

AVOID MISTAKES ON ANCESTRY

[Video Link](#)

Genealogy is fun, isn't it? Sometimes when we're surfing around our family tree it is easy to accidentally import something that is not accurate to our family history. Here are some examples of how to avoid those mistakes.

Member Trees

Member Trees...while it is at the top of the "hint" list on Ancestry, it is the last thing you should review. Attaching ancestors to your tree from other member trees, without analyzing the records yourself, can be a trainwreck.

When multiple people follow the mistaken leader, everyone who did, their trees crash. When the engine that led the way took you down the wrong path... well you get the picture. 😊 How's that for an analogy?



"The General" 1926 Silent Film by Buster Keaton

Here is my recommended order in which you should research, when using Member Trees.

1. Review **Hints** (for records only, not member trees).
2. **Search From Your Ancestors Profile.**
3. **Search From the Card Catalog**, for what is missing in your ancestors' profile.
4. **Go outside the Ancestry box** and search on places like FamilySearch, MyHeritage, WikiTree, FindMyPast, local and state archives, courthouses, etc.
5. Lastly, when you have exhausted all other search locations, search the **Member Trees** for clues or documents of anything you missed. This will help you review the records without bias. Most likely at this point, the other member trees will have everything you already have.

By researching in this order, you will review and ingest the records and data, without bias from other member trees. Trust me, this is a more accurate way of researching.



Accidentally Creating Duplicates

This is probably the most common mistake I see. This typically happens when importing spouses and children from other member trees.

When reviewing Member Trees...

I recommend that you don't use the "Select all Trees" box. This could give you duplicate ancestors of the if you were to check all and then import them all.

Select trees with relevant information

4 Ancestry Member Trees Select all trees Joshua Newby Sr from your tree

Family Tree
Owner: [REDACTED]

Joshua Newby Sr
BIRTH 15 Mar 1767 Center, Guilford, North Carolina, USA
DIFFERENT
DEATH 02 Oct 1846 New Castle, Henry, Indiana, USA
sources (14) records (13)

Family Info

Father	William Newby Sr (1743-1831) NEW
Mother	Elizabeth Ratcliff (Newby) (1746-1803) NEW
Spouse	Rachel Nixon (Newby) (1773-1823) Married 1789
Children	Peninah (1791-1839) Millicent (1793-1850) Thomas (1795-1863) Gabriel (1797-1800) Elizabeth (1799-1880) Nancy Ann (1801-1802) Edith Roena (1803-1880) Margaret (1803-1822) Rachel (1807-1850) Charity (1809-1825) Joshua (1811-1853) Zimri (1813-1896) Jacob S (1817-1877) Jabez H (1820-1900)

HENLEY - KNOX Family Tree 2015 USE THIS ONE
Your Tree

Joshua Newby Sr
BIRTH 15 Mar 1767 Guilford County, North Carolina, USA
DEATH 02 Oct 1846 New Castle, Henry, Indiana, USA

Family Info

Father	
Mother	
Spouse	Rachel Nixon (1773-1823)
Children	Peninah (1790-1839)

Review selected tree hints Cancel

The trick to avoiding this mistake, is to look carefully as you are importing. If you already have an ancestor in your tree, then make sure you click on "Not a new person."

Look at only one member tree at a time starting with the one that has the most sources and records. This is usually the top member tree. Review those records to see if there is anything you don't have and if you agree with their conclusion that this clan of people belong together. Do they have the same conclusions you do?

Likewise, if you have two different people with the same name, make sure that you choose "Not a match?" if they're not the same person.

Hints Are Not Everything!

While hints are convenient, they are not all records available to you for your ancestor. Hints only provide the low hanging fruit. You'll want to **work those leafy hints first**, and then you will want to **search from the ancestor's profile** for additional records. Once you've finished that then you want to see what is missing, and then do targeted **research for those specific records from the card catalog**, as mentioned on the previous page.

The screenshot shows the Ancestry website interface. At the top, the navigation bar includes 'Home', 'Trees', 'Search', 'DNA', 'Help', and 'Extras'. The user is logged in as 'Constance Knox'. The profile for 'Niels Madsen Hvolbøl' is displayed, with birth and death dates (1806-1881) and location (Harte, Vejle, Denmark). The 'Hints' tab is active, and the 'Card Catalog' dropdown menu is open, showing options like 'Census & Voter Lists', 'Birth, Marriage & Death', 'Immigration & Travel', 'Public Member Trees', 'Military', and 'Card Catalog'. A red arrow points from the 'Card Catalog' option in the dropdown to the 'Card Catalog' section of the profile page.

To get to the card catalog you will want to go to the “Search” tab and then drop down to Card Catalog. There you can use the “filters” on the left-hand side, to narrow your search to the specific record sets that you want to search.

The screenshot shows the search filters and results page. The filters on the left are expanded to show 'Birth, marriage & death', 'Record location', and 'Record date'. The results on the right show several record sets for Niels Madsen, including church records and marriage records.

Filters	Count
Birth, marriage & death	428
> Birth, baptism & christening	363
> Marriage & divorce	152
> Death, burial, cemetery, obituaries	
Record location	931
> North America	74
> Europe	
Record date	413
> 1800	451
> 1900	

Record Set	Name	Death	Vital
U.S., Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Church Records, 1781-1969	Niels Madsen	13 Aug 1882	14 Aug 1882
Iowa, U.S., Births (series) 1880-1904, 1921-1944 and Delayed Births (series), 1856-1940	Niels C Madsen (Niels C Madsen)		
U.S., Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Church Records, 1781-1969	Niels Madsen		
Iowa, U.S., Select Marriages Index, 1758-1996	Niels Madsen		

Then right-click and “open in a new tab” each record set that looks plausible. Search each record set/browser tab, and then close the tabs one by one, as you exhaust your research.

Your fourth step is to **“Get Outside the Ancestry Box”** and search in other locations such as FamilySearch, MyHeritage, WikiTree, local and state archives, and libraries, etc. Put your thinking cap on!

Lastly, check other **member trees** (from the hint list on ancestor profiles) for what you may have missed.



ThruLines® - Only Estimates

While ThruLines® provides a great tool for genetic genealogy, it should only be used as a hint or clue feature.

ThruLines® is a combination or blend of other member trees (with yours) and Ancestry's defined DNA communities. If any of those member trees are incorrect, then there is a good chance your view of ThruLines® could be incorrect.

In this example, if I were to import the Una Smith (with the dashed lines), I would duplicate that ancestor because Una A Smith is already in my tree (solid line) and is likely the same person.

Note: The dashed box means you do not have that person in your tree. Clicking the “Evaluate” button will allow you to do so. A side panel will pop out (different example, on the right who has records attached).

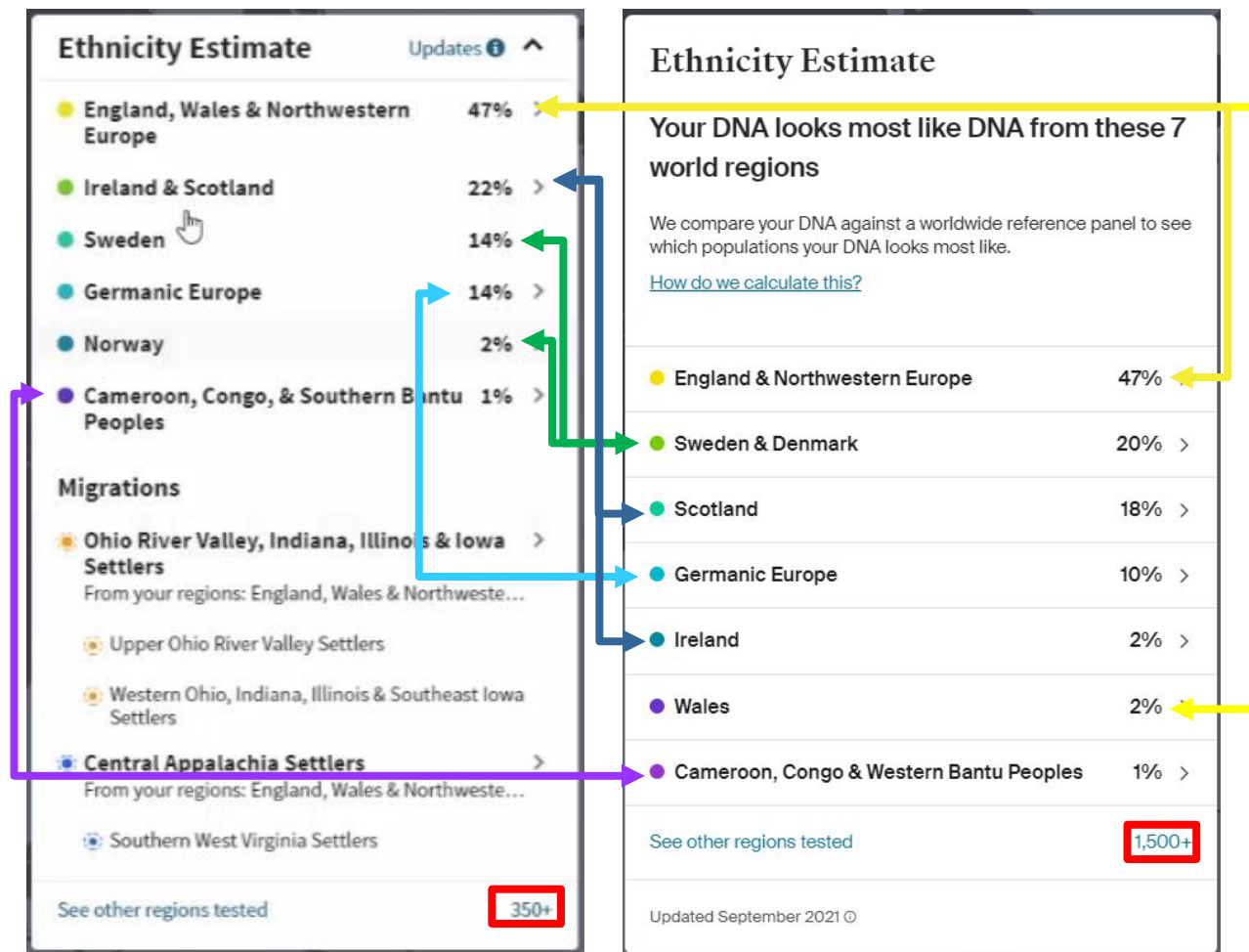
I recommend evaluating the evidence before importing a new person to your tree... and make sure you don't already have that person in your tree.

When you click on the evaluate button and the side panel pops out, you can see if there are records attached to the “dashed lined” person. If so, drill in by clicking the hyperlinks and see if you agree with the evidence.

In this example on the right, you can see a long list of records. Right click and open each one in a new tab. Then close each tab as you go, to preserve your original ThruLines view.

Ancestry's Ethnicity Estimate

You should know the estimated ethnicity regions and estimates will change over time as they learn more and add more to the reference panel.



As you can see some of the regions have been divided, but the estimates still don't add up. This is because, as the reference panels and total number of DNA kits grow, the more refined Ancestry is making their estimates. Additionally, looking at the red boxes, you can see how many regions there are today as opposed to four years earlier.

Long story short, don't use Ethnicity Estimates for anything other than clues if you have nothing else. They are just "Estimates of Ethnicity".