

# Specific Steps to Success with Autosomal DNA

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**Overview** – Autosomal DNA testing can be overwhelming – many Matches over all of your Ancestry. Where to start? How to get organized? This talk provides specific steps that have been developed over the past 6 years that will lead to success (I have communicated with most of my Matches and determined Common Ancestors with over 500 of them). These are genealogy steps that will get you going; finding new cousins and ancestors; and organizing your efforts.

## Step 1. Before you test: **Learn about Autosomal DNA**

- Over 95% of your DNA is Autosomal DNA – Chromosomes 1 to 22
- Each part of your DNA came down to you from your parents, grandparents, etc.
- Each of your atDNA Matches share an identical segment of DNA with you
- Most Matches will be cousins [some with smaller segments may be false matches]
- 2nd cousins and closer will almost always match you; more distant cousins may not
- A specific 6th cousin will only match 2-5% of the time
  - Notwithstanding – most of your Matches will be 6-8th cousins, and beyond.
- Spend some time at International Society of Genetic Genealogy (ISOGG); free to join!
  - Specifically noodle around [http://isogg.org/wiki/Portal:Autosomal\\_DNA](http://isogg.org/wiki/Portal:Autosomal_DNA)
- Compare companies: [http://isogg.org/wiki/Autosomal\\_DNA\\_testing\\_comparison\\_chart](http://isogg.org/wiki/Autosomal_DNA_testing_comparison_chart)
- Also read my blog: [www.segmentology.org](http://www.segmentology.org)
- Take a class in Spreadsheets if you are not proficient

## Step 2. Before you get results: **Develop Robust Ancestral Tree and Standard Message(s)**

**ANCESTRAL TREE**: Start with whatever you have, and extend it as much as you can

- Ancestors are essential – you can only share a Common Ancestor with a Match
- Feel free to add in all children of Ancestors (and other direct descendants)
- But focus on Ancestors first – as many as you can out to 13 generations
- Throw in the kitchen sink** (IMO) for atDNA Matching purposes
  - Your Tree and Ancestors are your bait
  - Your goal is to find a Common Ancestor – you can't if he/she isn't in your Tree
  - “Borrow” ancestors and research from: Ancestry, FamilySearch, DAR, etc.
  - Use judgment in what you borrow; be aware of what you are/are not sure of.
  - Be ready to acknowledge/change, when someone has better info.
- Your Matches are only looking for one Ancestor in your Tree – theirs!
  - Matches will scan your Tree for the Common Ancestor – make it easy for them
- Make a **GEDcom** of your final Tree
  - Upload it to the company you tested with, and link to your name
  - Upload it to GEDmatch, Family Search, Ancestry, Geni, World Connect.
- Make an **alpha list of every surname** in your Tree
  - An alpha list is much easier for a Match to review and to look for their surnames
  - Many of us have added dates and locations to our surnames
    - BUTCHER (Germany; to VA mid 1700s)
    - HIGGINBOTHAM (Amherst Co, VA 1700s)
    - TIMBERLAKE (VA late 1600s)

- TIP:** Make a unique Patriarch list from surname list
- Spell out the best known Patriarch for each surname; add dates, places
- Use Matriarch, if Patriarch is unknown
- Strive for one Patriarch per line; with surnames first, arranged alphabetically
- Lets Matches easily scan down the surname list; and glance at other info
  - FLEMING**, James 1739 MD-1821 Harrison Co, (W)VA, LT/RevWar
  - HILL**, Sion W 1654-1705 Surry Co, VA
  - MITCHELL**, John 1763 Amelia Co, VA-1836 Montgomery Co, VA
  - RUCKER**, Peter 1661-1743 Immigrant MD/VA
- Use this list in Step 3.

### **STANDARD MESSAGE:**

- Include your real name and email
- Include links to your Tree (public place you've posted your GEDcom)
- Request your Match's Ancestry in any form: Tree, Ahnentafel, spreadsheet, etc.
- Include a short summary of your ancestry – in general
  - Do not drone on about your favorite Ancestor, or tell stories – save it for a cousin
- Optional: use your Patriarch List at the bottom of your message.
  - Most genealogists will scan down an alphabetical list.
- Offer to help your Matches understand atDNA; provide helpful links.
- Be upbeat – you want to work with your Match to determine the Common Ancestor.

### **EXAMPLE MESSAGE:**

We share a DNA segment, and should be cousins with a Common Ancestor. Below are some links to my ancestry (roughly 3/4 Colonial Virginia, 1/4 Scotland and Germany). Please look it over and let me know if you recognize your ancestral line, or a common place/time. Please share your Tree (best), pedigree, list of Patriarchs or surnames.

My Ancestry Tree: <http://trees.ancestry.com/tree/20620230/family> (I can send invite)  
 My GEDMatch ID is M200105; Tree: 8311833.

I'm having success with atDNA and would be happy to help you. See my How to Succeed list at: <http://boards.rootsweb.com/topics.dnaresearch.autosomal/301/mb.ashx> - with some good links at the end. My autosomal DNA blog – in Plain English for genealogists – is at: [www.segmentology.org](http://www.segmentology.org).

I hope to hear from you – Jim Bartlett please email me at [jim4bartletts@verizon.net](mailto:jim4bartletts@verizon.net)

### **Step 3. After you get results: Communicate with Each Match/Determine Common Ancestors**

- Contact every Match** – well that’s the goal; start with the closest.
  - Personalized emails/messages work best; then paste in your standard message.
  - Some people manage several kits, so be sure you identify who the Match is.
  - If you recognize a matching surname, or anything else in a Matches profile, mention it.
  - If you Triangulate, or otherwise group, Matches for an email, bcc them
  - Generally, a single personal message works best – it’s easier with standard paragraphs.
- Read/Study/Respond to all replies – keep the conversation going.
- Be persistent
  - It sometimes takes several emails/messages before you hear back
  - Try to find some new information or specific question to ask in follow up messages
  - Often new clues come out in the follow up messages.
- Track** the emails/messages sent and received [see spreadsheet below]
  - I use a code for each standard message, so I can use that code & date in spreadsheet.
- Share**
  - Share your information with your Matches – they often respond in kind
  - Examine every Tree you can for similar Ancestors
  - Also look for place/time matches:
    - Your Ancestor and your Match’s Ancestor in the same place/time is a good clue.
- Common Ancestors (CA)**
  - Usually the **husband/wife** of your and your Match’s Ancestors
    - You and your Match descend from different children of the CA
    - You usually cannot tell which one passed down the DNA segment you share.
  - Sometimes you’ll share more than one CA with a Match
    - The shared segment can only come from one CA
  - Sometimes a CA may be in your Tree more than once
    - The shared segment can only come from one place in your Tree
  - Sometimes the CA may be behind your brick wall
    - The shared segment can easily go through brick walls, you cannot find it.
  - Sometimes the CA will be further back than your Tree...
  - However, when you find a CA, or a place/time match, be sure to keep track of it.
    - See spreadsheets, below.
  - You might want to enter at least part of your Match’s descent in your Tree...

### **Step 4. Use a Spreadsheet to Manage Match/Segment Info and Your Status/Progress**

A spreadsheet will help you with several objectives:

1. Track all of your Matches
  - Particularly important if you test at more than one company, and use GEDmatch
  - It helps you “inventory” your data
  - Easily search for any name.
  - Easily sort on any field
2. Track all of your shared segments
  - Some Matches will share more than one segment with you
  - Easily sort on shared segment location – very handy for Triangulation
  - Triangulation lets you group matches who are cousins from one Ancestor.

3. Track emails/messages with Matches
  - You need some way to keep track of your correspondence
    - Have you contacted each match?
    - Have they responded yet?
4. Keep track of Common Ancestors you've found
  - You can make a duplicate of the row and enter multiple CAs
5. Note when a Match also matches a known close relative – key in Triangulation.
- 6.

How do you get this data into a spreadsheet? Download it!

- Set up a template you want to use (which columns of data)
  - Match's First Name, Last Name; email; Company used; Match date; Segment: Chromosome, Start, End, cM, SNPS, etc
  - Later you'll add columns for CA, cousinship, GEDmatch numbers, etc.
  - As you download data, you'll need to arrange the columns to match the template.
  - At 23andMe and FTDNA, you also need to merge Match & segment data
- FTDNA's Family Finder
  - Download spreadsheet of Match data from the Matches page: lower right
  - Download spreadsheet of Segment data from Chromosome Browser: top right
    - TIP: sort on centiMorgan and delete all rows below 7cM
    - NB: all Matches will have emails and Segment data, automatically
- 23andMe
  - Download spreadsheet of Match data from DNA Relatives page: very top right
  - Go to MyResults > Ancestry Tools > Family Inheritance: Advanced...
    - Over Explanation of terminology: click on download link
    - NB: you will only get segment data from Matches who have shared with you
    - However, this may be changing...
- www.GEDmatch.com
  - Use Tier 1 Utilities: Matching Segment Search.
    - Copy entire spreadsheet [CNTR A]; and then paste it into a blank spreadsheet.
      - It takes a few minutes, but it's worth it to get name, email & segment info