

Grandpa Did Whaaat?!

Young people can benefit from being involved in family history because:

- A. It provides them with a connection to their roots. Example: Musical talent and love of music can span the generations.
- B. They develop a “sense of history” by knowing what has happened to their families in the past.
 - 1. Helps them know “who they are.”
 - 2. Reading journals and family histories reveals that there have always been problems, and perhaps the problems of today can be overcome, just as the problems of the past have been overcome.
- C. Family history provides a context in which to understand the world. Example: We live in a mobile world where people move from city to city, and sometimes from country to country. Contrast this with immigration and pioneering.
- D. Pursuing and documenting family history is an intergenerational activity. Parents, grandparents and youth can work together to gather their history.
 - 1. This helps young people develop responsibility.
 - 2. Young people have role models working with them to help them learn.
 - 3. Who will inherit all your “stuff” when you take in your family history shingle? Prepare the next generation to take over.

What are the first steps in getting young people involved in family history?

- A. First, you, the parent or grandparent, must love it, live it, cherish it, and know it yourself. You can’t teach something you don’t know. And you can’t interest someone in something you do not find interesting.
 - 1. Write your own family history and share it with the young.
 - 2. Illustrate your history with photos. Tell the stories the photos represent. Have your young people help you label all those photos.
 - 3. Contact older relatives, visit them, and collect their histories. If their histories aren’t written, encourage them to do it. Share these stories with your young people. Better yet, take them with you when you visit Aunt Jane.
- B. Foster bonding between generations—a feeling of family.
 - 1. Grandparents should use family history to help them bond with grandchildren. Tell them stories about your youth, about their parents as they were growing up.
 - 2. Bonding between members of the same generation is encouraged when cousins participate in family history together.
 - 3. Bonding will also occur between extended generations (great grandparents and further back) as family stories are discovered and shared.

- C. Some activities that build bonds and help young people enjoy family history are:
1. Discovering journals—their own as well as those of ancestors.
 - a. Make journals to give to your young people by covering the hard cardboard that make up the covers to the “black and white” hard-cover notebook. You can use construction paper, or scrapbooking paper for a fancier look. These are inexpensive and lovely. Make one for yourself as well, and use it.
 - b. Have a bookshelf where you keep the journals of your ancestors and encourage your young people to read them.
 2. Re-enacting. Find old clothes or costumes (even period clothing from your ancestor’s time) and dress up with your young people. Each person re-enacts a character out of family history. This way the young people need to know something about their ancestors in order to “enact” them. Have a party, a dinner, or a tea-party as you each become one of your ancestors.
 3. Make opportunities to tell family stories. Have a special family home evening and tell inspiring stories of your ancestors. Or, have a sleep-over for grandchildren and tell them stories as they settle down for the night. (They especially love to hear stories about their parents as they were growing up.)
 4. Make a family calendar with birthdays displayed as well as other special family occasions.
 5. Write a newsletter and include family stories. Have your young people help you in the publishing and distribution of the newsletters.
 6. Host a “grandma’s camp” where you invite all your grandchildren to come. Make it a real camp with flag raising, tents, nature walks, etc. but include family stories. You may even visit family sites together, telling stories of what happened at each site. This camp can last one day, or several.
 7. Have them do “meaningful” work—not just busy work—such as baptisms for the dead, typing up family histories, sorting and labeling photos, scrapbooking, etc.
 8. Don’t overlook the benefits of a one-on-one experience with a young person. Take a young person (or several, if you wish) to the family history center in your area and show him/them how you can find family history there that you do not already have.
 9. Have a family history scavenger hunt—a game where information is found at home on the internet or at the family history center that answers questions about your ancestor.

When we involve young people in family history we all can benefit. More history is found/preserved, and young people can gain knowledge of how the world works now and in the past.