

Working with your Ancestry DNA match list

Once you have looked at the overview of your DNA results (see this information sheet: [Ancestry DNA Results Overview](#)) it's time to look at the most useful part of your results when it comes to creating your family tree – your DNA Match list.

Knowing where to start working with your matches will be easier if you have some knowledge of your biological family - it can feel a daunting task if you have a long list of relatives and no idea how they are connected to you. However, every little connection you make, or similarity in surnames or locations in trees that you identify, will all gradually add up and lead you in the right direction. See this information sheet for ideas on keeping effective notes: [Adding Notes to your Ancestry DNA Matches](#)



1 Locating your Match List

Sign in to your Ancestry account, click **DNA** in the black bar at the top of the screen and your DNA home page will be displayed.

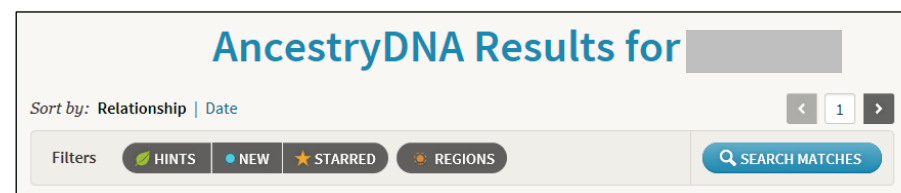
In the centre of the screen is a section marked **DNA Matches**, with a summary of information about your matches. At the bottom of this section is a green button marked **VIEW ALL DNA MATCHES** – click this to view your list of matches.



2 Filters and Sorting Options

The filters and options for your own match list may vary slightly from the illustrations you see here. More information on using these is in sections 6 and 7 below.

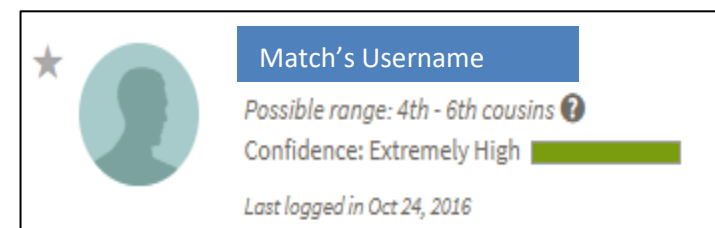
If you have tested your parents, you will also have filter buttons labelled "Mother" and/or "Father". You will only have a **REGIONS** filter if Ancestry has been able to identify specific regions within your ethnicity estimate.



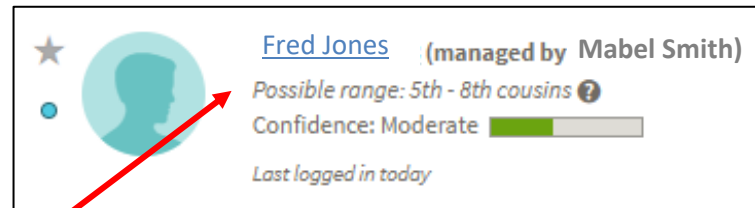
3 Viewing a DNA Match – what can you learn?

Even from the basic entry on your match list, you can glean some information about the relative who shares DNA with you. Usually you can tell if they are male or female from the profile picture – but if they have uploaded a picture of their cat it may not be so easy!

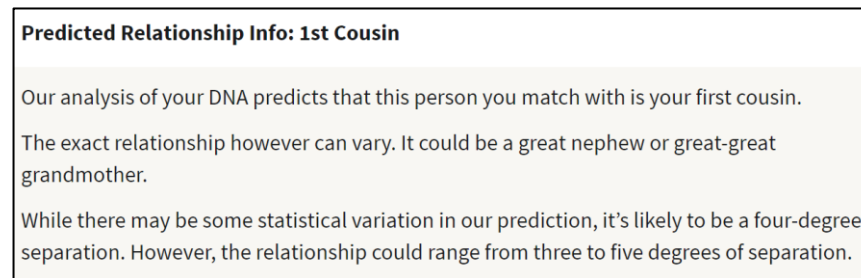
There will be a username of some sort, which might be a "proper" name, or a username that might offer some clue about them – eg, EdinburghGal1956.



Sometimes you will find that the match name is "Fred Jones (managed by Mabel Smith)", which indicates that Mabel is dealing with Fred's results. There can be many reasons for someone being a manager - maybe Fred only tested as a favour to Mabel, or he doesn't use technology so she's helping him with his test results. They could be members of the same family, but Mabel might be Fred's friend or neighbour.

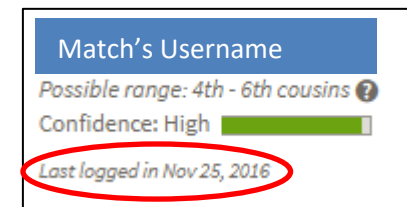
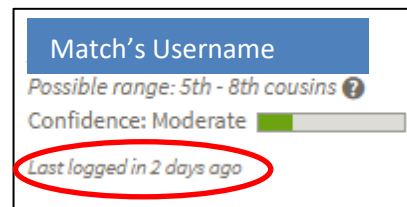


Underneath the match's name will be information about the likely relationships, which is usually a range in terms of cousinship, eg 4th – 6th cousins. There is a "?" symbol after the prediction – it is worth clicking and reading more about the relationship as the heading can cover many different relationships. This example is for the First Cousin category (this match was actually a half-aunt):



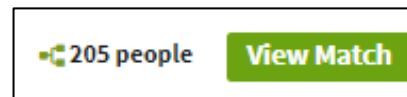
Ancestry provides a guide to the categories here: [DNA Match Relationships](#). However, there are so many different relationships that even this list is not exhaustive. The best way to identify all the possible relationships is to work with the amount of shared centiMorgans (see [this information sheet](#)) and a relationship predictor site, such as [The Shared cM Project](#).

You can see date for when the match last logged in to Ancestry – but this can be a little misleading! Some people rarely log out of Ancestry, so even though it might appear that they last logged in ages ago, they could have been working on their tree and checking their match list every day. Even so, a recent date gives you some hope that they are an active user of Ancestry and might respond if you decided to send them a message.



4 Does your match have a family tree?

On the right-hand side of the screen there is information about each match's family tree. If a match has created a tree it can make finding their connection to you much easier. In a perfect world, everyone on your match list would have a public, large, well-researched, accurate tree going back many generations. Well, we can dream! Often you will find "No Trees".



Public tree (no padlock)



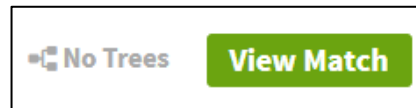
Private tree (padlock symbol)

Everyone has the option of making their tree available to view (a **public** tree) or making it **private** – if you see a padlock symbol it means the tree is private and you cannot view it unless the owner sends you an invitation.

Unfortunately, not everyone is interested enough/able to build a tree. Seeing match after match without a tree is discouraging, but you cannot force people to do create trees just because you would find it helpful!

Ancestry has recently begun displaying extra information about “unlinked” trees. Some matches may have created a tree but not linked their DNA, so their tree is considered “unlinked”. To view an unlinked tree, click the **View Match** button and scroll down. Any available trees (there may be more than one) will be listed on the drop-down menu:

Ancestry offers some wise advice about these trees – just because a tree exists does not mean that the tree reflects the match’s biological family. Even if it is a relevant tree, it can be hard to work out which person in the tree is the match – sometimes people opt to start their tree with one of their ancestors, for example.



i “Match Name” has not yet linked a family tree to their AncestryDNA results.

Your DNA results show that you may be related, and comparing family trees is the best way to find out exactly how. We’ve got a few tricks up our sleeves to make it easy—automatically showing the surnames, places and people that both family trees share in common.

You can ask this member to link a family tree so that you both can take advantage of all of these features.

Contact “Match Name”

In the meantime, you can preview any public family tree that this member has posted on Ancestry. But keep in mind, the “Home Person” specified for each public tree may or may not be the same person that your DNA test has matched you with—something to remember as you are investigating. Good luck!

Select a tree to preview... ▾

5 Shared Ancestor Hints

If you can see a little green leaf on your match list, you have a Shared Ancestor Hint (SAH). This means that, as well as sharing DNA, you and this match both have trees containing the same direct-line ancestors.



In this example, I have a Shared Ancestor Hint which shows how I might be related to a 4th – 6th cousin category match on my list. We both have trees that include Alexander Burford and Mary Jackson as our Great-Great-Grandparents. Based on further research this appears to be correct, but note that it makes us 3rd cousins, which is a closer relationship than Ancestry’s initial prediction.









Remember that SAHs are just hints, not a guarantee that this is the correct relationship. If there are errors in either of your trees, then you may get inaccurate hints. Also, the SAH may not be the only connection – you could find that you are related to someone in several ways via different branches of your families.



According to your family trees, it looks like you have a shared ancestor. Review the info below to confirm the relationship. You can take this opportunity to [get in touch](#), share stories and photos, or just say hello.

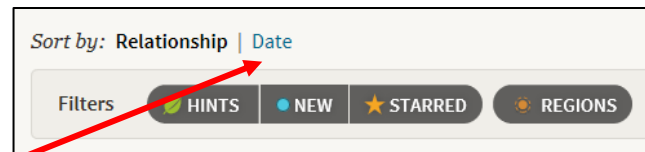
Shared Ancestor Hint

Alexander Jasper Burford  &  Mary Jane Jackson
2nd Great-Grandfather 2nd Great-Grandmother

 Great-Grandmother	 Great-Grand aunt
 Grandparent	 1st Cousin (2x removed)
 Mother	 Private 2nd Cousin (1x removed)
 Self	 3rd Cousin

6 Sorting your match list

Your match list is automatically sorted so that your “best” matches - the people you share most DNA with - are at the top of the list. As you go down the list you are looking at matches who have less DNA in common with you and are therefore likely to be more distant relatives.

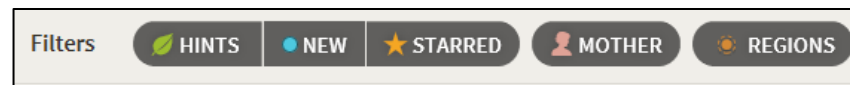


To display the list with your newest matches at top of the list – click **Date**

To revert to having the closest match at the top, click **Relationship**

7 Filtering

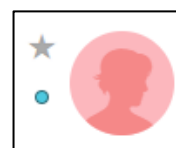
The filters allow you to concentrate on a sub-set of your matches. Every person who tests will have the first three options, additional filters will only show if your parent(s) have tested, or specific regions have been identified within your ethnicity estimate:



HINTS If Ancestry thinks it can identify how you and a match are related it will give you a “hint” (see Shared Ancestor Hints in Section 5).



NEW If you have not yet viewed a match it will have a blue dot. Once you have looked at a match to see more detail the dot will disappear – but you can click the dot within the match’s profile to mark them as “new” again if you wish to do so.

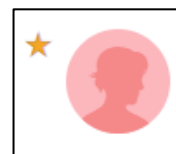


New match
(blue dot)



Viewed match
(no blue dot)

STARRED When you look at a match you can click to add a “star”. It is entirely up to you as to what you use the star to signify – it might mean “this is interesting, I need to look at it more” or “I know this match is on my Mother’s side of the tree”. To remove the star, click it again.

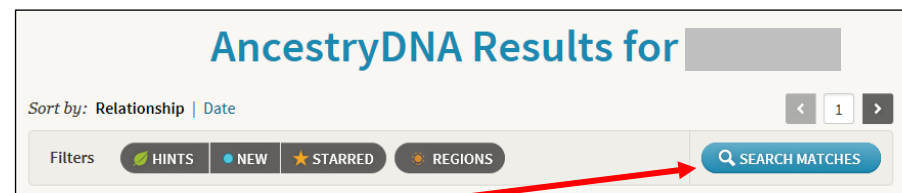


All the filters work the same way: Click the button once to apply the filter and show only matches that meet the criteria (eg, only starred matches), then click the “x” on the filter button to remove the filter and return to viewing the full list.

You can combine **sorting and filtering** – for example, you could filter by Hints and sort by Date to see a list of the most recent Shared Ancestor Hints.

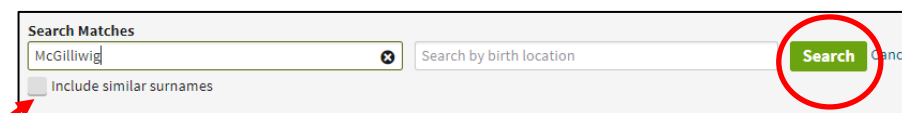
8 Searching your Matches' Trees for Surnames and Locations

It takes a little while after your results arrive before the searching function works properly. During the week or so after receiving your DNA results you may find that your searches are missing people/locations that you are sure should be included.



To carry out a search for surnames or locations within your matches' trees, click the **Search Matches** button on the right-hand end of the Filters bar:

This will display the search options - just type in the relevant box and click the **Search** button:



If you are searching for a surname that might have had many different spellings over the years – Smith, Smyth, Smythe etc – you can also tick the **include similar surnames** option.

The search results will reflect the direct line ancestors of your matches (ie, their parents, grandparents, great-grandparents etc) as these are the people that the two of you could share as common ancestors. The search will not pick up people in your matches' extended family, such as a Step-Mother or Great-Uncle.

But there are no results when I search for my Dad's surname! Should I panic?

Being unable to find matches to known family surnames can cause concern, possibly making you wonder whether DNA testing is about to reveal something unexpected. Do not panic! There can be many reasons for a surname not appearing – it could be as simple as a lack of people from that part of your family having tested, they might have tested but not created a tree, or their tree is not extensive enough to include the surname you are seeking.

I've got so many matches with surnames I recognise – it's fantastic! 😊

It is possible to have too much of a good thing! Some parts of the world have surnames that are particularly popular – Wales for example has many Evans, Hughes and Williams families. If you were an Evans whose family had lived in Wales for hundreds of years, it wouldn't be a great surprise to find the Evans surname in the trees of many of your matches. Working out the specific connection between you and a match, even with a surname in common, can take a lot of research.

For further help discovering your DNA family, visit DNADiscoveries.co.uk



or



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