

Secrets of Successful Search Strategies

1. Go advanced.
2. Enclose phrases in quotation marks, exclude terms with minus sign.
3. Try searching for a place and date(s) without a name.
Works in Ancestry, FindMyPast, MyHeritage, FamilySearch
4. Work back and forth between sites.
e.g. FamilySearch or Google with Ancestry or FindMyPast or Findagrave
5. Find a book in Google Books, then see if Ancestry or FamilySearch has it online.
6. Google a specific site.
e.g. site:rootsweb.com, site:findmypast.com
7. Use wild cards
Ancestry, FamilySearch, FindMyPast: ?=1, *=any number (including zero)
Google: no single-letter searches, * stands for a word (“when in the course of * events” or separate with a space “when in the * * * events”)
Archives.com, MyHeritage: no wild cards
8. Try Mooseroots <www.mooseroots.com>, “Google for genealogy.”
9. Use One-Step Webpages <www.stevemorse.org>.
10. Try keywords.
Ship name, associations, church, title.
11. Experiment with date ranges.
Ancestry, Archives.com: plus or minus 0,1,2,5,10 years
MyHeritage: “Match Flexibility,” 1,2,5,10,20 years
FindMyPast: 0-40 years
Google: 1823..1852
Be careful about “exact”: misses records without that date field
12. Work sideways: search for cousins, aunts and uncles, other collateral kin.
13. Search for nicknames and initials, alternate spellings.
Try the FamilySearch Standard Finder for ideas
<familysearch.org/stdfinder/NameStandardLookup.jsp>
14. Remember to search for women’s maiden AND married names.
15. Search on a relationship with partial or no name.

FamilySearch: Spouse/Parents/Other person (searches household)
Ancestry, MyHeritage: must specify relationship

16. Narrow time frame using “other” or “any” event option.

FamilySearch, Ancestry, MyHeritage: “Any”

FindMyPast: “Other Event”

17. Try browsing instead of searching.

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