



Using on-line genealogical DNA tests (e.g. Ancestrydna.com) to search for relatives separated by adoption

Before using DNA testing:

1. Get as much information as you can by applying for your adoption information from the relevant State Government.
In Qld the link below gives details about how to apply.
<https://www.qld.gov.au/community/caring-child/adoption/post-adoption-support-services/how-request-adoption-information>
2. Use information available from other sources to find your biological family – you can contact Jigsaw for advice on how to search.
3. Contact Jigsaw Qld or another post adoption support service to get support in deciding how to approach relatives once they have been located.
4. If you have been unable to find your biological family using the above methods, you may want to use a genealogical DNA test to identify potential biological relatives.

Consider the implications and limitations of using a genealogical DNA test:

1. Educate yourself about DNA genealogical testing by reading books, viewing websites and/or joining a family history DNA group. See resources at the end of this information sheet.
2. Be aware that you are placing your DNA in a database. Therefore, make sure you familiarise yourself with privacy information and settings.
3. Be aware that you could discover other surprises that are different to what you are trying to find out.
4. Be aware that what you find will depend on which relatives have also used a particular DNA database.
5. Be aware that the ethnicity information you will get will only be an approximation and may be refined and change over time as more people's DNA is added to the database.

Decide which DNA testing company to use:

1. There are a number of companies offering DNA testing. They all offer DNA test kits by mail and deliver the results online. The companies currently offering testing are AncestryDNA, MyHeritage DNA, Family Tree DNA, 23andMe, Living DNA and Find My Past DNA (in partnership with Living DNA).
2. Genealogists have recommended that in general you start with autosomal DNA testing with AncestryDNA and then transfer your raw DNA data into Family Tree DNA (free upload page), MyHeritage DNA (free upload page), Living DNA (free upload page) and to GEDmatch.

For more information on this topic see:

<http://genie1.com.au/which-dna-testing-company-to-use/>

Once you get your test results:

1. You will need to spend time looking at the results (DNA matches) and matching these results to information you already have. Concentrate on matches 4th cousin or closer. Look for similar surnames and any matches that share DNA with relatives you already know about.
2. Note the amount of the DNA match expressed in centiMorgans (CM). You can then use the free on line resource DNA painter to confirm who your most recent common ancestor is likely to be.
3. Remember where there has been an adoption, a half relationship may be involved and your biological parent or grandparent may be unknown to your matches and not in their family tree.
4. Autosomal DNA tests such as Ancestry do not distinguish whether the match occurs on the paternal or maternal side. Your most recent common ancestor with your match may be a couple.
5. Be aware that while a parent/child match will likely be accurate, a “first cousin match” could be a number of relationships: first cousin, uncle, aunt, or even a half sibling.
6. Gather as much information as you can from any family trees linked to your DNA “matches” before contacting any relatives. This could include taking screen shots. Sometimes after being contacted people remove their information from public viewing so it is important you capture the information before outreaching to a possible relative.
7. Decide if and how you will sensitively make contact with a “match” relative to gain more information. If you would like support with this, contact Jigsaw QLD.

Tips for making contact with relatives

1. Unless you find an exact parent/child match, and you are outreaching to other relatives, it is best that you do not mention adoption in the first contact.
2. If possible, you are aiming to get enough information to identify your biological parent/child so you can make direct contact with them rather than revealing adoption information to their extended family. The latter can jeopardise any future relationship with your parent/child as they may feel their privacy has been breached.
3. If using AncestryDNA, use the match messaging green button (not the orange user profile contact) as an email is sent (mobile users rarely see the inbox).
4. Keep a contact log – you could use a Spreadsheet or your own note taking system
5. Reach out with a brief message, use a friendly tone, ask a specific question and offer some personal information (but do not give too much family history information). The template below is based on one provided by Weinberg (2017)

Subject: Ancestry DNA Relative

Hello (name)

I have noticed that we match on AncestryDNA . Our longest segment is XXX cM. I was hoping we could compare our trees to determine who our common ancestor may be. I've attached a chart that might help us out. I hope to hear back from you soon.

Sincerely

(Your name)

(Your Ancestry DNA name) on Ancestry DNA

For more information including suggested templates for making contact go to:

<https://genie1.com.au/dna-match-email-template/>

6. If you don't get a reply it may be that the other person is only interested in the ethnicity information and not matches or perhaps they may have logged on once and never again.
7. Keep checking your matches (e.g. every month) as more people may have tested and you may have other matches to follow up

Resources

Websites

<https://genie1.com.au/> This is an excellent website hosted by an Australian genealogist Louise Coakley with a lot of free information in an easy to read and understand format

<http://familyhistoryresearch.com.au/> This website is run by Kerry Farmer. She publishes booklets which are short and easy to follow.

<https://dna-central.com/> This is an American website established w by internationally recognised genealogist Blaine Bettinger. It offers education resources but there is a fee to join.

Books:

Weinberg, T., *The Adoptee's Guide to DNA testing*, Family Tree Books, 2017

Bettinger, Blaine T. *The Family Tree Guide to DNA testing and genetic genealogy*, F & W Publications Inc., 2019

Farmer, Kerry *DNA for genealogists* 4th Edition, *Unlock the Past*, 2017.

The above books are available for loan to Jigsaw members.

DNA Assistance/Support groups:

Australian DNA Hub: DNA genealogy for Adoptees. If you pay a subscription of \$40 per annum you can get assistance with interpreting your results. <https://www.australiandnahub.org.au/services>

DNA detectives. This Facebook group for those affected by adoption has both positive and negative stories. Some individuals in this group may offer volunteer support.

www.facebook.com/groups/DNADetectives

You could also try contacting a local genealogical / family history group (e.g. Qld Family History Society) to see if they have any volunteers who are available and experienced with tracing using DNA.

<https://www.qfhs.org.au/groups/dna/>

