

FamilySearch Indexing

How to get started – the 6 steps for indexing at home

1. Open FamilySearch Indexing and click on the Download Batch button.
2. Pick a batch from the list. You might start with the Beginning level and be sure to select English.
3. First select the Image Type for each image. You'll usually select "Normal"
4. Then index what you see. If you have a question about what to enter, first check the **Field Help** section in the lower right. This will answer most of your questions. Also review the Basic Indexing Guidelines (below) and the Project Instructions for the specific project.
5. When you are all done, it will begin the Quality Checker. This just lets you verify some of the entries that Indexing did not recognize. Click the Accept button or correct your entry.
6. Submit the batch and check your new statistics!

Obituaries – Key Tips

4 Parts

1. Select the image type (normal, blank, no extractable data, etc.)
2. Index what you see
 - a. Index the deceased first
 - b. Index *every* other name next
3. Quality check
4. Submit batch

Key Tips - General

- If the batch you download looks too difficult, don't be afraid to click the **Return Batch** button and get a different one. You'll get better over time.
- The total records indexed is shown in the lower left of the screen. Parents and kids like to compete.
- Every now and then, check the Arbitration Results tab to see how well you are doing.
- If you have a question, first ask your 8-year-old 😊, then look at the Field Helps, then review the Project Instructions. Each project has instructions unique to it. Go through it at the beginning of a new project. You'll be glad you did.

Indexing Obituaries – 12 vital indexing hints

1. *Read the entire obituary before indexing any names.* Reading the entire obituary beforehand will help you know what information is available. Plus, you don't want to miss out on the interesting stories in these obituaries!

2. *Index all documents that detail death information.* Obituary collections may include a variety of death notices. You may end up indexing traditional obituaries, estate sale notices, reports of unidentified bodies being found, car accidents, and other newspaper articles. If documents contain death information, they need to be indexed.

Disclaimer: Some of these documents give tragic death details and may not be suitable for young or tenderhearted indexers.

3. *Combine all information from the obituary onto the first image of the obituary—even if the obituary spans multiple images.* There will probably be multiple obituaries in your batch. Some will span more than one image. Mark the first image of the obituary as Normal in the Image Type field, and then mark any additional images of the same obituary as a No Extractable Data Image. This will help keep secondary images from being marked as a new obituary. [Click here to see an example.](#)

4. *Index the deceased person first.*

5. *Most obituaries don't include an exact death date.* Don't try to determine which date is meant by statements such as "He died last Wednesday." If a death date was not specifically indicated, use the most recent date on the document, which is often typed or handwritten next to the obituary.

6. *Only index towns, counties, states, or countries that are called out directly.* Do not index locations such as "Galion Community Home" or assume that the community home really is in a city called "Galion."

7. *Index the names of relatives and nonrelatives in the order they appear.*

8. *Index the names of all individuals.* If a person's name included the name of a spouse or was indicated together with the name of the spouse, then index both names as separate records.

For example, if an obituary lists "Mrs. Ben (Mary) Wilson" as a surviving daughter, you would index a record for Mrs Mary Wilson and then one for Ben Wilson. If the obituary instead said, "Mrs. Ben Wilson," you would index a record only for Mrs Ben Wilson. [Click here to see more examples.](#)

9. *Don't assume surnames or genders.* If people were listed without a surname, mark the Surname field blank. Do not assume that the surname of a relative is the same as the surname of the deceased. For genders, don't base your assumptions only on the name. Look around the document. Is the person mentioned as a "he," "her," "husband," "wife," "mother," or "father," or referred to with any other words or phrases that are gender-specific? You can use those terms to determine a gender or gender-specific relationship. If you cannot determine the gender using clues on the document, don't guess. Use gender-neutral options such as Child or Child-in-Law from the available relationship list.

10. *Select the closest relationship from the list.* For example, if a relative was listed as a stepson or adopted son, index him as a Son. Consider how that individual would appear on a family tree, and index him or her that way.

11. *Add records as needed or mark unused records as blank.* You should index every name on these documents (deceased, relatives and nonrelatives) as individual records. In most batches of obituaries, space is provided for the deceased and 5 other individuals. If there are fewer than 6 names included in the obituary, you will mark any unused records as blank by pressing Ctrl+Shift+B. If there are more than 6 names, you will need to add record entries.

12. *Read the project instructions, field helps, and other training materials.* This tip may be last, but it is certainly not least. The instructions and the in-depth guide include all of these tips and other important details about how to handle almost every situation you may encounter while indexing obituaries.

Use these tips as you start or continue to index these fascinating records. If you are still unsure of your indexing, personal help is available. You can contact your local stake indexing director, group administrator, or FamilySearch Support. To find their contact information, click the Help menu while you are using the indexing computer program, and then click Contact Support.

Basic Indexing Guidelines

Basic Indexing Guidelines are instructions for all projects. If project instructions, field helps, or project updates do not answer an indexing question, refer to Basic Indexing Guidelines for an answer to the question. These guidelines help you know what to do in most indexing situations. Occasionally, projects will not follow these guidelines. Before indexing, always read the project instructions and field helps for the most current and specific rules for each particular project.

Type What You See

Most of the time, you will enter what you see on the record. Any exceptions will be listed in the field helps and project instructions. Remember, you are making an index to help individuals find their ancestors. In many cases, they can review the information about their ancestors on the record image to form their own interpretations and conclusions. If you have questions as you index:

- Refer to the field helps and project instructions.
- Refer to these basic indexing guidelines.
- Use your best judgment.
- Do not assume information that is not specifically listed.
- Contact your local administrator or FamilySearch Support, if needed.

General Guidelines

Abbreviations

- Names
 - DO NOT spell out a name that was abbreviated.
 - Type names as they were written, excluding punctuation except hyphens or apostrophes when they were written as part of the name. See the Punctuation section for more information.
- Places
 - When a place-name was misspelled and you can determine the correct spelling, correct the mistake, unless otherwise directed in the project instructions or field helps.
 - When a place-name was abbreviated and you can determine what the abbreviation stands for, type the complete name instead of the abbreviation, unless otherwise directed in the project instructions or field helps. Use the lookup list for assistance.

- When you are not sure what an abbreviation stands for, index what was written, excluding punctuation except hyphens or apostrophes when they were written as part of the place-name. See the Punctuation section for more information.

Punctuation

- No punctuation should be indexed except apostrophes or hyphens when they were written as part of a name or place-name.

Corrected and Crossed-Out Information

- When information was crossed out and replaced, type the replacement information.
- When information was crossed out and not replaced, but the original information can be read, type the crossed-out information.
- When information was crossed out and not replaced, and the original information cannot be read, press Ctrl+U to mark the field as Unreadable.
- A document that was marked “canceled” or “void” is treated the same as corrected or crossed-out information.

Ditto Marks

- When ditto marks or other signs of repetition appear in a record, type the information that was repeated, which is generally found directly above the ditto mark.
- Do not index the word “ditto” or the ditto mark. Other signs of repetition may include “Do” or a straight vertical or horizontal line under a surname or other information.

Unreadable Information

- One character. If you are unable to read one letter or number, use a question mark (?) to replace the unreadable letter or number.
 - Example: H?ndley
 - Note: Not all number fields accept a question mark. If you cannot enter a needed question mark in a field, press Ctrl+U to mark the field as Unreadable.
- Multiple characters. For multiple, consecutive unreadable letters or numbers, use an asterisk (*) to replace the unreadable group of letters or numbers.
 - Example: Di*son
 - When you are unsure how many letters or numbers are unreadable, use an asterisk for any number of unreadable letters or numbers.
 - Note: Not all number fields accept an asterisk. If you cannot enter an asterisk in a field, press Ctrl+U to mark the field as Unreadable.

- One field. When all information in a field is unreadable, click in the field, and press Ctrl+U to mark the field as Unreadable.
- Entire record. When all information in an entire record is unreadable, including the name, date, and any information for other required fields, press Ctrl+Shift+U to mark the entire record as Unreadable.
- Entire image. If none of the information to be indexed on the image is readable, select Unreadable Image in the Image Type field. See the Image Type section for more information.

Overlays

Overlays are handwritten or typed notes that cover part of the original record. To index overlays correctly, begin by reviewing all the images in the batch to discover if the original record was photographed separately from the overlay.

Then do the following:

- Index the information on the overlay only when it pertains to the record types being indexed in the project.
- Index the information behind the overlay only when the information pertains to the record types being indexed in the project, according to the following rules:
 - When the document behind the overlay is a duplicate of a document that is fully shown on another image in the same batch, do not index the partially visible document since it will be indexed in full as the batch is completed.
 - When the document behind the overlay is unique and is not included on another image in the same batch, index all the information that is visible.

Type Using Lowercase Letters

Type information using uppercase and lowercase letters. Do not use all capital letters. Batches entered in all capital letters can be confusing. Make sure the Caps Lock key on your keyboard is not on. The indexing program automatically capitalizes the first letter of each word in most fields.

Field-Specific Guidelines

Image Type

This field is required for all projects. Indexers use it to describe each image in a batch. Below are the available options for this field and their definitions.

- Normal. The image contains information related to the project, and it is information that should be indexed. For example, for a birth project, birth records would be marked as Normal and indexed. For the same project, any image that includes only other record types, such as marriages and death records, would be marked as a No Extractable Data Image.
- Blank Image. The image or form is blank.
- Duplicate Image. A duplicate image happens when two or more pictures are taken of the same document. Choose the Duplicate Image option if the image is a photo duplicate of a previous image in the same batch.
- No Extractable Data Image. The image or form is not blank, but it does not contain information related to the project, for example, marriage records in a birth project.
- Unreadable Image. None of the information to be indexed is readable. See the Unreadable Information section for more information.

Names

- When a name for an individual was recorded more than once on the same document, review the entire document to locate all occurrences of the name, and index the name one time with the most complete form of the name. For example: The name of a person recorded as both Frederick Millett and Fred Millet on the same document would be indexed as:
 - Given Names: Frederick Or Fred
 - Surname: Millett Or Millet
- See the Aliases or Name Variations and Abbreviations sections for more information.

Given Names

- When you cannot determine whether a name is a given name or a surname, index it in the Given Names field.

Surnames

- Maiden names are indexed before married names in the Surname field.
- Do not assume the surname of anyone based on the surname of someone else, such as a parent or a child.

Titles or Terms

- If “Mrs” was used before a name typically used for males, such as Mrs. Jason Jones, index Mrs in the Title or Terms field, not in a name field. In this example, Jason would be indexed in the Given Names field and Jones in the Surname field.

- When no Titles or Terms field is available, ignore the “Mrs,” and index the name in the corresponding name fields. For the example above, Jason would still be indexed in the Given Names field and Jones in the Surname field.
- When “stillborn” or “baby” was recorded for a name in a document, such terms should be indexed in the Titles or Terms field, if one is available.
- When no Titles or Terms field is available, do not index “stillborn” or “baby,” not even in the Given Names field.
- When used in reference to a Catholic nun, “Sister” is considered a given name and should be indexed in the Given Names field, along with any other given names recorded for that individual. See the Aliases or Name Variations section for more information.

Aliases or Name Variations

A record may include different spellings of a name for one person. A nickname, alias, or AKA is also commonly included. When you see variations of a name, type all versions, separating each version with the word Or. For example:

- The name of a person recorded as “Joseph (Jozef) Broski AKA Brozowski AKA Brzozowski” would be indexed as:
 - Given Names: Joseph Or Jozef
 - Surname: Broski Or Brozowski Or Brzozowski
- The name of a Catholic nun recorded as “Sister Maria Magdalena or Katherine Baker” would be indexed as:
 - Given Names: Sister Maria Magdalena Or Katherine
 - Surname: Baker

Spouses

- When multiple spouses were listed for a single individual, index only the present or current spouse, unless the project instructions direct otherwise.

Places

- When indexing a place-name, do not include identifying descriptions or terms, such as “near,” “about,” “around,” “twp,” “township,” “city,” “county,” or “state,” with the place-name unless the term is normally part of the name (for example, Carson City, Salt Lake City, New York City, and so on).
- When you do not know whether the place listed on a document is a city, state, country, or other locality, index the place in the geographically smallest locality field that is available.

- Do not index a nationality as a place unless you are directed to do so in the project instructions or field helps.
- See the Abbreviations section for more information.

Dates

- When multiple dates were given for a birth, index the earliest date.
- When multiple dates were given for other events, index the most recent or latest date.
- For events that include a date range, such as “between February 2 and March 9, 1937,” index the first date in the range. For the above example, you would index the month as Feb, the day as 2, and the year as 1937.
- The order of recorded dates (such as dd/mm/yyyy or mm/dd/yyyy) may vary, depending on where the records were created.

Ages

- If a recorded age includes days, weeks, months, or fractions of a year, round down to the nearest full year. For example:
 - When a child was listed as “5 years and 8 months old,” index the age as 5.
 - When a child was listed as less than one year old, index the age as 0 (zero).
- When an age was given as a range, such as 65–67, index the first age recorded, which is 65 in this example.
- When an age was recorded as an approximate number, such as “age 14 at next birthday,” “about 14,” “near 14,” or “close to 14,” drop the description, and index the number alone. (For these examples, the age would be indexed as 14.)
- When an age was recorded as an uncertain number, such as “over 21” or “over 18,” skip the age field by pressing Tab when the field is not a required field, or mark the Age field as blank by pressing Ctrl+B when the field is required.
- If “stillborn” was recorded for an individual, index the age as 0 (zero).
- When a specific age was not given, do not calculate an age from recorded dates.

Gender

- Do not assume gender based on given names. However, you can use relationship terms or other indicators in the language to determine gender, such as daughter, son, Mrs, female, male, she, he, and so on.

Marital Status

- Individuals who were separated or married by common law are indexed as Married.