



# Search Strategies

*There are lots of different ways to search on Ancestry.com. Which way is the most effective and efficient to help achieve your goal? Let's take a look.*



## Have a Goal

If you have a target in mind—someone or something specific you’re looking for—you’ll be better able to choose the type of search you need and formulate that search to achieve your goal.

## Global Search

### **What it does:**

A global search searches everything on Ancestry.com that is indexed. It is an efficient search for rich collections that have lots of detail, like census records.

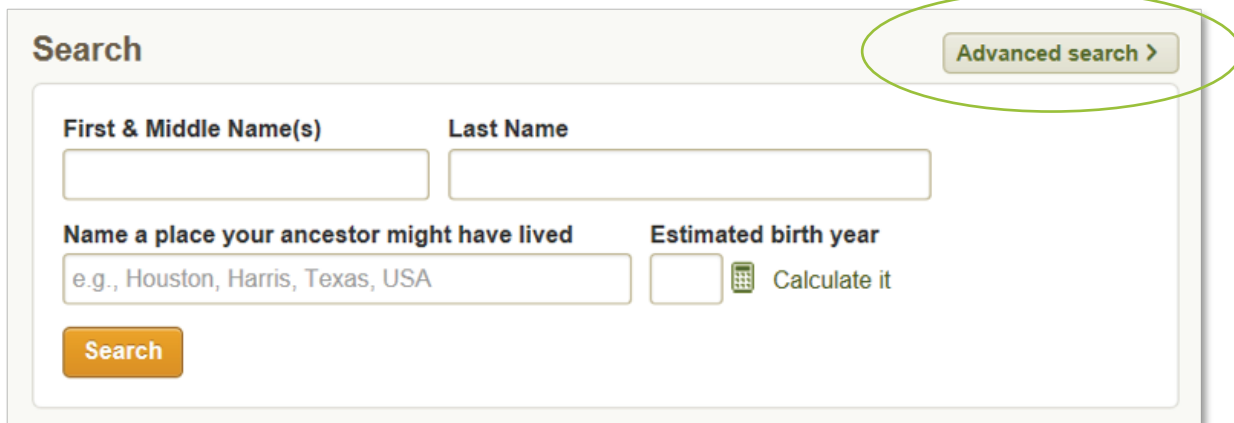
### **When to use it:**

Use a global search when you’re just getting started researching a person or if you want to revisit and see if there are new results for someone you’ve researched in the past.

### **TWO WAYS TO DO A GLOBAL SEARCH:**

#### • **Using the Search Form**

Start simple with the basic search form on the home page. If you’re seeing too many results, click on the **Advanced search** button and use the additional fields to help narrow your search. *(Remember that you’re searching all of the records on Ancestry.com and trying to match as many of the details you enter as possible. With that in mind, try to include information that is most commonly found in records).*



The image shows a screenshot of the Ancestry.com search interface. At the top right, there is a button labeled "Advanced search >" which is circled in green and has a green arrow pointing to it from the left. Below this is the main search form titled "Search". It contains several input fields: "First & Middle Name(s)", "Last Name", "Name a place your ancestor might have lived" (with the example "e.g., Houston, Harris, Texas, USA"), and "Estimated birth year" (with a "Calculate it" button). A "Search" button is located at the bottom left of the form.

#### • **Searching from Trees**

Searching from your Ancestry.com tree or from Family Tree Maker puts all of the details about a person from your tree into the search form, so you may see different results than you would from a basic search. Try one search with all of the information and see what rises to the top. Then edit your search by deleting or adding details to target records for that person as a child when they may be living with parents, as an adult with their spouse, or, in the case of women, living under their married name.

## Category Search

### What it does:

A category search focuses on a particular group of records (e.g., immigration, military, vital records, etc.).

### When to use it:

Use a category search when your goal applies to a particular record. For example, you have learned from a census record that your ancestor came over in 1897, and you'd like to find his arrival record. In this instance, you might search the immigration category and maybe even narrow it to passenger lists only. *(Note: If you're searching only passenger lists but not finding your ancestor, don't overlook the possibility that he or she didn't come in via Canada or Mexico. If you're not sure, you'll want to search the higher level to include border crossings.)*

Some categories can be accessed via the **Search drop-down** menu in the navigation bar, and all categories and some subcategories can be accessed via the **Search page**.

The screenshot shows the Ancestry.com search interface. The navigation bar at the top includes 'Home', 'Family Trees', 'Search', 'DNA', 'Collaborate', 'Learning Center', 'Publish', 'Shop', 'Hire an Expert', and 'Give a gift'. The 'Search' dropdown menu is open, listing categories: 'Search All Records', 'Census & Voter Lists', 'Birth, Marriage & Death', 'Public Member Trees', 'Military', 'Immigration & Travel' (highlighted), and 'Card Catalog'. The main search area contains several input fields: 'First & Middle Name(s)', 'Year +/-', 'Location', 'Family Member' (with a 'Choose...' dropdown), 'Keyword', 'Gender', and 'Race/Nationality'. There are also checkboxes for 'Exact' searches and a 'Collection Priority' dropdown set to 'All Collections'. On the right side, there are sections for 'Recently viewed collections', 'Special Collections', and a list of 'Historical Records' including 'Birth, Marriage & Death', 'Census & Voter Lists', 'Immigration & Travel', 'Military', 'Schools, Directories & Church Histories', and 'Tax, Criminal, Land & Wills'. At the bottom, there is a 'Recent Searches' section showing 'dye', 'szucs', '(no name indicated)', and 'ann\*'. A green bar at the bottom center of the page contains the number '3'.

## Collection Search

**What it does:**

Ancestry sometimes groups collections that have a common theme and makes them searchable from collection pages. Examples are the Jewish Family History collections, African American Family History collections, Quaker Family History collections, New York's 400th Anniversary, Military Conflicts, Death Records, Passenger Lists, and more.

**When to use it:**

When your search doesn't necessarily fit a record group, or when you're looking for more information on a particular record type. These pages typically also include links to guidance materials that will help you with your research in that particular area.

**SPECIAL COLLECTIONS ON ANCESTRY.COM**

- [African American Collection](#)
- [Death Collection](#)
- [Drouin Church and Vital Records](#)
- [Immigration Collection](#)
- [Irish Collection](#)
- [Jewish Family History Collection](#)
- [Military Collection](#)
- [New England Collection](#)
- [New York 400th Anniversary](#)
- [The Quaker Collection](#)

## Direct Search

**What it does:**

A direct search allows you to focus your search on one collection, without having to wade through other records.

**When to use it:**

When you've identified a type of record you need and it is available on Ancestry.com for the place and time when your ancestor would be included.

**LOCATING COLLECTIONS TO SEARCH DIRECTLY:**

There are two ways to explore Ancestry.com collections and identify records of interest.

## CARD CATALOG

The Card Catalog can help you locate collections for the times and places where your ancestor lived. The catalog lets you search for specific collections or use filters to help you get at the content you need.

### Searches

- Title search field searches only the titles of collections.
- Keyword search field searches the titles of collections and descriptive materials associated with the collection as well.

### Filters

You can filter by:

- Record category (e.g., immigration records; census records; birth, marriage, and death records; etc.)
- Location (country, state, county for U.S.)
- Time period (century or decade)
- Languages

**Tip:** You can sort results to rank recently updated collections at the top. This is a good way to keep up with the most current offerings for your ancestor's location.

The screenshot shows the Ancestry Card Catalog interface. On the left, there are search fields for 'Title' and 'Keyword(s)', and a 'Search' button. Below these are filter sections: 'Filter Titles' with options for 'Birth, Marriage & Death', 'USA', 'Illinois', and 'Cook'; and 'Filter By Collection' with options for 'Birth, Baptism & Christening', 'Marriage & Divorce', and 'Death, Burial, Cemetery & Obituaries'. The main area displays 'Results 1-14 of 14' sorted by 'Popularity'. A table lists various collections, including 'Cook County, Illinois, Birth Certificates Index, 1871-1922' and 'Cook County, Illinois Death Index, 1908-1988'. A tooltip is shown over the 'Cook County, Illinois Death Index, 1908-1988' entry, providing details: 'Published on Ancestry 8/29/2008', 'Updated 8/29/2008', and a description: 'This database contains an index to over 2.7 million deaths from 1908-1988 for Cook County, Illinois. Information listed in this index includes: name of deceased, death date, and file number.' The entry 'Directory of the city of Chicago, Illinois for 1843' is circled in green at the bottom of the list.

The Card Catalog can unearth collections you might not think to search. For example, the Directory of the city of Chicago, Illinois for 1843, actually includes an obituary page with "Names, places, dates, and ages at death of some of Chicago's Old Settlers, prior to 1843..."

PLACE PAGES

State resource pages (and equivalents for some foreign countries) are also available and can be accessed from the **Search** tab. Click the **Search** tab and then scroll down to the map in the lower-left corner of the page. You'll find links to collections unique to that state, listed by category.

The screenshot shows the Ancestry search interface with the Missouri state resource page open. The search filters on the left include options for matching terms, entering names, dates, and locations, and selecting collection priorities. The main content area displays the Missouri state page with a map of the United States and a list of data collections.

**Search > USA > Missouri**

### Missouri

Welcome to our Missouri family history research page. Here you'll find record collections, history, and genealogy resources to help you trace your Missouri ancestors.

Collections History Resources

#### Data Collections

| Collection Name  | Count     |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Missouri Census &amp; Voter Lists</b>                                   | 315,589   |
| Missouri, State Census Collection, 1844-1881                               | 315,589   |
| U.S. Census Reconstructed Records, 1660-1820                               | 171,563   |
| Missouri, Jackson County Voter Registration Records, 1928-1956             | 61,961    |
| Missouri, Compiled Census and Census Substitutes Index, 1830-1870          | 52,451    |
| Missouri Mortality Records, 1850 and 1860                                  | 2,060     |
| <a href="#">View all Missouri Census &amp; Voter Lists</a>                 |           |
| <b>Missouri Birth, Marriage &amp; Death</b>                                | 5,968,951 |
| Missouri Marriage Records, 1805-2002                                       | 752,904   |
| Missouri, Death Records, 1834-1910   | 668,370   |
| Missouri Birth Records, 1851-1910  | 214,105   |
| Missouri Still Birth & Miscellaneous Records, 1805-2002                    | 126,161   |
| Missouri Marriages to 1850   | 126,161   |
| <a href="#">View all Missouri Birth, Marriage &amp; Death</a>              |           |
| <b>Missouri Military</b>   | 2,049,383 |
| U.S., Confederate Soldiers Compiled Service Records, 1861-1865 <b>FREE</b> | 2,049,383 |
| U.S., Union Soldiers Compiled Service Records, 1861-1865 <b>FREE</b>       | 837,569   |
| Missouri, Confederate Pension Applications and Soldiers Home Applications  | 27,874    |
| Missouri State Office, Political and Military Records, 1810-1820           | 25,022    |

Search for historical records for ancestors in Missouri. [Search](#)

Select another state or region

USA Missouri

Narrow by county

Select a county to view its unique collections.

| County   | Count | County     | Count |
|----------|-------|------------|-------|
| Audrain  | 10    | Lafayette  | 3     |
| Barry    | 1     | Lincoln    | 2     |
| Barton   | 1     | Linn       | 5     |
| Bates    | 2     | Livingston | 13    |
| Benton   | 2     | Marion     | 1     |
| Boone    | 4     | Marion     | 3     |
| Buchanan | 10    | McDonald   | 2     |
| Caldwell | 3     | Miller     | 2     |
| Callaway | 10    | Moniteau   | 4     |
| Camden   | 1     | Monroe     | 1     |

**References, Dictionaries & Almanacs**

- General Reference Materials
- Research Guides & Finding Aids
- Dictionaries & Encyclopedias
- More

**Family Trees**

- Public Member Trees
- More

**Stories & Publications**

- Stories, Memories & Histories
- Newspapers
- Periodicals & Magazines

**Photos & Maps**

- Pictures
- Maps, Atlases & Gazetteers

**Special Collections**

- New York 400th Anniversary
- African American Collections
- Jewish Family History

[View all in Card Catalog](#)

A complete listing of collections browsable by title, location, and date

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## Contact us at

**1-800-ANCESTRY (1-800-262-3787)**

9am-11pm ET daily

