



AncestryDNA: Using Cousin Matches for Your Genealogical Research

This technique is good for any just about research question, but is especially beneficial for those trying to find a missing line in their tree, missing parents, or adoptees seeking their biological families, etc.

The best use of DNA for genealogical research comes in the **Cousin Matches**. Here I'm going to show you how to sort and filter your DNA Cousin Matches to zero in on the answers to your research questions.

Keep in mind, this is the basic principle and adding complex family structures can get complicated. Not every scenario can be explained here, but once you understand the concept, you can supersleuth the rest.

Step One - Research Question

Determine what you want to learn. Be as specific as you can. I recommend that you use this technique on one person or one line at a time in the family tree. Once you master this technique you can then use it over and over again for other lines in your tree.

Step Two - View Cousin Matches

- Go to your Cousin Matches by clicking on the DNA tab at the top of the screen, in the dropdown list, choose Cousin Matches.
- You're looking for your closest cousin matches, ideally 2nd cousins or closer, but 3rd to 4th cousins are good too.
- Note all the ways you can filter this list. We'll be using Groups to separate out the four lines of your four grandparents. You can use this technique to just separate your father's side from your mother's side if you choose.

Filter by: Unviewed Common ancestors Messaged Notes Trees Shared DNA Groups

- Create 2-4 Groups by clicking on the "Groups" drop down menu and choose "create custom group." Name each one for the surname (maiden names for women, if you know them) of your grandparents.
- If you don't know your grandparents or your parents surnames, then create two groups, one for the "father's side" and one for the "mother's side." Alternatively, you could name



these groups of grandparents the “paternal grandfather”, the “maternal grandfather”, the “maternal grandmother”, and the “paternal grandmother.” How you name these groups are entirely up to you.

- Don't worry about making a mistake. You can always delete these groups later if you wish. Just click on the pencil icon next to any of the groups and choose “delete group.”
- Another hypothetical example:
 - Say your paternal grandfather's surname is Jones. Create a group called “Jones Line.”
 - Let's say you also know who your paternal grandmother is, her maiden name was Simpson. Create a group called “Simpson Line.”
 - Let's also pretend that that is all you know, because you know nothing about your mother's side. Create a group called “Mother's side”.
 - In this scenario you would have three groups to start, named “Jones,” “Simpson,” and “Mother's Side.”

Step Three - Identify One Side of the Family

- Identify a cousin that you know is on one side of your family. This could be anyone you know or a cousin match where you recognize the surnames to be on your mother's side or father's side or more specifically a grandparents lines (if you know them).
- Add that DNA Cousin to the group that you know they belong in using the + button next to “Add/edit groups” in the right side column. For example you might add them to your “mother's side” or your paternal grandfather's surname group.
- Continue with one or two more if you can.
- Depending on your research question and who you're looking for will determine which cousins you are focusing on.
 - If you're looking for a great grandparent, then you're looking to 2nd cousin matches who will have the same common ancestor.
 - **Trick to Remember:** To help me remember how to remember which cousins will have which common ancestors...
 - Count the “G”s - Grandparent counts as one of the “G”s”
 - If you're looking for a Great Grandfather, then you're looking for 2nd cousins because there are two “G”s.
 - Looking for a Grandparent, then you're looking for 1st cousins because there is only one “G.”
 - If there are half siblings or intermarrying within family clans, this can complicate things a little. For now we're going to continue with this process to keep it simple.

Step Four - Separate Cousins Along Family Lines

- Click on one of the Cousin Matches that you Identified and added to a group.
- You should now see at the top of the screen it will say “You and _____” with two round profile pictures (yours and the other DNA cousin).
- Now click on “**Shared Matches.**” It looks like this just under your pictures.



- This will filter all the matches that you and this DNA Cousin have in common with other unidentified DNA Cousins.
- You have now filtered out all other DNA Cousins... so these cousins listed are on the same side of the family that you and the DNA Cousin you had identified earlier.
- In the right hand column click the “+” next to the groups and add each DNA Cousin in the list to the same group as the shared DNA match at the top of the screen.

Add to group

- For Example: If you had marked the cousin at the top of the page to be on your “father’s side” (say with a blue dot), then mark every one in this list with a blue “father’s side” blue group.
- Mark all of the cousins up to the 3rd or 4th cousins.
- Now click the groups filter button again and choose “reset” at the bottom of list to unfilter your matches You’ll see the entire list (unfiltered). Some will have the group markings and some will not.

Step Five - Use Shared Targeted Matches to Research for Clues

- Use the Shared Matches Tool for to identify the line you are researching
- Research the Family Trees of those Cousin Matches for clues.
- Contact those Cousins for more information through the Ancestry Messaging Center
- Note common surnames within multiple cousin matches.
 - This is especially important for those looking for missing parents.
 - Look for patterns of surnames in multiple cousin matches.
- Keep track of the FAN Club (Friends, Associates, and Neighbors) within the records and trees.



Hopefully by now you have found some additional clues, records, new ancestors or FAN club members to help answer your research question. If not, keep trying. Come back frequently to see if there are new cousin matches that have been added to your list.

LINK TO THIS VIDEO: <https://youtu.be/vm9WRkyaE14>