any reasonable person looks at and comes to the same conclusion. This can be from primary and secondary documents that together or combined presents the case beyond a reasonable belief to the majority of people.

And sometimes the farther back in time, because of war, fire, pestilence and the ravages of time, we can not find this level of proof.

3) Then we come to **reasonable belief**. You have enough documentary evidence that more than about half the people looking at the same evidence will come to the same conclusion you did.

4) Even farther back in time ... you may find just enough evidence that **the person existed** at an X time and place. And any connection is a speculation or best guess.

This leads to documentation. This is a listing of every thing related found, often in chronological order, including conflicting information in your research.

Remember: **DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT & DOCUMENT!!!**

Sources

Basic sources need information on BIRTH, MARRIAGE & DEATH. The goal is to prove in some manner each one of these.

The two examples of sources are internal and external¹. Notice the footnote with the numeral 1? That is external and often shows up at the bottom of the printed page. The same reference listed internally in the notes shows the following.

GRAVE: See image: Carpenter Myron GRAVE.jpg
<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=120328621>
Myron Carpenter
Birth: 1854
Hudson Falls
Washington County
New York, USA
Death: May 14, 1874
Fort Edward
Washington County
New York, USA
Burial:
Union Cemetery
Fort Edward
Washington County
New York, USA
Plot: lot 59 sec 6
Created by: John Carpenter
Record added: Nov 14, 2013
Find A Grave Memorial# 120328621
NOTE: There is another entry, apparently a duplicate of the entry above. See:
<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=120328617>

The external footnote shows the following. ¹ Union Cemetery, Fort Edward, NY

The internal note required a header - GRAVE: followed by copy and paste with minor cleanup. And the option of a saved image name.

The external note had just basic info without all blanks filled out.

¹ Union Cemetery, Fort Edward, NY

Why were the empty blanks in this source not completely filled out? It is human nature. More than 75 to 85% of the people do not take the time to properly fill out the form. They put in just enough to make it good enough.

Answer these questions to yourself.

Which one is more accurate and complete?

Which one allows the researcher to double check the data easier?

Which one was the easiest to enter?

Which one can be used as a research log?

If your answer is internal sources you are learning how to KISS.

If you need external sources for a report, it is always easier to use your internal notes as the base – when you have the time to do it right. Some programs will even allow you to convert portions of your notes to external sources. This is if you label them properly.

Example: BIRTH: MARRIAGE: DEATH:

Notes

Notes, what? I don't need any stinking notes. I have a good memory. Well so did I, twenty years ago! But, time erodes details. Use the notes to put in comments, email discussions and concerns. This is in addition to sources and stories! Remember this is research. Put your notes with the file. This way it does not get lost. Your notes are your research log!

Here is one example of my once excellent memory that failed me. Many years ago I remember an email discussion or Roots Web discussion on a Carpenter attacked by Indians while on a cattle drive in Kentucky. Recently someone needed that information. But I can not remember the name of the Carpenter who was killed in that attack. So I used a key word search of my notes and found two such incidents! A quick review and I know which one was survived and the other who died of his wounds. I then did a book style report via e-print and emailed the data to the requester. If I had not put that data in the notes, I may have never found it, or I could have spent hours looking for it.

When in doubt, put it in the notes! You can always take it out later. For example, when I need further research on a pay web site or elsewhere, I place a reminder at the top of my notes. Really need with a brief reason why like Ancestry/Fold3 or a web link – a key word search for “**really need**” finds all of these. When I finish, I delete my reminder. I only have one or two such reminders, but I use them a lot!

By now you have seen some note headers or section dividers. You have been introduced to BIRTH, MARRIAGE & DEATH under sources. If you use internal sources within your notes, then you should have an idea what comes next. These headers organize your notes and should be in chronological order. And you can add them when needed.

BIRTH:
MARRIAGE:
DEATH:

Other samples include:

CHRISTENING: BAPTISIM: RELIGION: SCHOOL: EDUCATION: DRAFT:
MILITARY: OCCUPATION: LAND: DISIBILITY: DIVORCE:
BURIAL: GRAVE: OBIT: SSDI: CHILDREN: CENSUS: BOOK: IMAGES:
PICTURES: E-MAIL: CONFLICT: PRI: DIRECTORY:

Sometimes you will need to define them by using a number or a brief comment to distinguish different headings.

MARRIAGE3:
CENSUS: 1850 US Census
DRAFT: Civil War
CENSUS: 1870 US Census
CENSUS: 1875 Iowa Census
CENSUS: 1891 Canada Census
DRAFT: WWI

When possible I use copy and paste. When I can not, I try to contain who, what, where, how and why of the information cited. Just like in school, always properly cite where you got the information. This way you or some one else can find it again later.

Side note: Copy and paste is great, except those pesky HTML codes that clutter up the paste portion with internal hyper text coding. What to do? Either delete them or use a simple program like PureText to strip away the unwanted HTML code. See: <http://www.stevemiller.net/puretext/>

Entry fields

Whoa! Entry fields? Those are part of all genealogy programs ... Why say anything about data entry fields? It needs to be stressed that garbage in equals garbage out. If you do not start with a proper format of entry, then down the road it will cause problems for you and others. The key is standardization of your data entry.

On older genealogy programs and computers, space fields were limited similar to those old printed forms. People used abbreviations and short cuts. Then later, people are still trying to decide what they meant. To computers and computer programs; CA, Ca, Ca., Cal, Cal., Calif, Calif., and California are all different. They do not mean the same thing. And in computer databases the lack of standardization means you can not find or search what you are looking for.

The standard entry field for places must contain city, county, state and country. Anything less than the city needs to be defined. Places such as; Bethel Hospital, Tioga Township, Holly Cross Cemetery, and First Baptist Church are such examples. Townships are less than a city? Yes, for the purposes of standardization, a township is an unincorporated area of less value than a city.

The commas distinguish the levels of location. If you just write California in the entry field for a place the program thinks this is a city for search purposes. By entering two commas before the word California, such as: “,, California” – This defines it as a state for search purposes. Of course adding the country is needed for international databases. Thus the entry should be “,, California, USA”

Why use USA instead of United States or United States of America? It is simpler and can not be confused with any other words. And a simple find and replace later can adjust or fix it for other databases.

Why not put in the word “County” behind the county name? Think like a computer for a second. Assuming both of the following are placed in the right location to represent a county. La Paz and La Paz County to the computer is two different locations. When transferring to a tree or combining with another database which does the program use? Placement location and not the extra word “County” is what counts or defines if it is a county or not.

But, if you do use the word County, be consistent and place the name of the county in the correct spot with commas.

Dr. William Henry Smith, Jr. - breaks down to be prefix (Dr.), first & middle name (William Henry), surname (Smith), then suffix (Jr.). Each of these has their own entry field or way of being defined. Violating the entry format causes search and printing problems later. Prefixes are for professional titles and not for courtesies such as Mr. or Ms. A suffix is part of the legal name and not a nickname or description such as a twin. The current format for nicknames are in another entry filed or using the nickname in quotes after the first and middle names.

Example: Dr. William Henry “Will” Smith, Jr.

A person was born in Virginia in 1860, but never moved, dying in West Virginia in 1870. Why not just put West Virginia as their birth location in the first place? We know West Virginia succeeded from Virginia and became its own state in 1863. So, what is the problem? The answer to both of these questions is; *historic accuracy in your research*.

Names of places change, counties get reshuffled and places become incorporated and some dissolve. Such is life. Use the historic and accurate name of the place when the event happened. Then explain, in your notes, why the place is different today than then. Focus on research need, not the final product.

You need those old places and spellings for research. Do not go revisionist using only modern names and places. Be correct and as accurate as you can. It shows that you know the difference and improves the quality of your research work.

Pictures

I have mentioned that the primary goal of KISS genealogy is research. If you find a picture or pictures, you may or may not use it for future reports. You need a simple way of documenting and storing the picture for any possible use. Regardless of the format you use, keep it simple and be consistent. In your note field, add an entry such as IMAGE: or PICTURE: Then give the name. This way you can find that image when you need it.

Hint: Always have a Flash Drive to store images and notes. And in the field use your smart phone or digital camera to record images on the go.

Some people use the ID or Record Information Number (RIN) of the computer genealogy record. All individual entries in a genealogy program are given such a number by the program. You may not see it if the option is turned off. For larger databases where you have multiple or even a thousand people of the same name (John Smith for example), an ID or RIN number helps distinguish who is who. If it works for the program, you can use it also. But it is always your choice. Just be consistent and KISS. The following are some format examples.

RIN 134284 Henry Carpenter Bible

Carpenter Henry - Bible

RIN 98658 Mary A Carpenter BIRTH

Carpenter Mary A - Birth

RIN 142274 Orr Carpenter Marriage3	Carpenter John – Marriage3
RIN 148625 John Carpenter PicwWife	Carpenter John - PicwWife
RIN 6758 Cyrus Carpenter 1870	Carpenter Cyrus - 1870
RIN 6758 Cyrus Carpenter 1875	Carpenter Cyrus – 1875 IA
RIN 23055 Silas Carpenter 1892	Carpenter Silas – 1892 NY
RIN 64023 George Hancock 1901	Hancock George – 1901
RIN 142541 Shubal Carpenter Land1817	Carpenter Shubal – Land 1817
RIN 149585 Ruby Fisher Carpenter Obit	Carpenter Ruby Fisher - Obit
RIN 142549 Abigail Eldred Brownell GRAVE3	Brownell Abigail Eldred – Grave3

Search tabbing

What is search tabbing? It is establishment of a base search page then opening a new tab (webpage) for each item being investigated. This is done by hovering over the selected link then making a right mouse click revealing, highlighting and left mouse clicking on Open in a new tab. Even on faster computers, saving time here and there adds up over x number of hours of searching. This technique makes you more efficient allowing better use of your time.

On computers with slower internet, this allows the new pages to open on their own – regardless of the speed of the connection. This allows you to finish searching the primary page before moving on to what you have selected. If you have duplicate records from different sources this allows flipping back and forth for review or even making a side by side comparison.

After review of an open tab, simply close it and move on to the next tab. When all tabs are closed, you are finished and back to your primary search page. Repeat the process as needed and you will never loose your primary search page.

Note: Any open tab can be converted to a new window by dragging it away from the other line of tabs open. Then re-sizing will allow a side by side comparison.

If you have two primary search pages such as FamilySearch.org & Ancestry.com this technique works allowing comparison of similar data presented side by side. Sometimes one entry will be more useful or complete than the other. The comparison will reveal which is better for your purposes.

GEDCOM

Each genealogy program allows basic data transfer via GEDCOM – Genealogical Data COMMunications. Mostly by version 5.5 which has been around since 1996! Since then each company has made little changes that can cause problems. Even PAF – Personal

Ancestral File – the grand daddy of today’s more modern genealogy programs would lose picture files during a GEDCOM transfer to another PAF program.

Know this truth: Not all genealogy programs use the same **GEDCOM** format for images, sources and data. Even sharing data files between the same programs could cause lost images and data. It is even worse between different brands and versions.

So why GEDCOM? GEDCOM allows import and export of data across multiple genealogy platforms. This reduces re-typing and the potential of typos. You can limit just a line you want to share and exclude or limit information as needed.

So how can you avoid the pitfalls of GEDCOM? Would you believe KISS?

IF you share data across different platforms, **keep the data simple**. Use only the basic data entry fields, internal sources and keep a separate picture file.

Book style reports

Why not other types of reports? Am I biased? You betcha! A book style report, also called a modified register in PAF, is a concise narrative report that easily conveys information. I can e-print it and save it to a file or copy and paste it in an email. Other reports do not translate or format properly when e-printed or copied and pasted.

Other reports have different functions and designs. But, I find the book style report most useful with imbedded notes. Here is an example with narrative sentences with notes following. Some children removed for brevity. Identification numbers can be turned off.

1. **John S. Carpenter-32629** was born about 1808 in ,, Virginia, USA. He died after 1880 in, Webster, West Virginia, USA.

See page 48 of the Mowrey 1997 book.

CENSUS: 1850 US Census - See image: RIN 32629 John S Carpenter 1850.jpg
Name: John S Carpenter
Event Type: Census
Event Year: 1850
Event Place: Braxton county, Braxton, Virginia, United States
Gender: Male
Age: 35
Race: White
Race (Original):
Birth Year (Estimated): 1815
Birthplace: Virginia
Household ID: 208
House Number: 208
Line Number: 27
Affiliate Name: The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)
Affiliate Publication Number: M432
Affiliate Film Number: 937
GS Film Number: 29712

Digital Folder Number: 004191114
Image Number: 00037

Household	Gender	Age	Birthplace
John S Carpenter	M	35	Virginia
Sydney Carpenter	F	25	Virginia
James Carpenter	M	15	Virginia
Madison Carpenter	M	13	Virginia
Hanson Carpenter	M	10	Virginia
French Carpenter	M	8	Virginia
Evaline Carpenter	F	6	Virginia
Emaline Carpenter	F	1	Virginia

Citing this Record:

"United States Census, 1850," index and images, FamilySearch
(<https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.1.1/M88R-912> : accessed 06 Mar 2012), John S Carpenter, Braxton county, Braxton, Virginia, United States; citing dwelling , family 208, NARA microfilm publication , roll .

CENSUS: 1870 US Census - See image: RIN 54959 James A Carpenter 1870.jpg

On same page as sons James and John. See James notes.

See the family of father John S. Carpenter age 60. Under John S. is wife Sidna and the next entry is John A. Carpenter age 38 then comes Cain and Love. Is John A. the father of Cain & Love or another son of John S.?

John married (1-MRIN:11981) **Judith or Polly Miller-28456** daughter of Samuel C. Miller-28458 and Nancy Jones-53363 (MRIN:11982) about 1822 in ,, Virginia, USA. Judith was born about 1802 in ,, Virginia, USA.

They had the following children:

2 M i. **Elijah Miller Carpenter-28518** was born in 1828 in ,, Virginia, USA.

... Armstrong Hicks was a local character noted for his peculiarities and wry sense of humor around the town of Spencer. He was "of stalwart frame, full gray beard, homespun clothes and gum boots regardless the time of year or weather". Elijah asked him if anything could be hotter in July than the rubber boots he was wearing one summer day as he sat on the courthouse steps. Normally prone to pondering such inane questions at great length, he quickly, laconically, replied, "Yeh, Bub, my feet!"

Elijah married (MRIN:12029) **Sarah Jane Grady-28519** in 1853 in ,, Virginia, USA. Sarah was born on 15 Sep 1837 in ,, Virginia, USA. She died on 29 Jul 1918.

Conclusion

KISS genealogy is a data flow of research information being processed. Remember you are responsible for your genealogy and that you want to show that you provided care, custody and control over your data in a firm, fair and consistent manner.

Once you are organized and you follow the basic guidelines of proof, sources, notes and entry then your research is well organized and focused. The rest will fall into place. Your ancestors will thank you.

You will thank yourself down the road many times when you compare your genealogy to others. You will see what they are lacking because of what you have mastered.

What did you learn? You learned how to KISS!

KISS updated February 2014 from an earlier version also by John R. Carpenter.
JRC14Mar2016