

Genealogy Do-Over - Week 2 Cycle 4: 9-15 October 2015

- [Genealogy Do-Over – Week 1 Cycle 4: 2-8 October 2015](#)
- [Genealogy Do-Over Cycle 4: Schedule of Topics](#)

[*Editor's note:* Much of the text below is unchanged from the [original Week 2 posting](#) on January 9, 2015 except for my personal updates.]

Topics: 1) Setting Research Goals, 2) Conducting Self Interview, and 3) Conducting Family Interviews

As we move into the second week of the [Genealogy Do-Over](#), and since we've tackled the first week's topics, I want you to take yourself back to when you first became interested in genealogy and family history. Were you a teenager like me who watched the mini-series *Roots* on television? Did you have a family history related assignment in high school or Sunday school? Or did you just hear others in your family discuss ancestors and you decided to do some research?

This week you are back at square one. Back where you started. But you have more knowledge and access to more tools than that first time. And you're going to heed the same advice you would give any other newcomer to genealogy: ***start with yourself.***

Sit down and record what you know about your own history (birth, marriage, children, religious rites and sacraments, etc.). Then move on to your relatives. I realize that this time you're at a disadvantage: some or many of your relatives to whom you had access for information are now no longer here. Still, take time to do these interviews and you might be surprised at the results.

And once you've recorded information, you'll set your initial research goals based on that information.

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Conducting Self-Interview

There are many different formats to use for your personal interview including a simple written narrative, a bullet point list of dates and places, or a family group sheet. Make sure you take your time and record the important data related to:

- Birth
- Marriage(s) and Divorce(s)
- Religious events including bar/bat mitzvahs, baptisms, confirmations, etc.
- Children

An additional option is to actually write out your own mini-biography in your own "voice." You can then extract the data (next week) for your research log and you'll have a nice memento to pass on to your family.

- **What I Plan to Do:** I created both a personal interview and a family group sheet for myself and my parents. The interview is important – it is a “brain dump” of what I know in terms of dates, places etc.
- **“All-In” Participant Options:** Select an interview format that works for you and enables you to extract the necessary information to launch your initial research next week.
- **Modified Participant Options:** Review any copies of family group sheets in your files and check them for accuracy.

Conducting Family Interviews

Once your interview is done, create a list of aunts, uncles, cousins and other relations who would have information about your parents, grandparents and other extended family members. Again, the format and method of interviewing is up to you. Some options:

- **Family Group Sheet:** If you have a fillable form (print or online) have your family members complete as much information as possible about their own immediate families.
- **Record an Interview:** With today’s technology it is easier than ever to record an interview. Consider using Skype and one of the several Skype recording programs. Or download an app for your iPhone or Android device. Yes, you will have to transcribe or record the information, but what can compare to preserving the voice of a family member as they describe their family’s history?

Setting Research Goals

While I have listed this topic first in this week’s series of topics, you really need some initial data (from the interviews above) before you can set research goals. Very often people set goals such as “trace my family’s Irish roots” that are too broad or are based on family lore or assumptions.

Set goals based on information from initial interviews; don’t worry if you believe some information is incorrect. Next week we will create research goals to prove or disprove data points. Create a simple list such as “verify birth location for _____” or “determine parents of _____.” Next week these goals will form the start of your research plan.

- **What I Plan to Do:** I actually did Family Group Sheets for myself (easy since I have no children) and both my parents. I also spent time on the phone with some of my aunts asking questions. I took notes because they weren’t comfortable being recorded on Skype – I ALWAYS ask permission when I interview a family members. It is important that they understand how the information will be used and how it will be recorded.
- **All-In Participant Options:** Use paper, Evernote, OneNote, or any program to track your research goals.

- **Modified Participant Options:** If you have existing lists of research goals, verify that they are in line with any family group sheet data. Create new goals based on new insights after reviewing the data.

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That is all for this week. Well, except for one question that has been bugging me lately: where do you go for a family group sheet? Do you use an online version? Do you print one out? Share your resources on family group sheets over at the [Genealogy Do-Over Facebook group](#).

Next Week: Week 3, Cycle 4 – 16-22 October 2015

- Tracking Research
- Conducting Research

Thanks for being a part of the Genealogy Do-Over and your feedback is always appreciated. You can leave a comment on the blog post at [GeneaBloggers](#), email me at geneabloggers@gmail.com or post at the [Genealogy Do-Over Facebook Group](#).

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