

Gedcom - What's that?

What is it?

GEDCOM, an acronym for GENEalogical Data COMMunication, which is a specification for exchanging genealogical data between different genealogical systems.

It was originally developed by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as an aid in their extensive genealogical research and was developed so that a common standard of communication could exist between the Church and submitters of genealogical data.

Gedcom

A GEDCOM file is plain text, containing genealogical information about individuals, and data linking these records together. Most (if not all) genealogy software supports importing from and/or exporting to GEDCOM format. Also be aware that there are differing formats.

Version

The current version of the specification is GEDCOM 5.5, which was released on 12 January 1996. A subsequent draft GEDCOM 5.5.1 specification was issued in 1999, introducing nine new tags, including WWW, EMAIL and FACT, and adding UTF-8 as an approved encoding. This draft was never formally approved, but its provisions have been adopted in some part by a number of genealogy programs.

On December 6, 2002 a beta version of GEDCOM 6.0 was released for developers to study and begin to implement in their software. GEDCOM 6.0 will be the first version to store data in XML format. This will further change the preferred character set from ANSEL to Unicode, allowing for example the storage of East Asian names in their original CJK characters, without which they could be ambiguous and of little use for genealogical or historical research.

Example

A sample of a GEDCOM file. The first column indicates an indentation level.

The header (HEAD) includes the source program and version (Family Tree Maker v10), the GEDCOM version (5.5), and the character encoding (ANSI).

The individual records (INDI)

The family record (FAM) BIRT =Birthdate DATE 1795 PLAC = Place

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0 HEAD
1 SOUR FTW
2 VERS 10.0
2 NAME Family Tree Maker for Windows
1 DATE 25 JAN 2004
1 CHAR ANSI
1 GEDC
2 VERS 5.5

0 @I0044@ INDI
1 NAME Joseph /Bradley/
2 SOUR @S01871@
3 DATA
4 TEXT Date of Import: Jan 18, 2002
1 SEX M
1 NAME Joseph /BRADLEY/
2 SOUR @S01661@
2 SOUR @S01705@
3 DATA
4 TEXT Date of Import: 23 Jan 2002
1 BIRT
2 DATE 1795
2 PLAC Hilltop, Nottinghamshire, England
2 SOUR @S01871@
3 DATA
4 TEXT Date of Import: Jan 18, 2002
2 SOUR @S01705@

```

