

AncestryDNA Cousin Grouping: Clarified

In previous episodes about DNA Cousin Grouping (in the comments), there was some confusion about DNA Cousin Grouping and how you may be related to those cousins. I am here to clarify that now. [This episode](#), demonstrates cousin grouping using AncestryDNA, but can be similarly done at any of the DNA services.

If you have missed any of the previous episodes, here are the two most recent videos:

- [Grouping DNA Cousin Matches on Ancestry](#) (Mar 2021)
- [AncestryDNA Shared Matches to Solve Genealogy Research Questions](#) (Feb 2021)

Quick Recap of the DNA Cousin Grouping Process

To group your DNA Cousins along family lines at Ancestry.com, follow these steps.

1. Go to the DNA tab, drop down to Cousin Matches.
2. Find the closest cousin (in cM) to you that you know to be from one line of your family and click on View Match. You should now see a screen that show you and your cousin at the top of the page (as shown on page 2).
3. Click the Shared Matches tab (red box on page 2) just under you and your cousin's name, to show all DNA matches you both have in common.
 - a. Everyone in that list should be in that same line of the family as your best-known match.
4. Add them to a group that represents that line of the family with the pencil icon on the right (shown on page 2).

The screenshot shows the AncestryDNA interface for Cousin Matches. At the top, there are filters: Unviewed, Common ancestors, Messaged, Notes, Trees, and Groups. Below the filters is a list of matches, each with a profile picture, relationship type, shared cM, shared DNA percentage, and a 'View match' button. A red box highlights the first four matches. To the right is a sidebar titled 'Add 4 DNA matches to:' with a 'Create custom group' button and a list of existing groups with checkboxes and edit icons. At the bottom of the sidebar is an 'Add to group' button.

Match	Relationship	Shared cM	Shared DNA	Tree Type	People
✓ [Profile]	1st - 2nd Cousin	737 cM	11% shared DNA	Public linked tree	3,435 People
✓ [Profile]	1st - 2nd Cousin	387 cM	6% shared DNA	Public linked tree	5,035 People
✓ [Profile]	2nd - 3rd Cousin	255 cM	4% shared DNA	Unlinked Tree	-
✓ [Profile]	2nd - 3rd Cousin	200 cM	3% shared DNA	Public linked tree	26 People



Right sidebar: Add 4 DNA matches to:
 + Create custom group
 Starred matches (0)
 Booth - Simmons (0)
 Booth - Smith (0)
 Davis - Henley (0)
 Henley - Winslow (2)
 Simmons - Coss (0)
 Simmons - Dunbar (0)
 Add to group



Clarification

When you have drilled into the Shared Matches tool. Everyone in that list should descend from an ancestral couple in that line of the family. It does not mean that they necessarily descend from the Most Recent Common Ancestor (MRCA) you have with your best-known DNA Cousin, but through that line, somewhere up the tree (farther back in time).

For example: Carol and I share a lot of cousins. Our MRCA is Herman and Frances Madsen (Shown on the next page) who are my Great Grandparents. However, some of these cousins (below) in the 4th – 6th estimated cousin range, which would mean that they have a 3X Great Grandparents – 5X Great Grandparents in common with me. More on the next page.

You and Carol

1st – 2nd Cousin
7% shared DNA: 464 cM across 17 segments

[Message](#)









[Add/edit groups](#) [Add note](#)

Trees
Ethnicity
Shared Matches

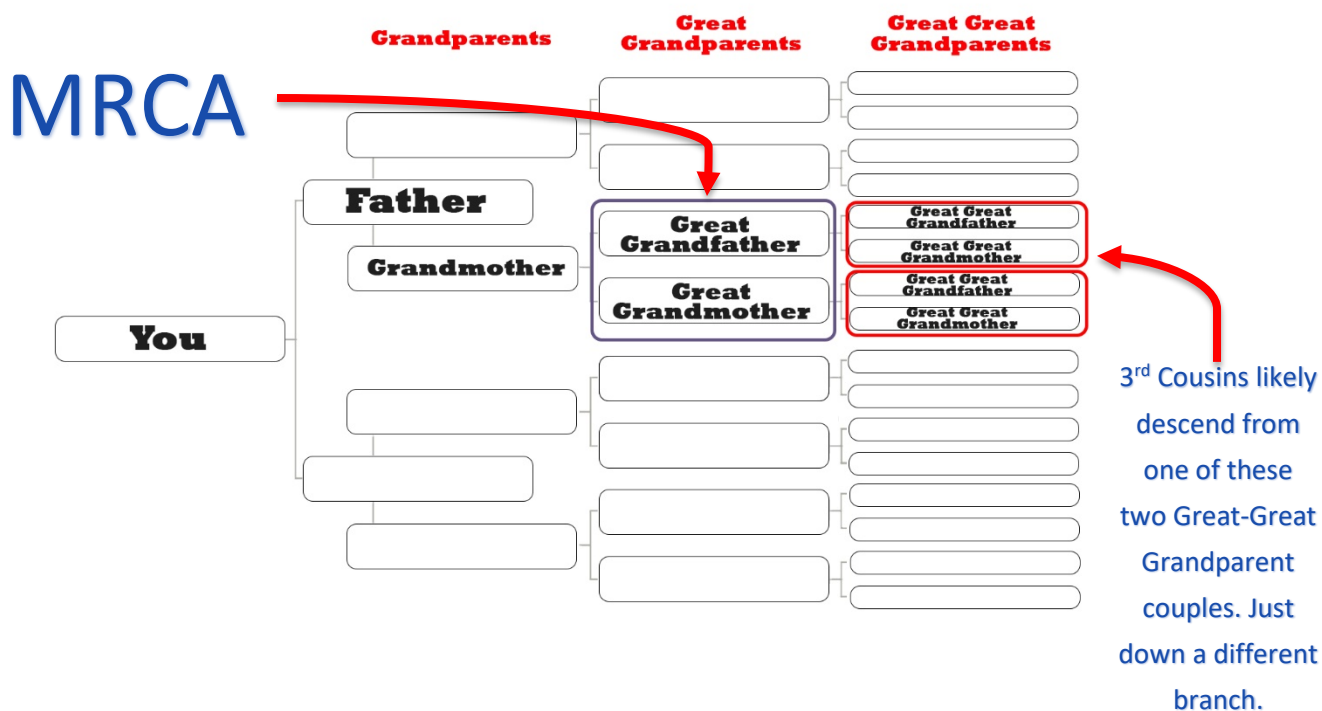
Filter by:

Unviewed
Common ancestors
Messaged
Notes
Trees
Groups

Search | Sort

	<p>4th – 6th Cousin 62 cM < 1% shared DNA</p>	<p>Public linked tree 42 People Common ancestor</p>	<p>View match</p>	<p style="color: red; font-weight: bold;">Edit with Pencil Icon</p> <div style="border: 2px solid red; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">  </div>
	<p>4th – 6th Cousin 61 cM < 1% shared DNA</p>	<p>Public linked tree 16 People</p>	<p>View match</p>	
	<p>4th – 6th Cousin 55 cM < 1% shared DNA</p>	<p>No Trees</p>	<p>View match</p>	
	<p>4th – 6th Cousin 55 cM < 1% shared DNA</p>	<p>No Trees</p>	<p>View match</p>	

If Carol and I have our MRCA as my Great Grandparents Herman Madsen and Frances Jensen (purple box), then only DNA cousins who are 2nd cousins or closer would descend from this couple. Other more distant cousins, say 3rd cousins (who share DNA with me and Carol), most likely have common ancestors farther back in time from one of the two Great-Great Grandparent couples (represented in Red boxes). You may not know which couple yet, but traditional genealogical research should help you figure it out.



The G- Rule

A great way to help remember how your cousins may be related to you is to use the G-Rule. This is something I came up with to help me remember immediately how we may be related.

Count the G's. Grandparent is one G. Great is another G. So, if you have a 3rd Cousins that you are trying to determine how you are related, then that cousin should be related to you through a Great Great Grandparent. 3 G's = a 3rd Cousin.

DNA Painter & the Shared Centimorgan (cM) Tool

To get an idea of what all possible relationships are to a specific cousin, use the [Shared Centimorgan Tool \(free\) at DNA Painter](#). This tool was created by Jonny Perl with the data from Dr. Blain Bettinger's Shared Centimorgan Project. This is an excellent resource to estimate all possible relationships.