

Why Use Floating Trees

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What is a floating tree?
Why should you create a floating tree? Lastly, why should you care?

A floating tree is simply a unlinked persons or tree branches within your tree. A floating tree stands alone and is not linked to anyone in your primary tree but is contained in the same file name as the tree you are working on.



Imagine you have printed your tree on a single sheet of paper and laid it on your desk. Your desk represents the file name of your tree on Ancestry. Then you printed another independent tree and laid it next to the other paper, but they are not touching each other. The two trees are independent of each other. That is what we are doing with the floating tree within the same file name. We are not creating a new tree but working within the tree you already have.

The reason you might want to have a floating tree is so that you can keep track of other people like the fan club members. The F.A.N Club members are also known as Friends, Associates, and Neighbors or people that are somehow interacting with your ancestors. We are going to talk more about the FAN club in another episode. Here we are focused on how to create a floating tree.

Why should you care? It is the F.A.N Club members that often tie your ancestors together and help confirm the records you are reviewing are in fact your ancestors.

Here is how you can create a floating tree at Ancestry.com. You may be able to do something similar on other websites, but for demonstration purposes, we are using Ancestry.com.

The reality is that you are first creating a “floating person” within your existing tree. Later you can attach his/her ancestors to the original floating person, thus creating a floating tree.



To create a floating tree, you will have someone in mind that you want to keep track of or research for additional clues that might help you with your own family history. Let's say, for the sake of demonstration purposes, you're researching a good friend of one of your ancestors.

Keep in mind too, this eliminates the need to create a new or different family tree at Ancestry. Thus, you can do all your research conveniently in the same tree file.

You can also use this technique to trace DNA matches that you are not sure how they connect to you - YET! By creating a floating tree and doing the research of your DNA matches, you may eventually see how they connect to your tree. I highly recommend doing this all in one tree.

STEP BY STEP INSTRUCTIONS TO CREATE A FLOATING TREE

1. Create a New Person/Profile by Attaching them to Any Ancestor in Your Tree.


From the profile of any person in your tree, add a child, sibling, parent, or spouse. It doesn't matter what ancestor you attach to or what relationship you create (sibling, parent, child or spouse), because you are going to disconnect the newly created person's profile (the friend in our scenario) from your ancestor as soon as you attach them in the next step. REMEMBER THE NAME OF THE PERSON YOU CREATE!

2. Disconnect the Relationship Between the Two You Just Created.

To disconnect the relationship between your ancestor & the newly created profile (the friend), do the following steps:

- a. Go to the profile of the friend you just created.
- b. In the upper right corner, click on Edit.
- c. Click on Edit Relationships
- d. Click on the X (on the right side of each person in the list) to disconnect all relationships.
- e. Click on Remove for each one until there are no more relationships listed.
- f. Close that relationship window.
- g. You now have a person floating within your existing tree, but they are not connected to anyone.

3. Finding Your Floating Tree

- a. When you close out the relationship window in Step 2, you are likely to be returned to the one person you just created floating alone in the tree view.
 - i. You can now see their profile if you wish or...
 - ii. You can add biological relationships to them creating a floating tree within your existing tree.
- b. Side note: Clicking on the home icon on the left of the tree will return you to your full tree and to the person you had originally set as your home person. 
 - i. In my case, I set myself as the home person, so when I click on that home icon, I can get my bearings quickly.
 - ii. If you ever want to change the Home Person, you could do that in your Tree Settings.
- c. To find the floating person you just created in your tree, you need to start in the tree view.
- d. In the upper right corner click Tree Search and search for the person in the floating tree.
- e. Click on their name and it will take you back to the floating tree.
- f. To return to anyone in your normal tree, just search again from the top right Tree Search button or click the Home icon to jump there quickly.

4. (Optional) Add a link to the floating “Friend” person to your Ancestor by creating web links in both profiles.

In short, by doing this you’re creating a reference link in your Ancestor and in the Friend’s profile so you can easily jump back and forth between them.

This is a two-step process. You need to create a link in your Ancestors’ profile and do the same step again in the “Friend” profile.

Linking the Ancestor to the Friend’s Profile

- a. Go to your Ancestor’s profile. Make sure you are in the person view, not the tree view.
- b. Highlight the weblink at the top of the page. (Keyboard short cut for copy is CNTL C for windows or CMD C for Mac users.)
- c. Now go to the “Friend” profile by searching from the tree view. Open the “Friend” profile. This is the person you just created in the floating tree.
- d. In the Friend’s profile view and viewing the facts tab, click the “add” button in the center column.
- e. Click “Add Web Link” and paste the web link from your Ancestor’s profile that you just copied. (Keyboard shortcut for paste is CNTL P on Windows or CMD P on Mac).
- f. Name the link with the Ancestor’s name and click add.
- g. You will now see the Ancestor name and web link at the bottom of the Friend profile fact column.

Repeat the steps linking the Friend in the Ancestors profile.

- a. Go to your Friend’s profile. Make sure you are in the person view, not the tree view.
- b. Highlight the weblink at the top of the page. (CNTL C for windows or CMD C for Mac users.)
- c. Now go to the Ancestor’s profile by searching from the tree view. Open the Ancestor’s profile. This is the ancestor you want to link the friend in the floating tree to.
- d. In the Ancestor’s profile view and viewing the facts tab, click the “add” button in the center column.
- e. Click “Add Web Link” and paste the web link from your Friend’s profile that you just copied. (CNTL P on Windows or CMD P on Mac).
- f. Name the link with the Friend’s name and click add.
- g. You will now see the Friends name and web link at the bottom of the Ancestor profile fact column.

If you want to attach the Friend to multiple Ancestors, you will need to do that manually using the last set of instructions.

Special thanks to Elizabeth Shown Mills who coined the term F.A.N.
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