



Contents

Free A4 forms for tracing your family tree. Print them, or use them as a guide for your own spreadsheets. Work in pencil, cite every source as you go, and keep each form with the person or family line it belongs to.

No.	Form	Use it to	Pages
01	Pedigree chart: 4 generations	Your direct line: you, parents, grandparents and great-grandparents.	1
02	Pedigree chart: 5 generations	The same layout one generation further back (31 people).	1
03	Family group sheet	One couple and their children, with sources.	1
04	Research log	Every search you make, with the result and next step.	1
05	Research plan	One question, what you know, and the records to check.	1
06	Source citation template	A record sheet plus citation patterns for common sources.	2
07	Oral history interview kit	Consent and permission form plus question prompts for relatives.	4
08	Census transcription grids, England & Wales, 1841-1921	One grid per census year (9 pages), with that year's columns.	9
09	Parish register transcription sheets	Baptism, marriage and burial sheets (3 pages).	3
10	Photo identification sheet	Who, where, when, and the evidence for each.	1
11	Document and artefact record	Catalogue a letter, certificate, medal or heirloom.	1
12	Ancestor timeline	A life year by year, with sources and historical context.	1
13	DNA match tracker	Matches, shared cM and common-ancestor hypotheses.	1
14	Correspondence log	Letters and emails to archives and relatives.	1
15	Certificate order checklist	Before you order, an order log, and what to check on arrival.	1
16	1939 Register transcription sheet	England and Wales, 29 September 1939: exact birth dates, marital condition and occupation.	1
17	US federal census transcription (1850-1950)	A guide grid, what each census year asks, and state censuses.	3
18	Canadian census transcription (1851-1931)	A guide grid, plus census years, dates and what to look for.	2

Reminder: these forms are a starting point. Always check the headings on the original record, and record exactly what you see.



Four generations on one sheet. Print, then write in pencil.

Person 1 (you or your starting person)

Chart title or surname

Prepared by

Date

Chart no. / continues on chart no.

1

b.

d.

m.

How the numbers work

Person 1 is the person this chart starts with. Every father is double his child's number (1 > 2 > 4 > 8) and every mother is double plus one (1 > 3 > 6 > 12). Fathers are even, mothers are odd. If you can't fill a box, leave it blank: a gap shows where to research next.

Parents

2

b.

d.

m.

3

b.

d.

m.

Grandparents

4

b.

d.

m.

5

b.

d.

m.

6

b.

d.

m.

7

b.

d.

m.

Great-grandparents

8

b.

d.

9

b.

d.

10

b.

d.

11

b.

d.

12

b.

d.

13

b.

d.

14

b.

d.

15

b.

d.



Five generations on one sheet. Print, then write in pencil.

Person 1 (you or your starting person)

Parents

Grandparents

Great-grandparents

2x great-grandparents

Chart title or surname

Prepared by

Date

Chart no. / continues on chart no.

1

b.
d.
m.

How the numbers work

Person 1 is the person this chart starts with. Every father is double his child's number (1 > 2 > 4 > 8) and every mother is double plus one (1 > 3 > 6 > 12). Fathers are even, mothers are odd. If you can't fill a box, leave it blank: a gap shows where to research next.

2

b.
d.
m.

3

b.
d.
m.

4

b.
d.
m.

5

b.
d.
m.

6

b.
d.
m.

7

b.
d.
m.

8

b.
d.

9

b.
d.

10

b.
d.

11

b.
d.

12

b.
d.

13

b.
d.

14

b.
d.

15

b.
d.

16

b. d.

17

b. d.

18

b. d.

19

b. d.

20

b. d.

21

b. d.

22

b. d.

23

b. d.

24

b. d.

25

b. d.

26

b. d.

27

b. d.

28

b. d.

29

b. d.

30

b. d.

31

b. d.



One couple and all of their children on a single page.

Family group no.

Prepared by

Date prepared

Linked chart or tree file

Husband or partner 1

Full name (SURNAME in capitals)

Occupation(s)

Born (date and place)

Baptised or christened (date and place)

Died (date and place)

Buried or cremated (date and place)

Father's name

Mother's name (including maiden name)

Other marriages or partners

Wife or partner 2

Full name (SURNAME in capitals)

Occupation(s)

Born (date and place)

Baptised or christened (date and place)

Died (date and place)

Buried or cremated (date and place)

Father's name

Mother's name (including maiden name)

Other marriages or partners

Marriage or partnership

Date

Place

By banns or licence

Witnesses

Source (certificate or register reference)

Children (in birth order)

No.	Child's full name	M / F	Born (date and place)	Married to (name, date, place)	Died (date and place)	Source or notes
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						

Record every search: where, what, and what you found (including nothing).

Research question	Person or family line	
Surname and spelling variants to try	Date started	Project or tree reference

Date	Repository or website	Collection or record set	Person searched (and variants)	Years, place and search terms used	Result (Found / Nil / Maybe)	Reference or URL	Next step

Log the searches that found nothing too. "Nil" results stop you repeating work, and can be evidence in themselves.



Plan before you search: one question, what you know, where to look.

Researcher

Date started

Project or family line

1. The question I am trying to answer (one clear sentence)

2. What I already know (facts, and where each one came from)

3. What I think the answer might be, and why

4. Records to check

Record or source	Where (website or archive)	Place and years	Why this record?	Date searched	Result

Name variants and sounds-like spellings

Review date

5. Next steps (the first three things I will do)



Record where every fact came from.

Person, event or fact this source supports

Date accessed

Source type

- ☐ Birth, marriage or death certificate ☐ Census ☐ Parish register ☐ Will or probate ☐ Newspaper
☐ Military record ☐ Directory or electoral register ☐ Photograph ☐ Family document or letter ☐ Interview
☐ Book or article ☐ Website or database

Other

Title of record, collection or book

Creator or issuing authority

Where found (archive, library, website, URL)

Reference (piece, folio, page, certificate no., GRO ref.)

Date of the record itself

Place covered

Saved file name

Quality check

What did you actually see?

- ☐ Original image ☐ Index or transcript only ☐ A copy of a copy (derivative)

Who gave the information?

- ☐ Someone who was there, at the time (primary) ☐ Second-hand or later (secondary) ☐ Unknown

How does it answer your question?

- ☐ Directly ☐ Indirectly (a clue) ☐ Negative (the expected entry is missing)

What the record says (names, dates, places, ages, relationships, exact wording)

Reliability notes: doubts, conflicts, other records that agree or disagree

Written citation (copy into your tree software)



Patterns for the records you will meet most often.

A good citation lets a stranger find the same record from your note alone. Fill in the square brackets with your own details. Keep the order the same every time, so your notes stay consistent.

Birth, marriage or death certificate

[Event] certificate for [full name], [date of event]; registered [district, county]; GRO index reference [year, quarter, volume, page]; certificate number [no.], issued [date]. Held by [you].

Census (England and Wales)

[Year] census, [parish or township], [registration district, county]; [class and piece, e.g. RG 11/1234], folio [no.], page [no.], schedule or household [no.]; image viewed on [website], [date accessed].

Parish register

[Parish], [county], [baptism, marriage or burial] register [years], [entry number or date]; [archive and reference]; image [no.] on [website], [date accessed].

Wills and probate

Calendar of Grants of Probate and Letters of Administration, [year], entry for [surname, first names], page [no.]; viewed on [website or at archive], [date accessed]. The will itself: [court or archive reference].

Newspaper

[Newspaper title], [place], [day month year], page [no.], column [no.]: [headline or short description]; [archive or website], [date accessed].

Military record

[Name], [regiment, ship or service], service number [no.]; [archive reference or collection name]; [website or archive], [date accessed].

Interview, letter or family papers

Interview with [name] by [you], [date], [place]; recording or notes held by [you]. OR: Letter from [writer] to [recipient], [date]; held by [owner].

Online tree, book or website

[Author or tree owner], "[title]", [website or publisher], [date or version], [URL], accessed [date]. Treat other people's trees as leads, not proof.

Golden rule: cite as you go. Add the source the moment you find the fact, not weeks later.



Interview record, consent and permission wording.

Interviewee (full name)		Born (date and place)	
Relationship to interviewer	Interview date	Place of interview	
Interviewer	Others present	Length of recording	

How it was recorded

- ☐ Audio recording ☐ Video recording ☐ Written notes only ☐ Phone call ☐ Video call

File names and where they are saved

Permission and consent (to be read and agreed before recording)

I have been told what this interview is for: to help the interviewer research and record our family history. I agree to take part. I understand that I can pause or stop at any time, skip any question, and ask for any part to be left out or deleted.

My words may be used as follows (tick all that apply):

- ☐ Kept within the family ☐ Quoted in a family tree or book ☐ Shared online or in a podcast
☐ Deposited with an archive or society

Living people I mention:

- ☐ May be named ☐ Should be referred to by relationship only (e.g. "my cousin")

Before anything is shared, I would like to:

- ☐ Read the transcript first ☐ Hear the recording first ☐ Leave it to the interviewer

Interviewee signature	Printed name	Date
Interviewer signature	Printed name	Date

A plain-language template, not legal advice. If a recording will be published or deposited, check what the archive, society or platform needs. For anyone under 18, a parent or guardian should also sign.

Interviewer's checklist

- ☐ Test the recorder and batteries
- ☐ Quiet room, phones off
- ☐ Bring photos or objects to prompt memories
- ☐ Say the date, place and names at the start of the recording
- ☐ Offer a drink and a break
- ☐ Back up the recording the same day

Tips for a good interview

- Ask open questions: "Tell me about..." works better than "Did you...?"
- Let silences run. People often add the best detail after a pause.
- Ask gently for names, dates and places, but do not correct. Check the facts against records afterwards.
- Follow the story where it goes. Keep a short list of topics to return to, and stop when the person tires.



Open questions. Follow the story, and note what to check later.

Warm-up: the person and the place

- Where and when were you born? Who told you about that day?

- What is your earliest memory?

- Where did you grow up? Describe the house, the street and the neighbours.

- Who lived with you, and what were the rooms like?

Parents

- What were your parents' full names, and what did people call them?

- Where were they born? When and where did they marry?

- What work did they do? What was an ordinary working day like?

- What sayings, habits or tempers do you remember?

Grandparents and older relatives

- What do you know about your grandparents' names, birthplaces and trades?

- Did you meet them? What do you remember of them?

- Which relatives lived nearby? Who was the family storyteller?

Names

- Were you named after anyone? Are there naming patterns in the family?

- Any nicknames, changes of spelling, or surnames that changed along the way?



Open questions. Follow the story, and note what to check later.

Home life

- What did you eat day to day, and on special occasions? Any family recipes?

- What chores, games, toys and pocket money did you have?

- What music, radio or television did the family enjoy?

- Which church, chapel or festivals were part of family life?

School and work

- Which schools did you attend? Do you remember a favourite teacher?

- What was your first job? How did your working life unfold?

- Did you belong to a union, club or workplace community?

Moves and journeys

- Where have you lived, and why did you move?

- Did anyone in the family emigrate or arrive from elsewhere? What do you know of the journey?

- Are there any papers, tickets or letters from those journeys?

War and hard times

- Did anyone serve in the forces or work on the home front?

- What do you remember of evacuation, rationing or air raids?

Ask permission before gently asking about illness, loss or hardship. Let the person set the pace.



Open questions. Follow the story, and note what to check later.

Marriage and family

- How did you meet? Where did you marry and who was there?

- When were your children born? How did you choose their names?

Photographs, objects and papers

- Show photographs and ask: who, where, when, who took it?

- Are there medals, letters, Bibles, certificates or heirlooms? Where did they come from and who has them now?

Stories and sayings

- Which stories does everybody in the family know? Which ones do you think might not be true?

- Are there family sayings, songs or superstitions?

Closing

- Is there anything I haven't asked that you would like on the record?

- Who else should I talk to? Do you know where other papers or photos are kept?

Thank them, and agree what happens to the recording next.

After the interview: facts to check against records

List the names, dates and places to verify, and the record you will use.

Census night Sunday 6 June 1841. Reference class HO 107.

Parish, township or place	Registration district	County	Reference (class / piece / folio / page)	Schedule no.
Street, address or house name		Date viewed	Website or archive	Checked against the original image? (Y / N)

Line	Address or place	Name	Age	Sex (M / F)	Profession, trade, employment	Born in same county? (Y / N)	Born in Scotland, Ireland or Foreign Parts (S / I / F)	Notes
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								
13								
14								

Tip: Adult ages were rounded down to the nearest 5 years. Birthplace is only a county tick, so look for a baptism to find the parish.

Write exactly what is written, spelling included. Put your own additions in [square brackets] and unclear words as [?]. Headings are summarised; always check the header of the original page.

Census night Sunday 30 March 1851. Reference class HO 107.

Parish, township or place	Registration district	County	Reference (class / piece / folio / page)	Schedule no.
Street, address or house name		Date viewed	Website or archive	Checked against the original image? (Y / N)

Line	Name	Relation to head	Condition (Mar / Unm / Wid)	Age	Sex	Rank, profession or occupation	Where born (parish, county)	Disability	Notes
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									
11									
12									
13									
14									

Tip: The first census to give relationship to the head of household and the parish of birth. Ages are in separate male and female columns on the original.

Write exactly what is written, spelling included. Put your own additions in [square brackets] and unclear words as [?]. Headings are summarised; always check the header of the original page.

Census night Sunday 7 April 1861. Reference class RG 9.

Parish, township or place	Registration district	County	Reference (class / piece / folio / page)	Schedule no.
Street, address or house name		Date viewed	Website or archive	Checked against the original image? (Y / N)

Line	Name	Relation to head	Condition (Mar / Unm / Wid)	Age	Sex	Rank, profession or occupation	Where born (parish, county)	Disability	Notes
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									
11									
12									
13									
14									

Tip: Same layout as 1851. Birthplaces can differ between censuses, so record exactly what is written each time.

Write exactly what is written, spelling included. Put your own additions in [square brackets] and unclear words as [?]. Headings are summarised; always check the header of the original page.

Census night Sunday 2 April 1871. Reference class RG 10.

Parish, township or place	Registration district	County	Reference (class / piece / folio / page)	Schedule no.
Street, address or house name		Date viewed	Website or archive	Checked against the original image? (Y / N)

Line	Name	Relation to head	Condition (Mar / Unm / Wid)	Age	Sex	Rank, profession or occupation	Where born (parish, county)	Disability	Notes
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									
11									
12									
13									
14									

Tip: Same layout as 1861. Check the head of household's street and house number against the 1861 and 1881 returns.

Write exactly what is written, spelling included. Put your own additions in [square brackets] and unclear words as [?]. Headings are summarised; always check the header of the original page.

Census night Sunday 3 April 1881. Reference class RG 11.

Parish, township or place	Registration district	County	Reference (class / piece / folio / page)	Schedule no.
Street, address or house name		Date viewed	Website or archive	Checked against the original image? (Y / N)

Line	Name	Relation to head	Condition (Mar / Unm / Wid)	Age	Sex	Rank, profession or occupation	Where born (parish, county)	Disability	Notes
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									
11									
12									
13									
14									

Tip: The 1881 census is freely searchable on FamilySearch. Compare with the 1871 and 1891 returns to follow each household.

Write exactly what is written, spelling included. Put your own additions in [square brackets] and unclear words as [?]. Headings are summarised; always check the header of the original page.

Census night Sunday 5 April 1891. Reference class RG 12.

Parish, township or place	Registration district	County	Reference (class / piece / folio / page)	Schedule no.
Street, address or house name		Date viewed	Website or archive	Checked against the original image? (Y / N)

Line	Name	Relation to head	Condition (Mar / Unm / Wid)	Age	Sex	Profession or occupation	Employer / Employed / Neither	Where born (parish, county)	Infirmity	Notes
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										
7										
8										
9										
10										
11										
12										
13										
14										

Tip: Adds a column showing whether a person was an employer, employed, or neither.

Write exactly what is written, spelling included. Put your own additions in [square brackets] and unclear words as [?]. Headings are summarised; always check the header of the original page.

Census night Sunday 31 March 1901. Reference class RG 13.

Parish, township or place	Registration district	County	Reference (class / piece / folio / page)	Schedule no.
Street, address or house name		Date viewed	Website or archive	Checked against the original image? (Y / N)

Line	Name	Relation to head	Condition (Mar / Unm / Wid)	Age	Sex	Profession or occupation	Employer / Worker / Own account	Working at home	Where born (parish, county)	Infirmity	Notes
1											
2											
3											
4											
5											
6											
7											
8											
9											
10											
11											
12											
13											
14											

Tip: Employment status now reads employer, worker or own account, plus whether the person worked at home.

Write exactly what is written, spelling included. Put your own additions in [square brackets] and unclear words as [?]. Headings are summarised; always check the header of the original page.

Census night Sunday 2 April 1911. Reference class RG 14.

Parish, township or place	Registration district	County	Reference (class / piece / folio / page)	Schedule no.
Street, address or house name		Date viewed	Website or archive	Checked against the original image? (Y / N)

Line	Name	Relation to head	Age	Sex	Completed years married	Children born alive (total / living / died)	Occupation	Industry	Employer / Worker / Own account	Working at home	Where born	Nationality	Infirmity	Notes
1														
2														
3														
4														
5														
6														
7														
8														
9														
10														
11														
12														
13														
14														

Tip: The richest return for family size: it records years married and the number of children born to the present marriage.

Write exactly what is written, spelling included. Put your own additions in [square brackets] and unclear words as [?]. Headings are summarised; always check the header of the original page.

Census night Sunday 19 June 1921. Reference class RG 15.

Parish, township or place	Registration district	County	Reference (class / piece / folio / page)	Schedule no.
Street, address or house name		Date viewed	Website or archive	Checked against the original image? (Y / N)

Line	Name	Relation to head	Age (years and months)	Sex	Marital status	Birthplace	Nationality	Orphanhood (under 15)	Education	Occupation	Employer	Place of work	Years married and children
1													
2													
3													
4													
5													
6													
7													
8													
9													
10													
11													
12													
13													
14													

Tip: Taken on a different date to earlier censuses. It records employers and places of work, which are useful clues for tracing a worker.

Write exactly what is written, spelling included. Put your own additions in [square brackets] and unclear words as [?]. Headings are summarised; always check the header of the original page.



Transcribe each entry in the order it appears.

Parish or church	County	Denomination	Register and years covered
Archive and reference	Image or page no.	Website or archive visited	Date transcribed

Entry no.	Date of baptism	Child's name	Date of birth (if given)	Father's name	Mother's name	Abode	Father's occupation	Notes
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								
13								

Tip: in some periods the register gives the date of birth, the mother's maiden name or the father's occupation. Record each extra detail.

Transcribe exactly as written, keeping the original spellings. Put your own additions in [square brackets] and unclear words as [?].



Transcribe each entry in the order it appears.

Parish or church	County	Denomination	Register and years covered
Archive and reference	Image or page no.	Website or archive visited	Date transcribed

Entry no.	Date	Groom's name	Age or status	Occupation	Bride's name	Age or status	Residence(s)	Fathers' names and occupations	Witnesses	Banns or licence
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										
7										
8										
9										
10										
11										
12										
13										

Tip: note whether each person signed or made a mark, and compare the witnesses with other family names.

Transcribe exactly as written, keeping the original spellings. Put your own additions in [square brackets] and unclear words as [?].



Transcribe each entry in the order it appears.

Parish or church	County	Denomination	Register and years covered
Archive and reference	Image or page no.	Website or archive visited	Date transcribed

Entry no.	Date of burial	Date of death (if given)	Name	Age	Abode	Occupation or relationship	Cause of death or notes	Minister
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								
13								

Tip: burials may give a different age or abode to the census. Record the entry as written and compare later.

Transcribe exactly as written, keeping the original spellings. Put your own additions in [square brackets] and unclear words as [?].



Who, where, when and how you know.

Photo reference no.	Scan file name	Date recorded	Recorded by
---------------------	----------------	---------------	-------------

Paste a print or thumbnail here

Who is in the photo (names, left to right, back row first)

Where it was taken

Date, or estimated range

Reason for that date (clothing, studio, inscription)

Photographer or studio (from the backstamp)

Who gave you this copy, and when	Current owner or location of the original
Size and format notes	Permission to share (who, and any conditions)

Format and condition

- ☐ Daguerreotype ☐ Ambrotype ☐ Tintype ☐ Carte de visite ☐ Cabinet card ☐ Snapshot print ☐ Postcard
- ☐ Negative or slide ☐ Digital file
- ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Fragile ☐ Faded ☐ Torn or creased ☐ Stained ☐ Stuck in album

Writing on the back, or captions (copy exactly)

Dating clues: clothing, hairstyle, props, backdrop, mount, studio details

Notes and doubts about who is who



Catalogue letters, certificates, medals and heirlooms.

Record no.

Item name or type

Date recorded

Recorded by

The item

Description (what it is, what it shows)

Date on the item, or estimated

Place

Size or dimensions

Material (paper, card, metal, fabric)

Number of pages or pieces

Maker, author or issuer

Language or script

Condition

☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Fragile ☐ Torn ☐ Stained ☐ Mould ☐ Faded ☐ Insect damage ☐ Repaired

Where it is now

Current owner or custodian

Contact

Where it is stored

How it came to the family (provenance)

People named in, or connected to, this item (link them to your tree)

Inscriptions and transcription (copy exactly; [?] for unclear words)

Digital file names

Scanned or photographed on

Resolution

Handling reminders: clean, dry hands. Pencil only near originals. No sticky tape, glue, staples or lamination. Store flat, cool and dry, away from attics, cellars and direct sunlight. Photograph or scan the item before you do anything else.



Ancestor timeline

Plot a life year by year to spot gaps and impossibilities.

Person	Born	Died	Prepared by

List every record you have, in date order. Then look for gaps, impossibilities (a mother aged 8) and moves between places. Each gap or oddity is your next research question.

[illegible]



Track matches, shared cM and your common-ancestor ideas.

Tested person

Test company

Kit or profile ID

Date reviewed

Match name or username	Company	Shared cM	Segments (longest cM)	Predicted relationship	Shared matches (names)	Tree linked? (Y / N)	Common ancestor (your hypothesis)	Contacted (date)	Notes and next step

Tip: compare shared cM against the Shared cM Project tool on DNA Painter. Group matches by common ancestor, and keep DNA evidence separate from your paper trail. Keep this sheet private: it names living people.



Correspondence log

Letters and emails to archives, offices and distant relatives.

Project or family line

Prepared byDate started[illegible]

Tip: keep a copy of every letter and email, and always quote your own reference number so replies can be matched up.



Free to print and share for your own family history research



England and Wales, 29 September 1939. Record series RG 101.

Parish, town or area (as shown)	Local authority or registration district	County	Enumeration district and reference (RG 101 piece and letter)	Page no.
Street or address (as written)		Date viewed	Website or archive	Checked against the original image? (Y / N)

Line	Schedule no.	Sub no.	Address (first line of household)	Surname	First name(s)	Role (institutions only)	Sex	Date of birth (day / month / year)	Marital condition (as written)	Occupation	Later changes and notes
1											
2											
3											
4											
5											
6											
7											
8											
9											
10											
11											
12											
13											

Taken on 29 September 1939 for National Registration, this is the nearest thing to a 1939 census. It records an exact date of birth, which helps separate people of the same name. The sheet follows the record series RG 101. Closed records: entries for people born less than 100 years ago, and not known to have died, are blanked out online. Write "closed" in the name column and try again later. Later changes of name (often a married name) were added over the years, so note them in the last column. Crossed-out entries marked "See page..." are continuation entries and usually add nothing. Transcribe exactly what is written, with your own additions in [square brackets] and unclear words as [?].



A guide grid for 1850 to 1950.

State

County

Township, city or ward

Enumeration district (1880 onwards)

Sheet or page no.

Reference (NARA series, roll, page)

Street and house number (1880 onwards)

Date enumerated (as written)

Date viewed

Website or archive

Checked against the original image? (Y / N)

Line	Dwelling / family no.	Name	Relationship to head	Sex	Race or colour (as written)	Age	Marital status	Place of birth	Father's birthplace	Mother's birthplace	Occupation or industry	Immigration year, naturalisation	Notes
1													
2													
3													
4													
5													
6													
7													
8													
9													
10													
11													
12													
13													
14													

Columns change from year to year, so use this grid as a guide and follow the printed headings on the page. Leave a column blank if the census did not ask it. Transcribe race, birthplace and occupation exactly as written, even where the wording is now outdated.

Put your own additions in [square brackets] and unclear words as [?]. The next page shows what each census year asked, and page 3 covers state censuses.



Check the printed headings on every page.

What is new, or worth looking for, in each year. Check the printed headings on every page, because questions and column order differ.

Year	What it records, and what to look for
1850	First census to name every person in a household, with age, sex, race (colour) and place of birth. No relationships are given, so infer them with care. Adds the value of real estate. Slave schedules are separate.
1860	Same layout as 1850, plus the value of personal property. Still no relationship column. Slave schedules continue.
1870	Adds a mark where a parent was foreign-born and, for those born or married within the year, the month. A column marks male citizens aged 21 and over. Still no relationship column.
1880	First census to record relationship to the head of household. Gives the birthplace of each parent, the street and house number, and the enumeration district.
1890	Almost all destroyed by fire and water damage, and only a few thousand names survive. Bridge the gap with state censuses, directories and the 1880 and 1900 returns.
1900	Adds month and year of birth (not always accurate), years married, children born and children living, year of immigration and naturalisation status.
1910	Years married and children born and living continue. Notes Union or Confederate veterans and weeks unemployed. Owned or rented home.
1920	Adds the year of naturalisation alongside year of immigration. Employer or employee. Owned or rented home, with parents' birthplaces.
1930	Adds age at first marriage, radio ownership and the war served in by veterans. Records the value of an owned home or monthly rent.
1940	Adds highest grade completed, weeks worked and 1939 income, and where the person lived in 1935. Extra questions (such as marriage history and children born) were put to a sample only.
1950	Open to the public since 2022. Marital status, parents' birthplaces, children ever born and similar items were asked of a sample of people on each page.

Where to search: FamilySearch (free account), Ancestry, and the US National Archives (NARA) website for the 1950 census. Treat an index as a finding aid and confirm on the original image. Names are often misspelt, so search by sound and by household.



Fill the gaps between federal censuses, and check what you find.

Year	What the New York State census records
1825, 1835, 1845	Mostly heads of household with statistics rather than every name: births, marriages and deaths in the year, voters, aliens and militia. 1845 adds birthplace and school attendance. Most of these years are lost, so ask county repositories.
1855	The first to name every person. Gives relationship to head, native, naturalised or alien, literacy, county of birth within New York, land owned and its value, disability, and years resident in the town or city. Marriages and deaths are counted, but without names.
1865	Adds how many children a woman had, how many times married, usual place of work, and military service since 1861. Marriages and deaths are listed with names, which can stand in for missing vital records.
1875	Similar to 1865: relationship, citizenship, literacy, county of birth, land, disability and work, with named marriages and deaths.
1892	Little detail: citizen or alien, and literacy.
1905, 1915, 1925	Relationship to head, citizen or alien, years in the United States and literacy. 1925 adds the place and year of naturalisation.
Gaps	No state census was taken in 1885 or 1895. Most state copies before 1915 were lost in the 1911 State Library fire, so a county copy may be all that survives.

Online, New York: 1855 is on FamilySearch for most counties. 1865 and 1875 are there for most but not all. 1892 covers 40 counties, and 1905 all but 13. 1915 and 1925 cover all 62 counties, with the index on FamilySearch and the images on Ancestry.

Checking an 1855 entry

- ☐ Confirm your county was covered. The 1855 census is missing for some downstate counties, including Queens, Richmond and Suffolk. Manhattan's Ward 17 is only in the NYG&B Online Collections.
- ☐ Find the household on FamilySearch, note the county and town, then read the original image rather than trusting the index.
- ☐ Match the household to the 1850 and 1860 federal returns. Names, ages and birthplaces should agree within a year or two.
- ☐ Use "county of birth" to search that county's births, baptisms and church records, and "years resident" to date a move.
- ☐ Remember the informant: a neighbour may have answered for a family who were away. Treat an odd age or name as a clue to test, not an answer.
- ☐ Confirm facts with vital records and other sources, and log every search, including the ones that found nothing.

Using any state census

- ☐ Check which years your state took one. Most states counted every ten years in years ending in 5, but coverage is uneven, and some states (Connecticut, Idaho, Kentucky and Ohio) have no known records.
- ☐ Look for the originals at the state archives or state library. Some are on microfilm through Family History Centers and some are on commercial sites.
- ☐ Use Ann S. Lainhart's State Census Records to see what survives for each state.
- ☐ State censuses can stand in for missing federal returns, such as 1890, and many asked questions the federal census did not.
- ☐ Record each one on the grid in this pack, writing the state and year at the top, then compare with the nearest federal censuses either side.
- ☐ For New York, the FamilySearch Wiki coverage tables and NYG&B county guides show which counties exist for each year.

A guide grid for 1851 to 1931.

Province or territory	Census district (no. and name)	Sub-district or division	Page no.	Reference (LAC reel, item or image)
Place, street or lot (as written)	Date enumerated (as written)	Date viewed	Website or archive	Checked against the original image? (Y / N)

Line	Dwelling / family no.	Name	Relationship to head	Sex	Marital status	Age (and date of birth, where asked)	Place of birth	Parents' birthplaces (where asked)	Year of immigration, naturalisation	Origin or nationality (as written)	Religion	Occupation	Notes
1													
2													
3													
4													
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6													
7													
8													
9													
10													
11													
12													
13													
14													

Columns change from census to census, so follow the printed headings and leave a column blank if it was not asked. Transcribe origin, nationality, religion and birthplace exactly as written, even where the wording is now outdated.

Put your own additions in [square brackets] and unclear words as [?]. The next page lists the census years, dates and what to look for.

Check the printed headings on every page.

Census days as listed in published Canadian census tables. Check the printed headings on every page, because questions differ by year.

Year	Census day	Where it was taken	What to look for
1851-52	12 Jan 1852	Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia	Colonial returns, taken before Confederation. Catalogues may file them under 1851 or 1852, so check both.
1861	14 Jan 1861	As 1851-52, plus Prince Edward Island	Colonial returns, taken before Confederation.
1871	2 Apr 1871	Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia	First census after Confederation, and the start of the ten-yearly series that runs to 1971.
1881	4 Apr 1881	Adds British Columbia, Manitoba, PEI and the North-West Territories	The country now stretches west. Check the district name against a map of the time.
1891	6 Apr 1891	As 1881	Compare the household with 1881 and 1901 to follow families through moves.
1901	31 Mar 1901	Adds the Yukon	Use it to bridge from 1891 to 1911, and read the origin and immigration columns carefully.
1906	24 Jun 1906	Prairie census: Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan	Prairie provinces counted every five years, so it fills the gap between the ten-yearly returns.
1911	1 Jun 1911	Adds Alberta and Saskatchewan to the main census	Has several questions about occupation and unemployment.
1916	1 Jun 1916	Prairie census: Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan	Useful for tracing families through the First World War years.
1921	1 Jun 1921	Ten-yearly census, all provinces and territories	Asked for parents' birthplaces, as the 1931 census did.
1926	1 Jun 1926	Prairie census: Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan	Last Prairie census in this series.
1931	1 Jun 1931	Ten-yearly census, all provinces and territories	Released 1 June 2023 after the 92-year rule. Only the population schedule (Form 1) survives. Asks relationship, birthplaces of the person and parents, years of immigration and naturalisation, nationality, racial origin, language, religion, literacy and occupation.

Where to search: Library and Archives Canada (free census search and images), FamilySearch (free account), Ancestry and MyHeritage. Census returns are held by Statistics Canada for 92 years before release.