

Operation Granny Files

A Quickstart Guide to Tree Building

Your cheat sheet for turning names into legacy

1. Start with What You Know

Write your own name first. On a pedigree chart, you are always Person #1.

Then add your parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents if known.

Don't worry if parts are missing—this is a growing tree.

TIP: Work backwards from yourself. Never guess forward.

2. Use Two Essential Forms

- Pedigree Chart: Your direct ancestors in a tidy tree shape.
- Family Group Sheet: Every nuclear family in one unit (parents + children).

Use them together: One shows the forest, the other maps each branch.

3. Fill It Out Clearly & Consistently

- Use pencil if writing by hand—trust us.
- Write full names, dates (DD MMM YYYY), and places in this format: City, County, State, Country (e.g., Provo, Utah County, Utah, United States)
- Record maiden names and middle names when known. Example: Ella Marie Johnson, b. 14 Feb 1913, Provo, Utah County, Utah, United States

4. Cite Your Sources (Even If It's Aunt Karen)

Was it a birth certificate? A conversation? A family Bible?

Add a simple note on the form—or better yet, on the back.

This builds credibility and prevents future confusion.

“Told to me by Grandma Nellie in 2004” is a valid starting point!

5. Avoid These Common Pitfalls

- ✗ Guessing birthdates.
- ✗ Merging two people with similar names.
- ✗ Assuming someone is married because they had kids.
- ✗ Treating oral history as infallible.

💡 6. Bonus: Understand Ahnentafel (Optional Nerd Moment)

Each person in your pedigree chart has a number:

- You are #1
- Your father is #2, your mother is #3
- Grandparents = #4–7, etc.

It's a handy system for organizing ancestors—especially for written notes.

🌐 7. Consider Digital Tools

Paper is powerful, but if you prefer screens:

- [FamilySearch.org](https://www.familysearch.org) – free, collaborative
- [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) – robust, subscription-based
- [MyHeritage.com](https://www.myheritage.com) – global focus
- [Gramps](https://www.gramps-project.org) – open-source desktop software
- [RootsMagic 10](https://www.rootsmagic.com) – Granny's desktop tool of choice

Choose one that fits your comfort level and goals.

✅ 8. Your Mission: Map What You Know

Download the Pedigree Chart and Family Group Sheet provided.

Fill in as many names, dates, and places as you can.

Bring these forms to the next mission—we'll help you verify and expand!

📁 9. Download the Forms Here

- [Pedigree Chart](#)
- [Family Group Sheet](#)