

Family History Group:

Getting Started



1. Think about how you want to work on your family tree and what type of information you want to collect. What access do you have to a computer, the internet, libraries and record keeping organisations?
2. Choose a method that you would like to use to document your research findings. These could be either a subscription based service, genealogy software, a word document or excel spreadsheet, pedigree charts and family group sheets (such as those available for free on [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com)). All City of Port Phillip libraries provide free access to the library editions of [findmypast.com](https://www.findmypast.com) and [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) and have many other resources to help you in your search!
3. Start with what you already know. Talk to other members of the family and look at what records exist within the 'family archive.' Has anyone done research into your family before? Think about certificates, letters, diaries, passports, family photos, a bible and family anecdotes.
4. Work backwards from yourself. Enter as much information as you can into your tree noting down what you have about your genealogy; births, marriages, deaths, immigrations and other major life events. Next, look at your siblings and parents, then your grandparents and so on...
5. Dive in to the enormous pool of other sources that are out there! A good starting point are the registries of births, marriages and deaths. Census and immigration records are also important to look at early in your research. Later you can fill out your family tree with newspaper reports, photos and many other records: military, land, wills & probate, employment, clubs and societies.
6. Always cross-check your research findings with as many sources as you can.
7. Always carefully examine each record for all the clues it contains. For example a death record can reveal not only the cause and date of death, but addresses, family names, and length of residence in Australia.
8. Remember to think about the reliability of sources you've used. Are they primary or secondary sources? Remember to *always* document the source of the information you're writing down – so that you or other researchers can verify it at any time. You can be more certain of a piece of information when it has come from multiple primary sources.