Genealogy Pit Stop:
Research in 15 minute Increments

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You have 15 minutes before you need to _____ (insert "pick up the grandchildren" or "wash the dog" or "make dinner" . . .). Is it really possible to do meaningful genealogy research in that short time period? Are you putting off researching an ancestor because you believe you need a two or three hour block? Learn how to use the **Genealogy Pit Stop** concept to succeed in the research race! Learn what race car driving teams already know: you **CAN** accomplish important, detail-oriented genealogy research in a short amount of time with the proper tools.

Why the Genealogy Pit Stop Concept Works

With only 15 minutes at hand, you may think you can't accomplish much in terms of genealogy research, but you can. What is required?

- A sense of focus

- The ability to ignore BSOs ("bring and shiny objects")

- Tools to track where you started and where you left off

- "Helpers" such as pre-formatted source citation templates or evidence evaluation cheat sheets

If you develop a solid research routine within a 15 minute time frame, your overall productivity for genealogy research will improve. And you can leverage those skills even when you have a few hours to work on locating information.

Solid Research Tools Win the Race

For general genealogy research, see my Genealogy Research Toolbox which contains links to the 100 resources I use on a weekly basis to find my ancestors. Besides a series of links, what other tools do I always have ready for that 15 minute pit stop?

- A way to quickly download and save images and a **File Naming Convention** to use so you always know what's in the file you are opening.

- A **To-Do List** tracking what I need to research (i.e. birth date for AUSTIN, John Ralph), when I started the research, and when I completed the research.

- The **FamilySearch Research Wiki** open and on-screen in case I need to look up a term or learn about the quirks in an unfamiliar record set.

- A **Research Log** tracking all the details I need to formulate a proof for the research question. For "When was John Ralph AUSTIN born," I gather when I found a record, where I found it, name of record, an abstract of information, etc.

So if I peeked into your genealogy toolbox, what would I find? If you don't have some method of quickly getting the tools you need, I highly recommend you start building one! The format can be on paper (a black and white composition book is what one colleague uses), an Excel spreadsheet, a set of Internet favorites, or even in a mobile app such as Evernote or Trello.

When building your own toolbox, gather these types of items and also feel free to look at my personal genealogy toolbox HERE and "steal" whatever you find useful!

- **Bookmarks and Favorites**: use search engines like Google or Bing to locate websites and make them bookmarks and favorites; use a resource like Cyndi's List and select the resources you use the most; visit your favorite genealogy blog and see if there are helpful links in the sidebar.

- **Books, Articles, etc.**: most books and articles can be downloaded in either RTF or PDF format. Good resources are Google Books, Internet Archive as well as Family Search's Historic Books collection. The best part is that most are free!

- **Tools**: don't forget things like age or relationship calculators, currency calculators and other tools! Very often you will scramble to locate these resources and it helps if they are already in your toolbox! Cyndi's List Calendar Calculators & Converters, Cousin Charts & Tables and Birthdate Calendars & Calculators.

Case Study: Gathering New Clues from a 1920 US Census Record

Here is an actual document for which you can see if you are up to the Genealogy Pit Stop. Answer the questions below and see the "answer key" at the end of this handout!

Click https://abundantgenealogy.com/austinjr-1920uscensus to access the 1920 United States Federal Census population schedule for John Ralph AUSTIN on FamilySearch. Click https://abundantgenealogy.com/austinjr-1920uscensusfs if you don't have a FamilySearch account or to access the image file directly.

> Your research knowledge at this point is that John Ralph AUSTIN was, in fact, born on 31 January 1896 in Lowville, New York. You have also been told through a relative that his wife's name was Therese McGINNES. While working to prove the marriage date and location of John Ralph AUSTIN and Therese McGINNES you notice an entry in the 1920 census that may or may not be in line with your ancestor's information.

How would you break down the new information into proof points that can be tracked? How would you enter the information in your To Do List? What else should be done with this record on the FamilySearch site?

Get In and Get Out: Triage Your Research Findings

- **Your Research, Your Method, Your System**. Don't squeeze the square peg *that is your research into a round hole. If someone likes using Trello and a* smartphone as part of their One Pass Approach, good for them. After experimenting with different methods, stick with the one that works for you.

- **Get Smart, Quickly!** There are times when you need to get up to speed on a new record set, the quirks and codes that can be found, etc. The best tool is the FamilySearch Research Wiki with close to 90,000 articles.

- **Don't Panic! Don't Get Sloppy!** With a time constraint, don't rush your research and miss valuable information. Have a back up plan if you can't implement the Genealogy Pit Stop: get record images, get information and get out!

- **Create a Cheat Sheet for Each Record Set.** Once you use a set of records for a few times, you'll recognize patterns, codes, etc. Create a document listing all these items so you can access it from your "toolbox". Ex: In the 1940 US Federal Census, there should be an "x" in a circle (⊗) next to the name of the "informant".

Case Study: 1940 US Census for Alfred J. Austin and Family

Click https://abundantgenealogy.com/austinaj-1940uscensusfs-01 to access the 1940 US Federal Census for Alfred J. AUSTIN on FamilySearch. Click https://abundantgenealogy.com/austinaj-1920uscensusfs-image01 if you don't have a FamilySearch account or to access the image file directly. Ideally, you should be gathering information WITHOUT using the questions below. Use ONLY the image to answer the questions; DO NOT use any FamilySearch text or links.

1. What was the Census Day for the 1940 Census?
2. On what line number does the Alfred Austin family start?
3. Who was the informant?
4. What year was Anna Austin born?
5. How many children did Alfred Austin have living with him on the Census Day?
6. In which Assembly District did Alfred Austin live?
7. What is Alfred Austin's home address?
8. What is the Enumeration District?
9. Does the Austin family Rent or Own their home?
10. Did Alfred Austin graduate from high school?
11. What was the monthly rent for the Austin family?
12. Where did the Austin family live in 1935?
13. How many hours did Alfred Austin work the week before the Census Day?
14. What was Alfred Austin's salary in 1939?
15. Were any members of the Austin family selected for supplemental questions?
16. Who was the enumerator for this Enumeration District?
17. What is the source citation for this record?

Resource List

Answer Key

1. April 1, 1940
2. Line 38
3. Anna Austin
4. Abt 1915
5. Four
6. Assembly District 7
7. 206 West End Avenue
8. 31-611
9. Rent
10. No
11. $26 per month
12. 206 West End Avenue
13. 72 hours
14. $1,560 per year
15. No
16. Frank T. Sheehan
17. 1940 U.S. Census, New York County, New York, population schedule, Manhattan borough, Enumeration District 31-611, p. 6A (penned), 206 West End Avenue, family 152, Alfred AUSTIN: digital images, FamilySearch (http://www.familysearch.org: accessed 31 May 2019); from FamilySearch Film #005458609.

- **CamScanner**
  https://www.camscanner.com/

- **Evernote**
  https://evernote.com

- **FamilySearch Research Wiki**
  https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/

- **Flip-Pal mobile scanner**
  http://genealogybargains.com/flip-pal

- **Genealogy Research Log**
  https://genealogyresearchlog.com

- ***The Genealogy Do-Over: Slow Down, You Move Too Fast!***
  https://abundantgenealogy.com/genealogy-do-over-slow-down-you-move-too-fast/

- ***The Genealogy Do-Over: The Value of a BSO***
  https://abundantgenealogy.com/genealogy-value-bso/

- **Steve Morse – One Step**
  https://stevemorse.org/

- **Trello**
  https://trello.com

BONUS Case Study: Gathering New Clues from a World War I United States Draft Registration Card

Click **HERE** to access the World War I United States Draft Registration Card for John Ralph AUSTIN on FamilySearch.

> Your only knowledge is that John Ralph AUSTIN was supposedly born on 31 January 1896 in Lowville, New York (according to a family story). While working to prove this information, what new clues about the life of John Ralph AUSTIN do you discover on the WWI Draft Card? How would you break down the new information into proof points that can be tracked? How would you enter the information in your To Do List?