Tips for Getting Started in Genealogy

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1. **Collect all family evidence from your home**. Keep it in labeled folders or binders for easy reference. Don't lump everything together. Save mementos. Check for names and dates on the back.
2. **Fill out a Family Group Sheet, Pedigree Chart and Descendant Chart with what you know**. Keep your documentation/evidence handy.
3. **Track your ancestor in every available census**. Remember the census was not meant for genealogical research, but to track data important to the government. Ages are notoriously wrong. Copy the entire page to understand the neighborhood.
4. **Check the whole family and FAN club**—friends/family, associates and neighbors provide clues.
5. **Don't assume documents are entirely accurate**. **Spelling will vary from document to document**. Keep track of different spellings; don't change them. Primary evidence (eyewitness; there at the time.) Consider who gave the information. Was there a reason to misrepresent information? Death records often have wrong birthdates, birth locations, parents' names.
6. **Look at original documents, not indexes**. The indexer may get information wrong or not include peripheral information that contains valuable clues.
7. **Create a timeline with everything you know**. This helps to see if events were possible or plausible. Helps you untangle two people with the same names.
8. **Interviews are fun and helpful but may be misleading**. Does the person have a reason to lie or mislead you? Memories become distorted over time even without a reason. Think of the perspective the person had based on their age at the time of the event.
9. **Internet trees are good for clues and people who share an interest in your family**. Many are notoriously wrong.
10. **Check all sources on every site**. There may be different versions or images that are easier to read. Ancestry.com; familysearch.org; Google.com; Americanancestors.org., etc.
11. **Educate yourself with webinars, books, conferences, interest groups**.
12. **Write up what you know as you go along**. It gives you clarity and gives you motivation.