



Wise words

#1: What would be the most important piece of advice you would give a new genealogist that would provide them with an ongoing advantage in their research?

Nerida Attwood: To talk to your older generation before it's too late to ask.

Rachel Hill: Get as much info as you can from living relatives as soon as you can. As Grandma used to say, delays are dangerous.

Jeanette Cooke: Treat living relatives with respect. They might have lots of stories and information, but it should also be about them too!

Catriona Williamson: Never rely on your memory; record, somewhere, what you have learned and where you learned it. Saves so much time in the long run.

Trisha Dunn: Don't rely on your memory; source everything you find.

Ros Lauder: Maintain good records from the beginning.

Christine Birrell: Always keep good records.

Linda Young: Add source citation for each record you find. Learn how to do it properly.

Brad Beadel: Not only record where you found the source but put down the date you found it.

Michaela Sortehaug: Cite all your work (so if need be, you know where you found your information and can go back and review the record again).

Christine McGregor: Index what you find and keep info found in some order. I have NOT done this so well and waste lots of time!

Chinese Family History & Stories: Print all your emails and file them by topic.

Ormskirk and District Family History Society: Keep any handwritten notes that you make at archive centres; by all means transfer them to your family tree software, but don't discard them... just in case something happens to the computer.

Sue Carter: Print out descendant/ancestor reports from time to time for the same reason, (if your computer fails).

Jan Powell: consult primary sources whenever possible

Wise words is a compilation of suggestions made by individuals on the facebook page of New Zealand Society of Genealogists. NZSG does not necessarily endorse any of the suggestions.

Brad Beadel: Make sure you are tracing the right person even if there is someone else with a similar name in the family.

Heather Malmo Drew: Don't believe the family stories as gospel. Many of them turn out to be wrong once you find the actual documents.

Suzanne Sutton Cummings: Check absolutely everything! There are lots of family stories out there made up to cover unpleasant and/or embarrassing things.

Christine Tregonning: Always check your facts and don't assume anything.

Harriet Taylor: Verify, verify, verify. Anne Bromell, who wrote *Tracing Family History in New Zealand* and tutored night classes, advised that each piece of information should be verified in at least two different ways. Especially important regarding anything found on the internet as I have discovered.

Michaela Sortehaug: If you are looking at another person's research, don't take it as gospel that they are right, especially if you are thinking, "they must be right because they have been researching for so long," or "the document was produced so long ago at a time when the author of the document and the people in the tree must have known each other." We can all make mistakes.

Karin Mary: Don't trust everything you find on the internet.

Trisha Dunn: Don't believe on line trees. Found one yesterday with a woman having a son in her 60's; in fact, the child is a grandson.

Michaela Sortehaug: If you are reviewing people's on line family trees, all it takes on line is for one person to incorrectly copy someone else's data and it can easily snowball. For instance, one of my grandfathers died in 2008 but someone decided to put him on their tree as having died about 1998. Now, on line, there are so many trees where they have listed him as having died in 1988. Grrrr.

Sue Carter: Be prepared to look wide. For example, your person might appear as a witness to a sibling's wedding, complete with residence and occupation, even though you thought there was little point in going out on a tangent.

Ros Lauder: Think laterally when researching.

Christine Birrell: Think laterally, especially with names that could be misspelled.

Doreen Pennell: When starting, I suggest you follow just one line for several months until you are familiar with research. I found it easier to focus on each of my four trees individually until I became confident about each one, instead of confusing them by having too many branches at once. I could then recall by memory which line the information I was looking at belonged to.

Jill Renton: Don't stick to your direct lines. Branch out to brothers and sisters. I couldn't find my 2X great grandmother's parents but I found her sister's parents.

Cathy Owens: date and identify photos.

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Sue Carter: Look at the background of photos, with a magnifying glass. It might be possible to identify a nearby building or structure and its location. Odd items on a picnic rug, for example, can give all sorts of clues.

Jan Powell: Get your relatives to name and date their photos, especially old photos.

Trisha Dunn: get a good database early, (I use Legacy) that you control.

Kerrie Metcalfe: Join a group. It is not all on the internet and some groups have well resourced rooms as well as good advice.

Heather Malno Drew: Join SeniorNet. Most clubs have a genealogy group. I learned everything I know from my group in Takapuna. I drove them mad with my questions but finally found hubby's grandfather with their help, and my on line tree got me lots of contacts too.

Ormskirk and District Family History Society: One thing is to consider joining a family history society that covers your area of interest. Many have libraries containing books, software and research that have been donated by other members. If the group has been running for any length of time, they may even have copies of out-of-print local and family history books that public libraries just wouldn't keep. You would be surprised by how much local knowledge group members have, if they are prompted to share it.

Rachel Williams: Join one of the main genealogy sites. I recommend Ancestry.

New Zealand Morporks: ALWAYS have a genealogist as a friend.

Doreen Pennell: I confess here and now that I did little of some of the previous suggestions.