

Searching for Lost Relatives

Today, many people believe that knowing your biological roots is a basic human right. Instead of just wondering about lost relatives, they are taking action to find them.

If you have a name, then the Internet can be a great tool for finding people. But unless the person you seek has an unusual last name, it may be impossible to pinpoint the right person. In many cases, you don't even know the names of your lost relatives. So you need another approach to solving your mystery.

How DNA Testing Can Help

As the cost of DNA testing has come down, a new science called genetic genealogy has developed. For less than a hundred dollars, nearly anyone can uncover hundreds of biological relatives through an "autosomal" DNA test offered by just three companies.

Collectively, more than two million people have taken one or more of these tests. You simply order a home test kit and collect your own DNA by rubbing a swab inside your cheek or spitting into a tube. A few weeks after you mail in your sample, your results will be compared to everyone else in that testing company database. You log into your private account and see all your matches.

Yours DNA Matches

Some people get lucky and immediately discover a parent, sibling, or first cousin. This will happen more often for most people as the databases get even bigger.

Most likely, your closest matches will be second or third cousins. Second cousins, for example, share a set of great-grandparents with you. By contacting that person and/or examining a posted family tree, you can then do conventional genealogy research to find the branch of their family that includes you.

The Tests You Need to Take

Here are the three autosomal DNA tests that can solve your mystery. Since each database is mostly different, you increase your chances of success by testing with all three companies. But you can always start with one and add the others later, if needed.

As a bonus, each test includes an overall breakdown of your ethnic ancestry. Besides being of great personal interest, that information may provide a useful clue in your search.

Each test has a different set of features, advantages and limitations. No one test is always superior to the others. The following links will take you to the individual company web sites where you can learn more and place your order.

AncestryDNA <https://www.ancestry.com.au>

MyHeritage <https://www.myheritage.com/login>

Familytreedna <https://www.familytreedna.com>

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