

Ten Tips for Kids Tracing their Roots

1) Write down what you already know

This should include information on you, your parents, and grandparents and so on. List complete names, using maiden names for your mother, grandmother, etc. List birth, marriage and death dates as well as places if you know them. At this point, don't worry if all the information is correct – we'll work on that next!

2) Can you prove it?

You will need to see how much of what you have you can actually prove. Ask your parents if they have any copies of records. A birth record, for example, can provide evidence of a precise birth date, place, parents' names, ages, where they lived, where they were born and what their occupations were.

3) Obtain material from relatives

It's time to gather more information. Contact family & relatives (grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins.) They may have important documents such as family Bibles, old letters, journals, deeds, scrapbooks, family photos and more that can help you prove the information you already have and add to it.

4) Interview family members

This can be a lot of fun! Your older relatives can tell you stories that will provide clues to the past. You get to play the role of newspaper reporter, conduct the interview and write everything down. Using a tape recorder is a good idea too. You will be amazed at some of the things you will learn. Many older relatives have a lot of family information that no one has ever bothered to ask them about! Remember that the stories you hear have come down through the years so all the information may not be accurate.

5) Look in Newspapers

Newspapers from the city your ancestors lived in or near can be a great source of information. Was your relative involved in an event that might have received news coverage? If you know the time period, you can view newspapers on microfilm at your local library (if they have the newspaper on file) or contact the newspaper itself to see if they offer research services.

6) Search websites

There are many genealogy-related websites online that allow you to search for information on your ancestors. Initially these sites are free. Check with your parents to see if there are any costs involved.

A few sites to try are:

The New England Historic Genealogical Society www.newenglandancestors.org

Family Search www.familysearch.org Ancestry.com www.ancestry.com
Genealogy.com www.genealogy.com Ellis Island On-Line www.ellisland.org

7) Find published family material

Libraries and genealogy societies collect published family histories. Someone related to your family may have published information on your ancestors years ago. You can make great progress this way.

8) **Attend family reunions**

This is a great opportunity to meet distant relatives in person. Family reunions are the ideal setting for storytelling and the perfect chance for you to ask questions and gather new information.

9) **Play detective**

This can be the most challenging part, but also the most rewarding. You have gathered plenty of information and have lots of clues, now you have to play the role of detective, look at all the evidence and see where you can connect the dots. You can also read books about the time period that your ancestors lived in and use your imagination and the evidence you've gathered to picture what their lives were like.

10) **Publish your findings**

Congratulations! You put a lot of effort into finding your ancestors. Why not share what you learned with others? You can draw a family tree, make one online or build a family website. For more information on these ideas, see the websites listed above. You could even write a book about your ancestors like I did about mine – www.walkingboston.com/audio. Write your book by hand or type it on computer. Either way, you'll have lots of fun in the process and be proud when you're finished!

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Ben Edwards is the only tour guide in Boston who shares original colonial-era documents and newspapers, and reveals fascinating, little-known stories about early Boston life passed down in his family for over 200 years.