

# Using MyHeritage to Quickly Discover & Write Your Ancestors' Stories

By Devon Noel Lee

If you struggle to write a family history, then discover how MyHeritage can help you organize your discoveries and then turn these documents into completed family histories,

**Record by record  
Sentence by sentence  
You can honor your ancestors in writing**

## Prepare to Write

1. Build a profile for your ancestor on MyHeritage
  - Watch *A Newbie's Guide to the MyHeritage Website*  
<https://youtu.be/04y5RaFq3xg>
2. Gather records for your ancestor, using Record Hints and other search techniques.
  - Watch *How to Research Records Hints on MyHeritage* -  
<https://youtu.be/NSFbHiNIDIO>
3. Open a writing program and create a new file for your project in one of the following programs:
  - Google Docs
  - Microsoft Word
  - Apple Pages
  - LibreOffice Writer
4. Turn Off Your Inner Critic
  - What is the goal of a first draft?
  - Do not edit during this stage of writing.
  - Ignore your audience while writing your first draft (read <https://www.familyhistoryfanatics.com/post/ignore-your-audience/>)

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## Records Supply The Content

If you have documents and photos that provide evidence that your ancestor existed, then you have the material you need to write a rough draft.

Focus on one person as the central character of your story.

- Until you have practice writing about one individual, it's tough to write about multiple relatives as the main character.
- You will include additional relatives, neighbors, and associates in your story but always write from a single individual's perspective.
- Watch *Tips for Writing a Family History Book - Keep It Simple*  
<https://youtu.be/cvoshRhZVcU>

Take each record in chronological order and extract EVERYTHING from that document. Even the smallest detail provides insight into your ancestor's world.

- Be sure to include everyone listed on the document.
- Include how they are related to the ancestor you're writing about.
- If a fun detail pops into your mind while writing, make a note, or add it to your story.

Repeat this process for every document for one ancestor.

**Review some writing samples for life events:**

- "How to write a simple birth story about your ancestor" -  
<https://www.familyhistoryfanatics.com/post/writing-a-simple-birth-story/>

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- How to write a simple marriage story about your ancestors -  
<https://www.familyhistoryfanatics.com/post/writing-a-marriage-story-2/>

## Using MyHeritage to Gather More Source Material

MyHeritage has a wealth of records that can help you write your ancestor's story. My favorite collections include:

- Census records
- -City Directories
- Yearbooks
- Periodicals
- Newspapers
- Passenger Lists
- Vital Records
- And so much more.

To learn how to find your ancestors in this collection, check out the MyHeritage Knowledge Base for some of the following tutorials:

- [Using Census, Immigration, Newspaper, and Yearbook Records at MyHeritage to Explore the Lives of Your Ancestors](#)
- [How to Get the Most Out of Record Matches](#)
- [City Directories: No Town Too Small No Clue Too Little](#)
- [How to Find Your Family in Newspapers with SuperSearch](#)

## Tying the Chronology Together

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After you write a rough draft that turns documents into paragraphs, you can rearrange events so they flow excitingly. You should add social history to make your ancestor's world have more richness and depth. Finally, you need to use transitions to your events, so the story flows better.

Much of these steps are covered in the following blogs and videos:

- Why Should You Add Historical Context To Your Writing?  
<https://www.familyhistoryfanatics.com/post/add-historical-context-to-your-writing/>
- 5 Cool Sites For Spicing Up Your Family History Books  
<https://www.familyhistoryfanatics.com/post/spice-up-your-family-history-books/>
- How to Improve Your Book With the Five Stages Editing -  
<https://youtu.be/40X4j6dKIJM>
- Should You Use Proper English?  
<https://youtu.be/OZ5XibsW5Lk>
- How to Write About a Boring Ancestor  
<https://www.familyhistoryfanatics.com/post/write-about-a-boring-ancestor/>
- How To Describe Your Ancestor's Physical Appearance  
<https://www.familyhistoryfanatics.com/post/describe-physical-appearance/>
- Should I Include That? - Family History Writing Tips  
<https://www.familyhistoryfanatics.com/post/should-i-include-that/>
- Enliven Family Histories With One Simple Trick -  
<https://www.familyhistoryfanatics.com/post/enliven-family-histories/>

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## Additional Family History Writing Resources

- Nigro, Carmen. "20 Reasons Why You Should Write Your Family History." New York Public Library. August 29, 2018.  
[www.nypl.org/blog/2015/02/09/reasons-to-write-your-family-history](http://www.nypl.org/blog/2015/02/09/reasons-to-write-your-family-history)
- Palmero, Lynn. "Social History Resources" Family History Writing Studio. March 12, 2017. [familyhistorywritingstudio.com/social-history-resources](http://familyhistorywritingstudio.com/social-history-resources)
- Lee, Devon Noel and Andrew Lee. *A Recipe for Writing Family History*. Houston, TX: FHF Group, LLC, 2017.
- Sturdevant, Katherine Scott, and Sharon Debartolo Carmack. *Bringing Your Family History to Life Through Social History*. Cincinnati, Ohio: Betterway Books, 2001.
- Szabados, Steve. "Social History and our Ancestors." Steve Szabados. January 27, 2018. <https://bit.ly/2MdZ88Q>