**What should I look for in a genealogy and family tree building tool?**

Every family tree building tool is a little different. But hey—every family is a little different too. So finding the right one means making sure its features meet your personal needs and ancestral origins. Here are a few key things to keep in mind when shopping for a good genealogy tool for family tree and ancestry searches.

* Make sure it supports your heritage (i.e. some are better for British/Welsh heritage, some focus on this or that place, etc)
* Access to historical records - cross-referencing with other databases
* Chat rooms and community to help you navigate common roadblocks
* Matches your family tree with others who have similar branches
* Interactive family tree builder
* DNA test included? Can it accommodate results from other test companies?
* Some of the many additional features you could find in family-tree programs include:
* User-friendly and easy to learn
* Report-building capability- create reports, family group sheets and more, and add notes to individuals or families
* Ability to add records, photographs, and even sound bites and videos, to individuals in your tree
* Applications to help build and publish a family history narrative
* Assistance with documenting citations
* Alerts to help you correct inconsistencies and errors in data
* “Clean-up” help for duplicate entries
* Options to create printable family trees
* Organizational tools to help you track your research and create a “to-do” list
* Ability to download your tree to a USB flash drive to take with you- helpful when researching in a facility with no internet access
* Some programs can even integrate with the major online databases, making it even easier to sync tree data between online and offline programs. For example, when you have a record “hint” in *Ancestry*, you could see it reflected in your offline tree as well!

**A large database of historical records**

Having access to a large database of historical records is the best way to ensure a successful genealogical search. Most genealogical tools will give you access to some sort of database, but they may differ in size and scope. Some of the larger companies, such as Genes Reunited and OneGreatFamily, give you access to millions of documents, records, and archived information that can instantly and infinitely propel your search forward and give you much more than free ancestry records.

**A relevant geographic focus**

It’s important to make sure that the tool you choose can serve your ancestors’ geographic location. FindMyPast, for example, is a treasure trove for those with British and Irish ancestry, though it may not be ideal for those whose branches extend into, say, Russia or Asia. Some family tree building tools will have a general focus and draw from databases all around the world, while others are specific to certain countries or continents. It’s important to consider your background and make sure the tool you choose can access the right historical records.

**DNA test or compatibility**

This isn’t vital, though it may be important if you’ve taken or plan on taking a DNA test. Some companies offer tests and family tree building tools in one. Others may only offer the family tree software, so if you choose one of those and are interested in DNA tests, you may want to check whether you can upload the results from that DNA test company into the site.

**Community forums**

Genealogy searches are an exciting, invigorating, but sometimes frustrating experience. There’s no doubt that when you’re tracking family clues across centuries and continents you’re likely to run into some false-starts or dead-ends. This is why genealogy forums tend to be so active—discussing common obstacles and solutions with other, more experienced genealogists is a great way to improve your family tree. Many sites offer community chats and forums, and it may be worth it to find one with an active community and other helpful resources.

## Core Features

*Family Tree Maker 2019* includes a variety of practical new tools. Most will help you with organization, media, and preservation of data.

### TreeVault Cloud Services

* + TreeVault Cloud Services extends the use of Family Tree Maker beyond the desk or laptop. Using this feature, you can preserve your work in the Cloud and sync it with apps for your phone or tablet. TreeVault Cloud Services makes preserving your research quick and easy. It helps you to share what you’ve learned as well as protect it for future generations.

### FTM Connect

* + Family Tree Maker Connect is the mobile app for Family Tree Maker 2019. It runs on both Android and Apple devices, such as iPhone and iPad.
	+ FTM Connect syncs in real time with research on your computer. Even if Family Tree Maker 2019 is not running, you will be able to access your work. This makes it an excellent tool for collaborating and sharing research with family.

### Historical Weather

* + Historical Weather is one of Family Tree Maker 2019’s most interesting new features. The tool stores over 1 billion historical weather records. You can use Historical Weather to bring to life important dates in your family’s history.

### Next of Kin

* + Chain of custody is important in genealogy. With the Next of Kin feature, you can choose who will inherit your work. You will receive a certificate to add to a will, containing all information necessary for your heir. Next of Kin is an important feature allowing you to protect your research. Also, it allows those you love to enjoy and continue it into the future.

### Tree Browser

* + Tree Browser keeps track of all trees, GEDCOMs, and other files. It is especially helpful when you are having difficulty locating a file. It works by searching for Family Tree Maker files on your computer and displaying identifying data about them, allowing you to pick which project you would like to work on.

### Rich Color Coding

* + Common ancestors and related lines are easy to identify using Rich Color Coding. You have several options of how to view a person in your tree. You can code a person with one color if you are working only on them. If you would like to see their ancestors, you have the option of coding them with up to four colors.
	+ If you wish to see a person’s descendants, you can code these people, too, with their own colors. Rich Color Coding also gives you a bird’s eye view of your tree, enabling you to show both a person’s ancestors and descendants. This feature makes family relationships much easier to track.

### Smart Filters

* + Family Tree Maker 2017 introduced Smart Filters and the new version has improved on it. In Family Tree Maker 2019, you can keep all the people in your tree organized by creating lists of people. You can then add criteria to lists, specifying them for certain traits.
	+ Smart Filters also make adding people easy. If a list exists for a characteristic and a person with that criteria is added, they will automatically appear in the list. It is a convenient way to organize and find people you have already entered and an easy method to add and keep track of new discoveries.

### Profile Picture Cropping Tool

* + This tool allows you to display family profile photographs in an attractive way. Without damaging the image, the Profile Picture Cropping Tool can zero in on the face of a photograph. It fits the image to an appropriate size and frame, cropping it to a square. The edited photograph will then attach to the person’s profile on Family Tree Maker. This is a non-destructive and intuitive way to work with and organize valuable images.

### Charts & Reports

* + The Charts & Reports features of Family Tree Maker are now even more effective. They include several ways to view a tree, such as bowtie, fan, pedigree, and descendent charts. When publishing your work, you have the option of focusing on only one part of a family or showing spouses, children, and ancestors.
	+ Family Tree Maker 2019 still includes traditional genealogical reports and family group sheets. Now, you can also generate reports on birthdays and other important data. You can also keep track of your research using reports of to-do’s and contact lists.

### Darkroom

* + Darkroom is a powerful and useful feature. With a simple suite of editing tools, you can restore family photographs with ease. Darkroom even works on faded photographs, restoring them to their original clarity. It is a fantastic feature that enables you to remember ancestors as they should be.

### Can I Put Family Tree Maker on More Than One Computer?

* + If you are a registered Family Tree Maker user, you can put Family Tree Maker on more than one computer. This is especially helpful if you are switching computers and wish to backup files externally. You can also install or uninstall Family Tree Maker as necessary.

### Does Family Tree Maker Sync with Ancestry?

* + Family Tree Maker 2019 does sync with Ancestry. With this ability, you’ll have access to features such as hints, trees, and records.

### Does Family Tree Maker Sync with FamilySearch?

* + Family Tree Maker 2019 does sync with FamilySearch. This is a new feature, allowing you to access hints from the online database.

### Does Family Tree Maker Support GEDCOM?

* + Family Tree Maker 2019 does support GEDCOM. Using the program, you can import and export GEDCOM data to share. You can also include media, notes, and facts. You also have the option to anonymize living people.

### Does Family Tree Maker Work with Windows 10?

* + Yes, Family Tree Maker is compatible with Windows versions 7 and above. This includes Windows 11.

### Can I Use Family Tree Maker on My iPad?

* + Yes! Using the FTM Connect tool, you can use the software on your iPad.

### What is the Difference Between Ancestry and Family Tree Maker?

* + Family Tree Maker is offline, purchased software. Ancestry is an online subscription. While both have similar features, Family Tree Maker is more powerful. It gives you greater control and allows for backup of your data.

## Final Word

* + Family Tree Maker 2019 is a powerful program that offers practical solutions to organization and preservation of research. It is also strong in its ability to allow sharing among family and rich in features that help humanize our ancestors.
		- References: [Best Genealogy Software to Build Your Family Tree (genealogyexplained.com)](https://www.genealogyexplained.com/best-genealogy-software/)
		- [Best Family Tree Builders of 2023| Learn More About Your Heritage (top10.com)](https://www.top10.com/dna-testing/genealogy-comparison?bkw=best%20genealogy%20software&bcampid=370506899&bcamp=Genealogy%20DT%20-%20Bing%20tCPA&bagid=1174279329117634&bag=genealogy%20software&btarid=kwd-73392608582150:loc-190&bidm=be&bnet=o&bd=c&bmobval=0&bt=search&c=73392659340526&m=e&k=73392608582150&=&bphysical=92402&bfeedid=&binterest=&a=7017&ts=&topic=&upf=&clicktype=&msclkid=ae80ac7d386510623df1c83947bddc57)
		- [Best genealogy tools for 2023 | TechRadar](https://www.techradar.com/best/genealogy-tools)
		- [Ultimate Review Of The Best Genealogy Software In 2023 | HobbyKraze (thehobbykraze.com)](https://thehobbykraze.com/indoors/genealogy/best-genealogy-software-to-buy/)
* Features and Benefits
	+ FamilySync
		- FTM has numerous features, but one that stands out is the FamilySync. FamilySync allows you to synchronize up to three family trees and is useful, especially if you’ve relatives working on the same tree as you. Any data you enter on your tree will get added to theirs and vice versa, thus simplifying the overall process.
	+ Color Code
		- Even with genealogy programs helping you organize data, it is still overwhelming to keep track of everything. Fortunately, you don’t have to worry about any of that with FTM. Its built-in color-coding helps you identify similar sets of information. For instance, you can use the same color to identify members born in a specific location, those enrolled in the military, or even kids by the first or second wife. Color coding is also handy at identifying specific lineages in your family line, such as a maternal line.
	+ Image Editor
		- Many genealogy software don’t include an image editor, but the FTM includes a lightweight built-in editor. It allows you to make simple changes to enhance any photos connected to your family tree. Plus, it’s also easy to touch up old and faded photos without leaving the program.
	+ Compatibility and Integration
		- FTM is a versatile software compatible with both Windows and Mac. And that’s not all! For long, FTM has allowed users to connect with Ancestry to upload their family tree and directly download records from Ancestry to their family tree. With the latest release, however, FTM now supports FamilySearch.com. This means that users can now connect and share on two of the largest genealogy sites and access a database with billions of records.
	+ Online Support
		- Because FTM has been around for so long and used by many people, it has a wealth of online support in the form of tips, guides, tutorials, and how-to videos. Plus, their website also includes a free digital companion guide to get you started on the software. While the support is great, keep in mind that FTM has changed a lot over the years, including ownership.
		- Currently, the software is owned by Mackiev, who took the management reins in 2016. The new owner made a few changes and improvements to the software, but don’t count on them to provide much support for older versions.