

Boxing Day is the perfect time to start your family tree because it's likely that you'll be surrounded by one of the best sources of information: your family.

It's important to start your research by talking to your relatives to establish what they already know before you can start to trace your tree further back. The clues you unearth about your ancestors can then be used to help find them in the records available at **findmypast.co.uk**, including the 1841 – 1911 census collection and birth, marriage and death indexes.

Findmypast.co.uk have come up with some handy questions to help you get the most useful and interesting details from your family. You can print a few copies of this Interview Guide or save it to your computer so that you can use it again the next time you're all together.

A few hints and tips before you begin

The great thing about researching your family history is that it can involve the whole family. Your parents or grandparents will enjoy sharing their memories, while the younger generations will find their stories endlessly entertaining.

Why not get your children actively involved? Get them dressed up as a TV chat show host and let them ask your family 'celebrities' the questions. Then, you'll be able to focus on scribbling down their answers too!

Ask your relatives these questions about specific people as this will help you stay in control of the conversation. For example, ask your mother these questions about her father, then ask about her mother, then her father's father and so on until you reach someone she doesn't remember.

You can then move on to question your father, grandparents, uncles and aunts in the same way.

Don't feel confined by the questions - adapt them to suit your family, add extras if you need them and leave any out that don't work for you.

Remember to take anything you are told with a pinch of salt. Your relatives' memories may not always be reliable and it's important to double check any 'facts' that you are told as they may just be family rumours.

You can use **findmypast.co.uk's** birth, marriage and death records to check any of the dates you are told and the census records will give you information about occupations.

1) Find out what your ancestor was called.

- What was his/her name?
- Did he/she have any middle names?
- Was that her married name or maiden name?
- Did he/she have any nicknames? Why did people call him/her that?

2) Find out when your ancestor was born.

- When was his/her birthday?
- If you don't know the exact date, could you tell me what month it fell in?
- What year was he/she born?
- If you don't know the exact year, could you tell me when he/she died and roughly how old he/she was? I can use this information to work out an approximate year of birth.
- Did he/she have any siblings? Were they older or younger?

3) Find out about your ancestor's marriage.

- What was his/her spouse's name?
- When did they get married?
- Had either been married before?
- Was there much of an age gap?
- Do you know what his wife's maiden name was?

4) Find out about your ancestor's employment.

- What was his/her job?
- What company did he/she work for?
- Did he/she have to do any training?
- Did he/she ever change jobs?
- What about his/her partner, what did she/he do?
- Did they live through any wars? Did he fight for his country? Did she have a wartime occupation?

5) Find out where your ancestors were from.

- What county did they live in?
- What town did they live in?
- Do you remember the address(es) that they lived at?
- Were they both locals or were they originally from elsewhere?
- Did either of them have an accent?

6) Find out about your ancestors' children.

- How many children did they have?
- Do you remember their names?
- Do you remember when they were born?
- What did the children do for a living when they grew up?
- Did they stay in the same area or did they move further afield?
- Are any of them still alive and are you in touch with them?

7) Find out what your ancestor was like.

- What sort of character did he/she have?
- Did he/she like a joke or was he/she quite serious?
- Did you get on with him/her?
- What did he/she believe in? Did he/she follow a particular religion?
- What about his/her partner?

8) Find out what your ancestor looked like.

- What colour hair did he/she have?
- What colour eyes did he/she have?
- How tall was he/she?
- What sort of clothes do you remember him/her wearing?
- What about his/her partner?
- Do you have any photographs that I could look at and scan?

9) Try to gather evidence to support what you've been told.

- Do you have a copy of his/her birth, marriage or death certificate?
- Do you have a copy of his/her will?
- Do you have any letters that he/she wrote or received?
- Do you have his/her baptism, memorial or identity card, or any other documents?

10) Get some leads to help you find out more.

- Which other relatives might remember him/her?
- Do you know who might have photos of him/her?
- Do you know who might have a copy of his/her birth certificate, marriage certificate, death certificate or will?
- Do you have this person's contact details?