

VBGS How-To Group - Oct 2020

Getting Started

by Heather Wright

✓ Choose Your Method of Recording

Where/how are you going to build your tree? Online, with computer software, on paper, a combo?

Note: With all the digital options and abilities available now, this is not recommended if you are just starting out. Online and computer-based programs will be easier to organize, grow, and maintain.

Online Options (there are [many others](#))

These are online but still controlled by you, they are different from collaborative trees.

Paid features are only available with a current subscription.

- [Ancestry](#)
 - free and paid versions
 - free – build tree and manually enter sources, no access to records on the site
 - paid – monthly or semi-annual subscriptions \$25 - \$200
 - subscription gives access to records and ability to attach them to your tree
- [My Heritage](#)
 - free and paid versions
 - free – up to 250 people
 - paid – annual subscriptions \$129 - \$299
 - ◇ lower plan – up to 2500 people
 - ◇ others – unlimited
- [Find My Past](#)
 - free and paid versions
 - paid – monthly or annual subscriptions \$15-\$179

Software Options (there are [many others](#))

This is software you load onto your computer and likely has several features.

They may be able to connect with online platforms, but it is not required.

- [Legacy Family Tree](#)
 - free version
 - deluxe version \$35 - \$40
 - first version upgrade usually free
 - recently bought by My Heritage (~2018)
 - can share with FamilySearch (likely with My Heritage in the future)
 - not on Mac but can be run with a Windows simulator program
 - gives hints for records on websites (FamilySearch, MyHeritage, FindMyPast, GenealogyBank)
- [Roots Magic](#)
 - free version
 - paid version \$30
 - looks like discounted version upgrades
 - can share with Ancestry
 - gives hints for records on websites
- [Family Tree Maker](#)
 - no free version
 - \$80 - \$100
 - was owned by Ancestry, now mackiev

Online Collaborative Trees

These are built and maintained online in a collaborative format.

They can be very useful in your research but are not the best platform for “your” tree.

→ [FamilySearch](#)

→ [Wikitree](#)

Choosing the right one

If you think you want computer-based software but aren't sure which program:

- Try them out - Download a free version if possible and play around, it's free!
Download more than one to really play and compare.
The key - don't spend time entering lots of little details, just keep to the big ones (birth, marriage, death) so you can get a feel for the program. Poke around at the available features like reports and charts (not all will be in the free version)
- Search for the program online – look for reviews and user videos on YouTube, watch a few.
- If you pick a popular one, you probably won't be disappointed, it's popular for a reason.
- Don't fret - you can switch if you change your mind. There may be a little work but it can happen.
- Keep in mind: Backing up your system becomes more important

If you think you want an online platform – pretty much the same advice:

- Try out the free version if possible and play around, it's free!
- Look for review and user videos online.
- The popular platforms are widely liked, so shouldn't disappoint.
- Keep in mind:
 - Switching between online platforms may be more problematic than computer-based software
 - Many features are behind a subscription cost and are inaccessible when the subscription ends.

✓ Organizing Files --- Paper and digital

Generally, the same advice whether paper or digital

- find what works for you and stick with it
 - organize by what you gravitate to - place? name? category?
 - this may be a combination
 - decide on a naming system for files
- if you need to make a change - think about what will be affected first
 - do you have links built into your system?

Refer to <https://vbgsva.net/contact/handouts/> for the organization handouts presented during the summer 2020 Coffee Hours

✓ Back-up your files

Failures are bound to happen, having a good back-up system makes it less painful.

- External hard drives – use in addition to your computer's hard drive, not in place of
- Flash drive – can keep a large capacity one plugged into your computer
- Your computer may have an auto back-up feature, check your settings
- Cloud based storage. Sync your computer drive to a cloud system. If your computer fails, you can sign in and retrieve your files.

Cloud storage options include: (there are others)

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| → Google Drive <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ 15 GB free per gmail account○ \$20/year for 100GB○ has 200 GB, 2 TB, & 10 TB options | → iCloud (Apple) <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ 5 GB free per account○ \$1/month for 50 GB○ has 200 GB & 2 TB options |
| → Dropbox <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ 2 GB free○ \$10/month for 2 TB○ has 3 TB option | → OneDrive (Microsoft) <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ 5 GB free per account○ \$2/month for 100GB○ 1 TB and 6 TB with 365 suite |

How much storage do you need? start small and grow as needed

- 716 folders with 19,773 files – uses 33.8 GB, includes:
 - LOTS of jpg images (records and photos)
 - LOTS of pdfs
- software program also produces back up
 - legacy cloud (no media) and to computer (with media)

Get Started

Once you choose where you are going to build your tree...

- Make yourself the starting person and record what you know for you, your siblings, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.
 - names
 - dates: birth, marriage, death
 - places: birth, marriage, death
- Gather any family info you have laying around to help (we'll talk about sourcing these next time)
 - Funeral cards
 - Birth announcements
 - Wedding announcements
 - Address books
 - Family books
 - etc.
- If you know nothing but your name, don't worry, you just have a different starting place that others