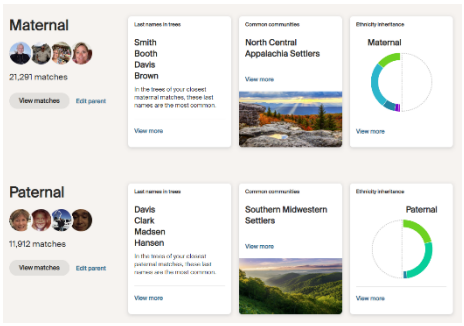
The Grouping Your AncestryDNA Matches by Grandparents

This works best if you know your grandparents. A similar strategy can be used through a process of elimination if you don't know one set of grandparents. In other words, eliminating the known grandparent descendants would reveal the unknown grandparents descendants (i.e. DNA cousins). Here you're grouping your DNA matches (descendants) into four groups representing your four grandparents.



1 DNA Matches Now Automatically Separated by Parents

Finding Your DNA Matches

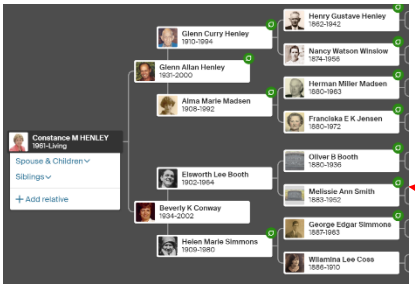
Finding your DNA matches is easy, go to the DNA tab at the top of the screen, drop down to DNA cousins and you'll see a new screen that shows your DNA cousin matches grouped by parents. Note: About 10% of the DNA kit population will not be able to be grouped for various reasons.

DNA Matches Grouped by Parents

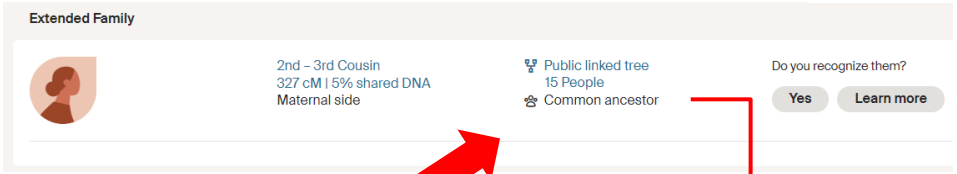
In my case, I have already labeled maternal from paternal, but you may see Parent 1 and Parent 2. For some AncestryDNA members, you may not see this split by parents. About 10% of the population cannot be grouped by paternal vs. maternal as of this writing.

Getting Started

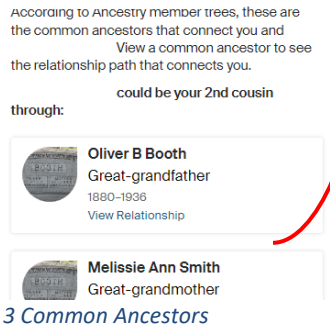
Opening your family tree in a separate tab from your DNA Match list is helpful for reference. For this example, I'm going to drill into my maternal side.



2 Henley Family Tree



4 Best Known Match on Maternal Side



3 Common Ancestors

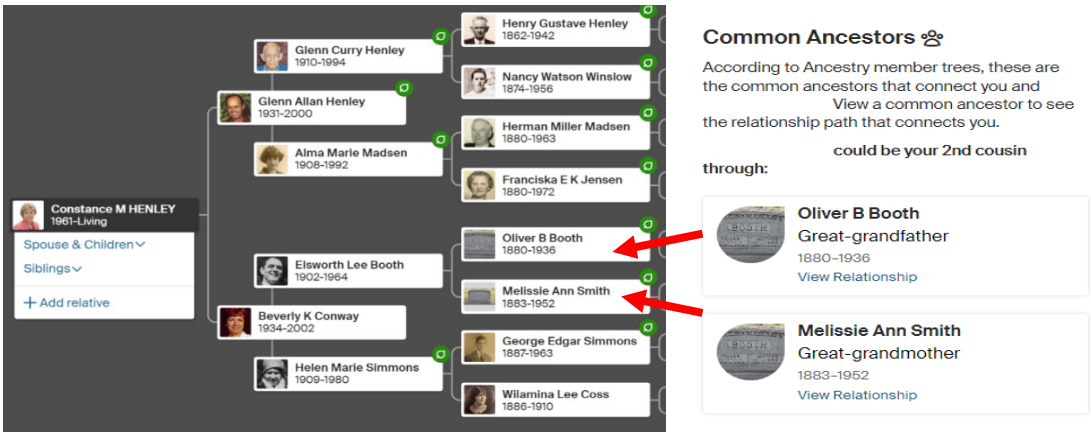
Common Ancestors

Looking at the Common Ancestors can help determine from which line your DNA cousin comes. You will only see Common Ancestors if you and your match have the same ancestors in both of your trees.

Click on Common Ancestors and you will see on the left side of the screen the ancestors that you and your match have common.

Grouping Your DNA Matches By Your Grandparents Branches

If you know your parents and grandparents, grouping your DNA matches by your grandparents will be simple.



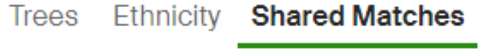
5 Common Ancestors in Tree

In the DNA Match List, skip over immediate family and close family list. Look at extended family for your "Best Known Match" that you know descends from one grandparent or another (as shown in Figure 4 Best Known Match on Maternal Side.)

In this example, we're grouping the DNA Matches that descend from my grandfather Elsworth Booth and his parents Oliver and Melissie Booth.

Grouping Your DNA Matches

Once you have drilled into your Best Known Match, you can then click on the Shared Matches tool near the top of the page. This will bring up a list of DNA cousins that you share in common with your best known DNA match. Just those matches that you and this one DNA cousin share DNA. This is a genetic network.



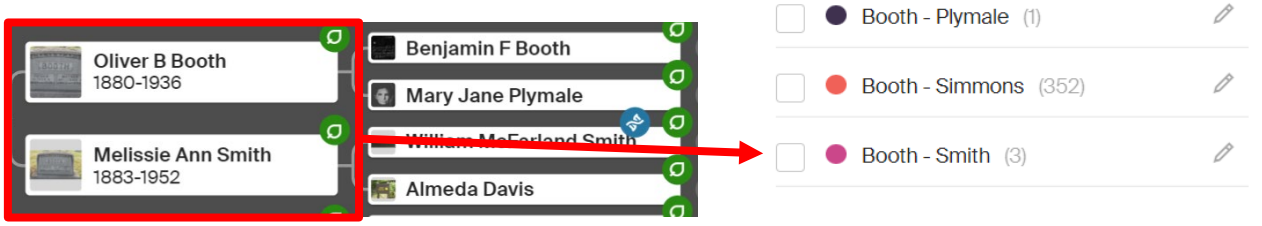
Again, you want to skip over your immediate family (in the DNA Cousins Match List) and go down to either Close Family or Extended Family and look at the cousin matches.

Next you want to assign a color to each of your DNA cousins in the filtered group. For example, if you have filtered to DNA cousin matches to all that descend from your paternal grandparents then you can create a group that represents that paternal couple and assign them a color.

Color Coding

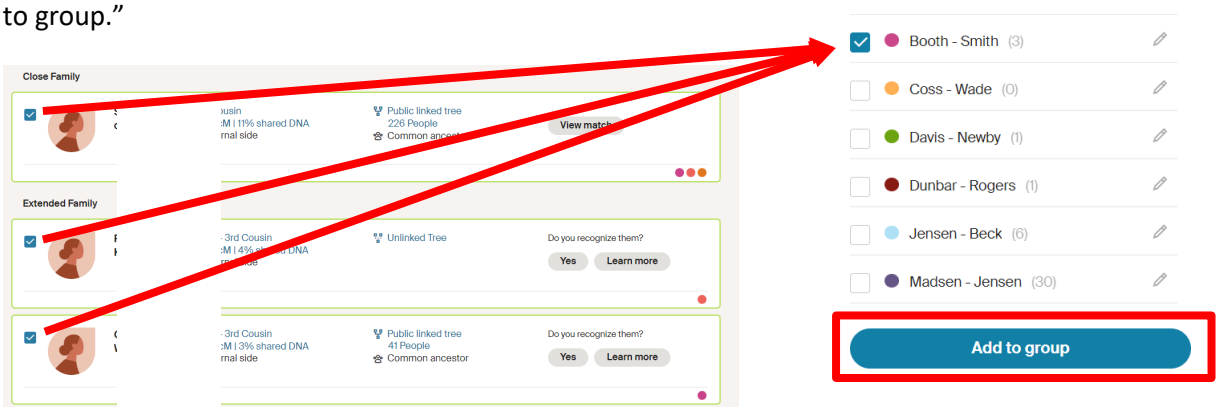
From here you'll want to click on the plus symbol on the right hand side of any cousin and “Create a Custom Group” using the plus symbol at the top of the side panel or use one of your predefined groups.

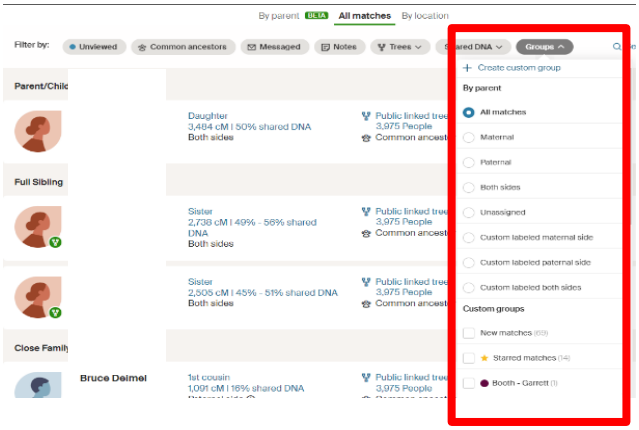
In this example, I have created lines of my family for surnames & maiden names of each couple, such as Booth – Smith.



Selecting Several to One Group

Once you have filtered your list to your “shared matches” for one branch of the family, you can select all the DNA Cousins in the list and assign them to one group representing that branch of the tree (all at one time). Do this by selecting each in the cousin list (left side), select the group (right side) and select “Add to group.”





Viewing Groups

Starting back at the unfiltered DNA cousin match list, you can now select any of the predefined or custom groups to filter the list down to exactly what you need.

Finding the Unknown Grandparent Lines

By grouping the your DNA cousins by the known branches of the tree, then reviewing the unfiltered list reveals those DNA cousins who are leftovers. These leftovers are most likely from the unknown branch of the tree.

This is the process of elimination we talked about at the beginning of this document. If you have grouped all of your grandparents except one, then those without groups are likely to be from the one remaining branch of the tree you have yet to discover.

If you drill into the highest cM count match in the ungrouped list, then hit shared matches again, you will likely find that they are all from the same branches of the family tree. You can then give them a color to represent that group.

Closing

This is not every possible scenario. There's a lot to learn about DNA and grouping your cousin matches. No two family situations are the same either. You'll need to put your detective hat on and do some sleuthing.

Here are some other episodes about Grouping Your DNA.