

## Facebook and Genetic Genealogy

Not everyone is keen on Facebook. Many people assume it only contains endless videos of cats doing funny things and pictures of what people had for lunch. However, a Facebook account can offer many benefits if you are looking to discover more about your DNA family.

DNA testing for family history purposes is still very new, especially in the UK. Autosomal testing has been available for slightly longer in America, so using Facebook/websites/blogs enables you to share the knowledge and skills of others who have already gained experience in working with DNA, no matter where you are located. As with every subject, you will find people who are genuinely well-informed and helpful - and others who are perhaps more enthusiastic than knowledgeable, so be prepared to check all the information you find.

As well as giving you a way to access discussions on DNA testing, Facebook enables you to be in contact with your DNA matches. If you are not currently a member of Facebook and intend to use it purely for family history research, you can set up an account with that in mind. Adding a profile picture and cover photo can help you look welcoming to anyone who is searching for you – you can give clues that you have undertaken DNA testing by adding a DNA themed image as your cover photo. It is entirely up to you whether you add an actual photo of yourself or something less personal, but if you appear to be too anonymous you may find that when you apply to join groups you do not get instantly approved – if you are too “bland” you look like a fake/spam account.

If you have an existing Facebook account and decide to use that, it is worth looking at your account from an outsider’s perspective. If you are hoping that members of your new-found DNA family are going to use Facebook to get in contact with you, is there anything that might put them off? Everyone is entitled to their views and likes/dislikes, and you can’t guarantee that everyone will agree with yours – but you do not want to deter people from contacting you because they are not as committed to your political/religious beliefs, or your chosen sports team as you are!

***All the images in this information sheet are from the screens displayed when you use Facebook in a browser on a computer. If you use an app/mobile phone/tablet you may find that you see a different layout, possibly without some of the options shown here.***

### Pages v Groups

#### **PAGES**

Pages are created by organisations so that they can promote themselves.

A good way to get started on Facebook is to “like” pages – use the **search box** at the top of the screen to find topics/companies that are of interest to you.

To see what is published on a Page, just click **Like** and anything posted on that page will appear on your timeline. All the major DNA/Family History companies have pages, so that is a good place to start. If you haven’t already liked the [DNA Discoveries](#) page, now is a good time!



## GROUPS

Groups enable discussion. DNA groups might talk about new features on the testing sites, or help members answer questions about a particular issue. Some groups are focussed on a specific topic, eg, family history relating to a particular area or surname, or to help adoptees.

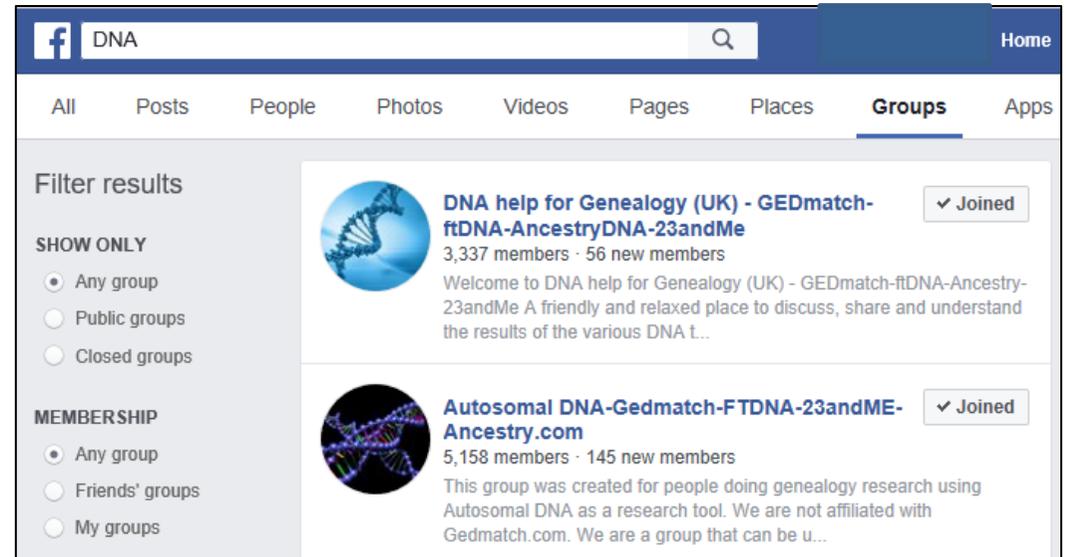
Groups can be set up as public or closed:

**Public groups:** Discussions that you take part in within a public group may appear on your timeline, so your Facebook friends will be able to see them.

**Closed groups:** If a group is closed then “what happens in the group, stays in the group” – the content is only visible to other group members. If your Facebook friends happen to be part of the group, then they will see your involvement, but the postings will not appear on your timeline.

Click on the group name to see more information about the group – most groups have a description section so you can find out more about the group before you apply to join. As well as telling you about the purpose of the group, it will often tell you what the group does **not** cover!

To join a group, click the **JOIN GROUP** button – you may be instantly added to the group if it is public, or, if the group is closed, your application may need to be approved by a moderator/administrator.



The screenshot shows a Facebook search interface with 'DNA' entered in the search bar. The 'Groups' tab is selected. On the left, there are filter options for 'SHOW ONLY' (Any group, Public groups, Closed groups) and 'MEMBERSHIP' (Any group, Friends' groups, My groups). Two group results are shown:

- DNA help for Genealogy (UK) - GEDmatch-ftDNA-AncestryDNA-23andMe**: 3,337 members · 56 new members. Description: Welcome to DNA help for Genealogy (UK) - GEDmatch-ftDNA-Ancestry-23andMe A friendly and relaxed place to discuss, share and understand the results of the various DNA L...
- Autosomal DNA-Gedmatch-FTDNA-23andME-Ancestry.com**: 5,158 members · 145 new members. Description: This group was created for people doing genealogy research using Autosomal DNA as a research tool. We are not affiliated with Gedmatch.com. We are a group that can be u...

### DESCRIPTION

This is a Facebook group for those wishing to learn more about DNA and how it might help you with genealogy.

Please keep discussion topics & queries relevant to GENETIC-GENEALOGY uses of DNA testing. MEDICAL & FORENSIC DNA, politics and religion are all off-topic for this list.

Join this group to see the discussion, post and comment.

+ Join group

## How do Groups work?

The groups you have joined are listed on the left-hand side of your Facebook screen. If you click on one of the group names, then look in the top left-hand corner of your screen you will find a list of different areas within the group to explore. At the very top, under the name of the group, will be reminder as to whether the group is Closed or Public.

🔒 Closed group

🌐 Public group

Discussion

## Discussion

The very first post in the Discussion section will often be a **PINNED POST**, written by the person who set up the group. This usually explains more about the purpose of the group, answers frequently asked questions and tells you what sort of postings are/are not allowed – for example, DNA/Family History groups often have rules regarding whether or not you can post information about living people.

It is worth spending time just watching the discussions in a group you've just joined, in order to get a feel for how it operates. Some groups are more forgiving than others about allowing off-topic posts, some will have teams of moderators who work hard to keep postings focussed on the themes outlined in the pinned post/group description.

Some groups are very tightly moderated, with all new posts being vetted first – in which case, your contribution may not appear instantly, it may have to wait for an administrator to approve it. Discussions which are not on topic may have their "comments closed" to prevent further discussion.

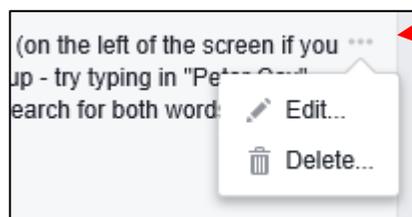
Some Facebook groups you might like to consider joining as a starting point include:

[DNA Detectives](#)

[Genetic Genealogy Tips and Tricks](#)

[AncestryDNA Matching](#)

Making your first contribution to a group can be nerve-wracking. Everyone makes mistakes – whether it's a typing error or posting in the wrong group altogether! You can amend anything you have posted, even after posting it. Hover the mouse over your post and three little dots will appear to the right:



Click the dots and the options of **Edit** or **Delete** will appear – click on the appropriate option. If you decide to **Delete** your post you will be asked to confirm that this is what you want to do, the text will not just suddenly vanish!

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## Members

Clicking **Members** will show you who else is a member of the group. Every group will have members who are Moderators and/or Administrators. These are the people who look after the group and attempt to keep things on track. Admins are able to delete posts and remove or block members, so have the power to keep people in line! if you have a problem about how the group operates, or posts that you think are a problem in some way, contact a member of the admin team by sending them a message.

Members

## Events

Some groups may have actual meetings of their members, which may be listed here. There may also be links to conferences or family history fairs, some of which you might be able to watch online.

Events

## Videos/Photos/Files

Take the time to read through these sections – there are often explanatory charts and other resources to help you.

If you find something of particular use to you, then you may be able to save the document/photo to your own computer for later reference (look for the option to **download**) – but bear in mind any copyright restrictions before sharing these elsewhere.

Videos

Photos

Files

## Searching

The ability to search within a group is one of the most useful options.

Try searching for topics that interest you to see what has been discussed previously. There will always be new people in the group and inevitably new people are likely to ask the same questions as those who joined before them. There is absolutely nothing wrong with that – everyone is new at some point, and if you don't ask you won't learn! 😊 However, you may find that your question has already been answered before, or that there are documents in the files section that will help you – or that a bit of research enables you to ask a more detailed/relevant question.

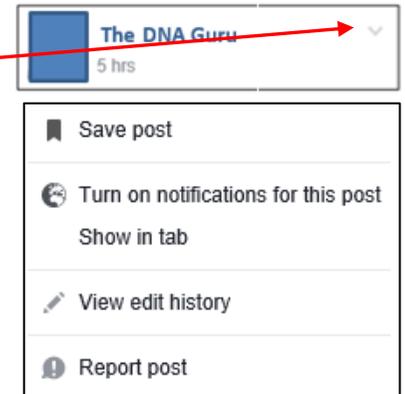
Search this group



You can search for a single word, or you can search for a group of words together by putting double quotation marks around the phrase you are looking for. This is helpful for finding either your own previous posts, or those made by another member – type in a name, eg, "Mary Smith" and click the search symbol and hopefully you will get a more accurate set of results to review.

## Saving information

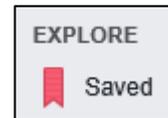
Discussions on the internet often move so fast that it is easy to think "oh, I must look at that later..." and then not be able to even remember which Facebook group you were in when you saw the post! To save a post, look for the name of the person who started the post, then look right until you find the **down-arrow**.



Click the arrow, then click **Save Post** from the drop-down menu:

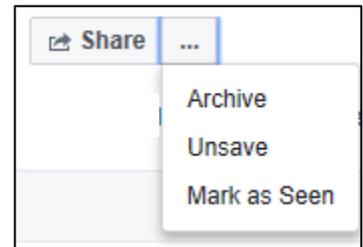
NB An alternative is to opt to **Turn on notifications for this post** – so you will receive notifications about any new activity on this post, even if you have not commented on it yourself. Sometimes you may see people adding a comment that says "Follow" or just a full stop in order to receive notifications – that does work, but means that everyone else who is part of the discussion gets a notification that someone has said "follow" or "."! To see how to turn notifications off, see the next page.

To revisit a post that you saved earlier, look on the left of the Facebook screen, about half way down, for a section headed **EXPLORE**:



Clicking **Saved** will display a list of your saved posts – just click the relevant link to return to a particular post.

If you no longer need the post, you can remove it from the list – click on the three dots to the right of the word Share, then click **Unsave**.



***The beauty of Facebook is that you can decide that something is not for you and just leave or opt to hide it from view – no need for give a reason! You can unlike/leave/unfriend or unfollow pages/groups/people with just the click of a button.***

## It's overwhelming... It keeps going "ping" all the time!

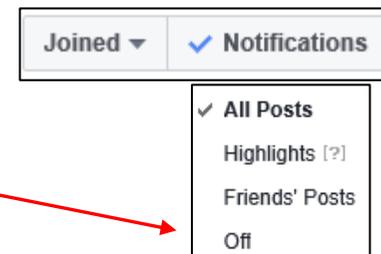
If Facebook wants to draw your attention to something, it uses a "notification" – the globe image will show a number in red indicating how many notifications you have (and depending upon your settings, you may also hear a noise). If you have joined several active groups this can become annoying very quickly.



## GROUP NOTIFICATIONS

Look for the list of groups on the left of your screen, then click on the name of one of the groups you have joined. Underneath the group's cover photo you will see a row of buttons:

If **Notifications** has a tick before it, you will be getting a notification for *every single new post!* Click **Notifications** and select a different option – **Off** will still show you everything that appears in the group, but without any sort of announcement.



If you have joined a group and found that the content is not really what you are after at the moment, you do not have to leave the group entirely. Another option is to "unfollow" the group – you are still a member, can see the discussion if you choose to click on the group name and look, but the posts will not automatically appear on your timeline.

Click on the Group name, then look at the buttons under the cover photo. Click on **Joined** and then click **Unfollow Group**. You can, of course, return to this setting at any point and opt to Follow the group again.



## INDIVIDUAL POST NOTIFICATIONS

Sometimes, you make one little comment on someone's post, then you spend two days seeing everyone else chime in! The discussion may be very useful, but on occasion people repeat the answer that has already been given, or the discussion veers way off topic. To stop notifications appearing on a specific post:

Click the **drop-down arrow** to the right of the name of the person who posted:  
Click **Turn off notifications for this post**

This still will not stop you getting a notification if someone likes your comment, but is an improvement!

