

5 Steps to Becoming a Good Ancestor

By Marian Pierre-Louis

#1 Share Your Tree

Be sure you share your research and your family history so that it becomes part of history rather than lost to history.

Your first step is getting organized so that you have something to share. Your family will likely not save your notes and papers.

Offline options

- Print multiple copies as a book and share with family members
- Send copies of your family history to an archive or historical society
- Publish articles about your family history

Online options

- FamilySearch.org
- RootsWeb World Connect
- Ancestry.com, MyHeritage.com, WikiTree.com, Geni.com, FindMyPast.com, AmericanAncestors.org

Be sure at least one family members knows what genealogy program you use and where to find your tree on your computer or website.

Publishing articles

Your knowledge of your family will be preserved if you publish articles about your ancestors. Not only does it preserve your family history but it also helps others learn about local history or how you solved a research problem.

Publish in:

- Local historical society newsletters
- Local/ethnic genealogy society publications
- Genealogy Magazines – Family Tree Magazine, American Ancestors, Your Genealogy, NGS Magazine
- Peer Reviewed Genealogy Journals – National Genealogical Society Quarterly (NGSQ), New York Genealogical and Biographical Record (NYGBR), The American Genealogist (TAG), New England Historical and Genealogical Register (NEHGR)

Select the publication that would be most interested in your story and subject matter.

Also consider submitting to a genealogical society writing contest. For instance, <https://www.ngsgenealogy.org/competitions/family-history-writing-contest/>

Publishing online

You can choose a less formal route and publish your family history yourself online.

Some of the options include:

- Personal Website
- Facebook Group
- Personal Blog
- Online Forums

One great way to get started is with Amy Johnson Crow's 52 Ancestors in 52 Weeks. This

activity provides free weekly prompts to get you writing each week.

Get started here:

<https://www.amyjohnsoncrow.com/52-ancestors-in-52-weeks/>

Things to Consider

When using your own online spaces such as a personal website, Facebook group, community forums, etc. keep in mind how you will prevent your information from being deleted after you're gone. Who will have admin access to the information?

#2 Preserve for the Future

A great way to preserve your family history is to join a lineage society. In most cases it won't preserve your whole family history but it will safely preserve whichever line is relevant to the society. It also paves a way for your descendants to join the society themselves based on the research you have already done.

Article: Should I Join a Lineage Society? by Brandy Heineman - <http://brandyheineman.com/join-lineage-society>

Popular Lineage Societies

- Mayflower Society – <https://www.themayflowersociety.org/>
- Daughters of the American Revolution - <https://www.dar.org/>
- Sons of the American Revolution - <https://www.sar.org/>

List of lineage societies -

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/LineageSocietyofAmerica> (U.S.)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_hereditary_and_lineage_organizations (International)

Use the WayBack Machine to preserve your online presence. Submit your blog or website to be captured so that it is always available even if your site or blog are deleted.

<https://archive.org/web/>

#3 Document Your Family and FANs

Your descendants want to know who shared your life and journey. Think about how you can save and share information about Family and FANs.

Family

- What family members did you meet during lifetime – even if only once?
- Who were you closest to outside of your immediate family?
- Who didn't you stay in touch with?
- Who did you visit?
- Did you have family reunions? How often?

Friends

Who have been your friends during the various stages of your life?

- Childhood
- High School
- College
- Local town friends
- Far away friends
- Lifetime friends
- Travel buddies

Associates

Associates are the people we most forget unless they become close family friends

- Colleagues from work
- Professional organization associates
- Fellow members of clubs and societies
- Religious organizations and groups
- Fellow volunteers

Neighbors

- Neighbors quietly (or not!) have a big part in your life
- How well did you know your neighbors?
- Did you have neighborhood parties?
- What kind of street did you live on?
- Who made a lasting impression?
- How many places/neighborhoods did you live?

#4 Leave a Legacy of Yourself

Personal Writing

- Diaries
- Short Memories
- Letters to children/loved ones
- Scrapbooks
- Blogs
- Memoires
- Autobiography

Writing Aids

Personal Historian software -

<https://www.rootsmagic.com/Personal-Historian/>

FamilySearch Memories (app) -

<https://www.familysearch.org/campaign/mobile/memories>

High School/College

- Local Newspaper articles about sports or achievements
- Yearbooks
- Submit information to college directories

Community involvement

- Church – flowers during the holidays, leadership roles, officers
- Town/County Offices
- Volunteer work – town committees

Hobbies

- Enter contests – photo, agricultural
- Keep track of your adventures/activities – date/rate wines your taste, hikes you've taken

Archive your digital life

- Save your website to the Way Back Machine
- Record a conversation for Story Corps - <https://storycorps.org/>
- Upload audio files to Internet Archive

Family

- Talk to your family about your family history
- Display photos in your house of your ancestors
- Start an annual family reunion
- Visit ancestral sites during family vacations
- Write down or record family traditions
- Create baby books

Photos Projects

- Create Memory Books – Shutterfly, CVS, Walgreens, blurb.com
- Send holiday photo cards
- Family Photo Calendar
- Digital scrapbook pages of events
- Take multi-generational photos
- Take photos of your kids/grandkids with family gravestones
- Save your old passports and driver's licenses

Other Projects

- Create a family quilt
- Create a family cookbook with recipes, photos and stories
- Make a family time capsule

Multi-media

- Create family history videos
- Record your family history stories
- <https://www.familysearch.org/blog/en/preserving-family-memories-reallife-success-stories/>
- Start an oral history project by recording family members
- Convert old video or scan old photos then be sure to share
- Journaling apps - <https://zapier.com/blog/best-journaling-apps/>

- Use a service to convert old video recordings or scan old photos

Heirlooms

- Inscribe your jewelry with names and dates
- Stitch name and date into embroidery
- Cookbooks – date and rate the recipes

#5 Leave Bread Crumbs for your descendants

- Buy a charity brick
- Dedicate a park bench
- Name your children after ancestors
- Leave your mark on the world – plant your favorite flower (mine are lilacs)
- Send a letter to the President
- Publish a book and send it to the Library of Congress