UNDERSTANDING SHARED DNA MATCHES

Amberly Beck
thegenealogygirl.blog
amberlysgenealogy@gmail.com
Mapleton Family History Center, Thursdays 7-9 pm

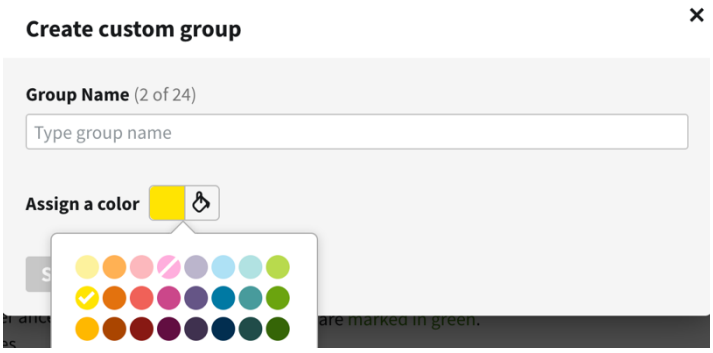
Shared DNA Matches are a list of DNA matches that we share with a specific DNA match from our list. That list of shared matches can help us create genetic clusters or genetic networks. A genetic cluster is a group of people who share DNA. Each genetic cluster can usually be traced to a specific ancestor or ancestral couple. For adoptees, or in brick wall research, sometimes we create a genetic cluster using processes of elimination even though we don't know which ancestor or ancestral couple to link that genetic cluster to — yet.

Identifying Our DNA Matches

We want each of our DNA matches, especially our close matches, to be more than just a username on our match list. We want to identify that match as a unique person. Hopefully we can identify their name and their parents, grandparents, and other ancestors.

When trying to identify a match, use every clue in a match profile. Once you have identified a match and how they connect to you, add a note to their profile with that information so that you don't spend your time figuring it out all over again in the future. There is a notes feature available on each DNA website. Use it!

On AncestryDNA, make use of the color groups to create descendancy groups for your ancestral couples. Add all known descendants to each group. This is a great way to sort your matches into genetic clusters.



Identify Your Shared Ancestors

Some of our DNA matches will share ancestral couples from different branches of our tree with us. Sometimes we descend from an ancestral couple more than once, giving us a double dose of their DNA. Each of those situations can complicate the process of correctly identifying our relationship to each of our DNA matches.

The Board for Certification of Genealogists standard 52 discusses analyzing DNA test results. "Genealogists use analytical tools, statistical data, and reasoning to interpret DNA test results . . . They also address all relevant factors that might affect determining a genetic relationship. Those factors include . . . Accuracy, completeness, and depth of each pedigree included in the analysis. [and] The possibility of more than one common ancestor for each pair of DNA test takers."[1]

The more complex our research problem, the more time we may choose to spend analyzing the accuracy of the trees belonging to our DNA matches. We may even choose to build our own private tree for them so we can check every generation. This work will be valuable as we compare our tree to theirs.

Tree completeness and depth effect our ability to know if we have found the correct connection with our match. To analyze your own tree completeness, you can use the "How much of your tree" spreadsheet created by Blaine Bettinger and available in the files section of the Facebook group, "Genetic Genealogy Tips & Techniques." https://www.facebook.com/groups/geneticgenealogytipsandtechniques/

My Tree Completeness					
Generation	**Relationship to Me**	**Cousin Relationship at this Same Generation**	**Total # of Ancestors in this Generation**	**Total # of Ancestors Identified in this Generation (ENTER DATA HERE)**	**Percentage of Ancestors Identified in this Generation**
0	Me	Self	1		0%
1	Parents	Sibling	2		0%
2	Grandparents	1C	4		0%
3	Great Grandparents	2C	8		0%
4	2nd Great Grandparents	3C	16		0%
5	3rd Great Grandparents	4C	32		0%
6	4th Great Grandparents	5C	64		0%
7	5th Great Grandparents	6C	128		0%

Total # of Possible Ancestors Through 7 Generations:	255
Total # of Identified Ancestors Through 7 Generations:	0
Percentage:	0%

[1] Board for Certification of Genealogists. Genealogy Standards. 2d ed. Nashville & New York: Ancestry Imprint, Turner Publishing, 2019. See specifically pp. 30–31, standard 52.

Targeted Match Analysis

When we identify specific DNA matches to analyze to help answer a specific question, that is targeted match analysis. It allows us to focus on a specific problem, looking at specific matches, and then spurs us to use genealogical records to seek answers based on the clues we gather in our analysis.

Start with a research question. Consider which DNA matches are most likely to help answer the question. Then focus on the right shared DNA match list to help you look at the DNA matches that can help answer your question.

Shared DNA Matches are your friend! Spend lots of time hanging out in the shared match lists of your most important DNA matches. You might be surprised what you will discover there.

Resource List

The Shared cM Project Tool on DNA Painter can be found here:
https://dnapainter.com/tools/sharedcmv4

Instructions for downloading your raw DNA file from AncestryDNA can be found here:
https://www.yourdnaguide.com/download-ancestrydna

Instructions for downloading your raw DNA file from 23andMe can be found here:
https://www.yourdnaguide.com/download-23andme

Instructions for transferring your raw DNA file to MyHeritage DNA can be found here:
https://www.yourdnaguide.com/transfer-myheritage?rq=transfer%20to%20MyHeritage

For Further Study

Bettinger, Blaine T. The Family Tree Guide to DNA Testing and Genetic Genealogy. 2d ed. Cincinnati, Ohio: Family Tree Books, 2019.

Board for Certification of Genealogists. Genealogy Standards. 2d ed. Nashville & New York: Ancestry Imprint, Turner Publishing, 2019.

Blogposts

John Costello:
https://thegenealogygirl.blog/2019/06/19/finding-john-costello-a-dna-journey-the-fried-family-johns-family-part-1/

https://thegenealogygirl.blog/2019/06/21/finding-john-costello-a-dna-journey-the-fried-family-johns-family-part-2/

https://thegenealogygirl.blog/2019/06/24/finding-john-costello-a-dna-journey-the-fried-family-johns-family-part-3/

https://thegenealogygirl.blog/2019/06/26/finding-john-costello-a-dna-journey-the-fried-family-johns-family-part-4/

https://thegenealogygirl.blog/2019/06/29/finding-john-costello-a-dna-journey-the-fried-family-johns-family-part-5/

https://thegenealogygirl.blog/2019/07/01/finding-john-costello-a-dna-journey-the-fried-family-johns-family-part-6-conclusion/

John Baptiste Jerrain:
https://thegenealogygirl.blog/2018/11/15/john-baptiste-jerrain-part-one-brick-wall/

https://thegenealogygirl.blog/2018/11/16/john-baptiste-jerrain-part-two-promising-dna-matches/

https://thegenealogygirl.blog/2018/11/19/john-baptiste-jerrain-part-three-brick-wall-weakening-with-dna-and-records/

https://thegenealogygirl.blog/2018/11/20/john-baptiste-jerrain-part-four-evalute-assess-and-research-some-more/

https://thegenealogygirl.blog/2018/11/21/john-baptiste-jerrain-part-five-the-wall-fully-tumbles/

Master Match Tree:
https://thegenealogygirl.blog/2019/01/17/connecting-dna-matches-using-a-master-match-tree-part-one-the-story/

https://thegenealogygirl.blog/2019/01/18/connecting-dna-matches-using-a-master-match-tree-part-two-the-how-to/