

Tips to Organizing your Information for your Family Tree

Tips to Organizing your Information for your Family Tree By: Paul Duxbury and Kevin Cook There are 12 steps to keep you organized when making a family tree.

1. Gather all the supplies for your project.

You will need file boxes with lids, colored hanging file folders, standard green hanging files, manila folders, pens, highlighters, labels for folders, dot or star stickers, lined paper, additional boxes to expand your storage, a carrying case to hold all of this in, and a wall size pedigree chart. Pedigree charts can be found on most ancestry websites or at your local library.

2. File your family pedigree charts

Print a complete set of all your pedigree charts starting with yourself and working back. Label one of the green hanging folders "Pedigree Charts" and place all of these charts in it. Pedigree charts can be located at most ancestry and genealogy sites. Fill them out as much as you can. The more info you can fill out now, the easier it will be later.

3. Print a copy of the Circlled 5 generation Pedigree Chart

Print a color copy of the Circlled 5 Generation Pedigree Chart. You are the 5th generation. Your sixteen great grandparents are the first generation. Use the color code provided with the chart to fill in the rest. This chart can be found at most genealogy websites.

5. Put 16 hanging file folders in your box

This step needs no explanation. Just place 16 hanging file folders in your box. You may need more later on but 16 is the basic you will need for all your great grandparents.

6. Label the colored hanging file folders with your family surnames.

Label each of the folders with the surname of each of your 8 great grandfathers, and the maiden names of your 8 great grandmothers. If you don't know the surnames (last names) of your great grandmothers, do as many as you can and try to contact family members that may know other names.

7. Put a highlighted copy of your 5-generation pedigree chart in each of the colored folders.

Print 16 more copies of your 5-generation pedigree chart with you as 1 on the chart.

On one of the pedigree charts, highlight the names of all persons with the same last name using the color assigned to that last name. File the highlighted pedigree chart in its last name hanging file folder.

Repeat the process of highlighting a last name line and filing the pedigree chart in its hanging folder for each of the 16 last names of your great-great grandparents. This may seem tedious, but you will appreciate how much easier it makes things later.

8. Set up a file for each family on your 5-generation pedigree chart.

Set up manila folders for each of the families by putting a colored labels on the file tab. Match the label color to the color of each family group record. Be sure to use sticky labels. Sticky labels are great because if you have to change something, you just place a label over the existing one. They help keep things organized.

9. File the manila folders

Place the manila family folders in hanging folders, matching the color of the label on the manila family folder to the color of the hanging file folder. Color coding everything makes things so much easier to find later.

10. Put these items in each family folder

In a family folder place the family group record of the family, documents you have already gathered for that family, and any notes you have taken on the family.

11. Set up other useful files

Set up other files containing letters, photos, emails, birth certificates, etc. Anything that you can think of that may fit into its own category, make a file for it. It makes it much easier to locate later.

12. Expand to other boxes as needed

When one of your files gets too big to fit into your box, simply move it to another box. Take as many boxes as you need to get all the information you need. Having multiple organized boxes is much better than having it all in one box unorganized and a jumbled mess.

Following these easy steps will help keep you organized while creating your family tree. With such a big undertaking, organization is important.

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