

Family history is more than names and dates—it's about connection.

By Rachel Nielsen

You are a descendant of millions of ancestors. And right now, you might not know who they are, or they might be just names with dates to you. But one of the joys of family history is that you get to connect with these ancestors and create things that will help your posterity connect with you and them. Here are some ideas that will help you start connecting.

1. Keep a record of your life.

It can be a handwritten journal, a blog, a digital scrapbook, a photo journal, a series of audio recordings, or something else—be creative!

2. Find your ancestors' graves.

You can visit a cemetery, or you can search for pictures of headstones online. Several websites have databases full of headstone pictures. If you visit a cemetery, you might want to take pictures of headstones and submit them to these websites for others to have access to.

3. Visit places that are important to your family.

Take pictures of those places and record stories about what happened there. Consider asking a relative to take you on a tour of his or her hometown. Or do a tour of your own home and hometown. Record the tours for future posterity!



4. Learn more about your ancestors' celebrations.

Research holidays your ancestors would have celebrated and how they would have celebrated them in their location and time period. Then celebrate their holidays as appropriate or incorporate appropriate customs into your current celebrations.



5. Preserve photos.

Take new photos and gather old photos, then archive them for future generations to enjoy. Make sure to tag them with names so the people can be identified. You'll find a great tool for uploading, storing, and sharing photos at FamilySearch.org (click on "Photos").



6. Hold an indexing party.

Invite friends and family members to come over and index together at FamilySearch.org/indexing.

7. Act out a family history story.

Re-create an event from your family history for family home evening. This is a fun way to involve younger siblings in family history.

8. Record about yourself what you wish you knew about your great-grandparents.

Think of five questions that you would like to ask your great-grandparents. Then ask yourself those questions and record the answers so your great-grandchildren don't have to wonder what your answers would have been. Preserve your questions and answers for your posterity at FamilySearch.org (click on "Memories" and then "Stories").

9. Research your name.

Find out where your last name came from and what it means. Or ask a parent why you received your first and middle names. Record what you learn.

10. Find and share journal entries.

Share photos of your ancestors' journal entries or other papers at FamilySearch.org (click on "Memories" and then "Documents"), where you can also see what other people have shared about your ancestors.

11. Film a documentary about your ancestors.

You can include their pictures, read from their journal, and act out stories from their life.



12. Create a family tree.

Print out a fan chart at FamilySearch.org. Use it as is, or use it to create a family tree out of family members' photos, to draw a family tree, to build a family tree—the options are endless.



13. Use your talents.

Try representing an ancestor or an ancestor's story through art, music, dance, writing, or poetry.



TEMPLE BLESSINGS: THE ULTIMATE CONNECTION

"Every human being who comes to this earth is the product of generations of parents. We have a natural yearning to connect with our ancestors. This desire dwells in our hearts, regardless of age.

"Consider the spiritual connections that are formed when a young woman helps her grandmother enter family information into a computer or when a young man sees the name of his great-grandfather on a census record. When our hearts turn to our ancestors, something changes inside us. We feel part of something greater than ourselves. Our inborn yearnings for family connections are fulfilled when we are linked to our ancestors through sacred ordinances of the temple."

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Generations Linked in Love," *Ensign*, May 2010, 92.

THE FAR REACH OF FAMILY HISTORY

When Connor M. of Texas, USA, decided to help digitize headstones for his Eagle Scout project, he had no idea of the effect his work would have. You see, a man living hundreds of miles away had been searching for information about his deceased father for 20 years—ever since he was a little boy. Because of Connor's work, this man found the headstone image of his long-deceased father online. That led the man to meet many relatives he hadn't even known existed. Now he has family—living family—he never knew before. That's family history come to life.

14. Find advice. Read journals of ancestors or talk with living relatives to seek out those who struggled with something that you're facing and see how they dealt with that trial.

15. Track your ancestors. On a physical or digital map, mark the places that your ancestors lived and record information about what they did at each spot.



16. Record the stories behind heirlooms. Sometimes we forget why a family heirloom is meaningful. Take a photograph of the artifact and write about it on [FamilySearch.org](https://www.familysearch.org). Attach it to the respective ancestor in your Family Tree. Recording stories will help preserve each object's significance.

17. Practice a new language. Learn genealogical terms in your ancestors' native languages. Memorizing words like *birth*, *death*, *marriage*, and *christening* will help you find your ancestors in those genealogical records.



18. Talk to living family members. Put together a book or video about your living relatives. Ask them about childhood memories, significant life events, favorite scriptures, or their testimonies.



19. Celebrate an ancestor's birthday. Have a birthday party with your family in honor of an ancestor, and share that person's stories, photos, and journal entries.

20. Preserve your social media posts. This is a fun way to share your life with your posterity. You could also preserve your emails and text messages in a computer document or in printouts.



21. Search immigration and military documents. Learn where your ancestors immigrated to and emigrated from, whom they traveled with, whether they fought in a war, the history of the unit they fought with, and more. Lots of these records can be found by searching their names at [FamilySearch.org](https://www.familysearch.org).

22. Make a recipe book. You can include favorite family recipes or recipes that your ancestors would likely have used in their location and time period. If you have recipes from specific ancestors, save them online at [FamilySearch.org](https://www.familysearch.org) in that ancestor's profile.



24. Prepare for missionary service. Once you have received a mission call, you can log onto [missionary.lds.org](https://www.missionary.lds.org) and learn about using family history on your mission.

25. Help others. Volunteer to help others learn about or do their family history. **NE**

Rachel Nielsen lives in Utah, USA.

