Your First Steps After Taking A DNA Test

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Steps for Success: Use the tools embedded into the DNA websites (AncestryDNA, 23andMe, MyHeritage DNA, Family Tree DNA, and Living DNA) to analyze and organize your DNA matches, develop relationship hypotheses, extend family trees, and search for unknown ancestors.

- Read all of the instructional material featured on each DNA test website.
- Download your raw DNA data and transfer it to DNA databases.
- Build a public family tree containing all of your known direct biological ancestors.
    - Include full names, birth, marriage, and death dates, and locations.
    - Attach this tree to your DNA profile. At Ancestry and MyHeritage DNA, computer algorithms will then compare your attached family tree to that of each of your DNA matches and identify common ancestors. Family Tree DNA's Family Finder highlights common ancestral surnames that you share with your matches.
- Compare your family tree to that of each match, starting with your closest matches, to identify common ancestors. While Ancestry and MyHeritage DNA have automated systems that compare trees and Family Tree DNA's Family Finder highlights common surnames, one cannot expect any computer system to do all the work.
- Annotate the DNA profile of each of your DNA matches, starting with your closest matches.
    - In the Notes box on your DNA match's profile, enter the names of your most recent common ancestors.
- Use AncestryDNA's colored dots to organize your matches into family groups.
    - Associate a color with each pair of most recent common ancestors.

o Place that colored dot on the profile of each match who descends from a given pair of ancestors. You can consider such matches "solved."
o These groups, when used in tandem with AncestryDNA's Shared Match tab, will help establish evidence for building and testing relationship hypotheses, finding potential new ancestors, and confirming known ancestors.

Craft a dynamite DNA profile.

- Include your name, email address, and social media links to facilitate easy communication.
- If you wish to upload a photograph of yourself, then use a polished professional portrait; avoid uploading "selfies." Do not use photos with emojis, face coverings, or altered with cartoons or other animation; such portraits do not generate a positive first impression.
- List your research goals and interests (including surnames and locations) and links to family trees.

Send your DNA matches introductory messages that yield responses.

- Send concise messages that communicate who you are and why you are contacting the match
- Keep the message brief and easy to read; write like an elementary school student. Check the reading level of your message at [Readable.com](https://readable.com/): https://readable.com/.
- Include at least one question in your first message.
- Beginning your message with "Hey" and ending with "Thanks in advance," raises the chances of your message yielding a response.
- Offer to help your match trace their ancestors.