DNA: Tools for Next Steps   Nancy Trimble, PLCGS   2 June 2020

So, you have tested your DNA and you are wondering what to do now. While you are waiting for your results there are some key action items to do. Go into your DNA website and look at your account and settings. You need to set the privacy levels that you are comfortable with. Also, check that your e-mail address is correct, so that you will receive notices from the company. Download a GEDcom from your software programme or your online tree, upload to your testing company and make sure it is connected to your own test on the DNA website. As well, at FamilyTreeDNA, go to Account Settings → Genealogy → Surnames to enter your Ancestral Surnames.

Key Point – only your BEST matches

You only need to keep track of your BEST matches. Start with your highest matches first. Best matches have shared surnames and/or shared locations. They share enough DNA that your common ancestor is discoverable on your trees and in genealogy records. Matches that are 4th cousins or closer are the best. You may have to ask some of your known cousins to test.

2nd and 3rd Known Cousins Are Gold

First, you need to validate your known cousins. Doing research on all your aunts/uncles, great-aunts & great uncles and finding their descendants will help you recognize your cousins. Another possibility is to use the tools that your DNA company provides you with. Ancestry has Thru-lines and MyHeritage has The Theory of Family Relativity. Using those will quickly identify matches that have surnames you recognize. Make sure to validate the linkages.

Find Genetic Networks

The whole key to finding where matches fit in your tree, is to use your known 2nd and 3rd cousins first. By looking at matches that share DNA with both you and your known match, you can form a cluster of cousins, that likely share a common ancestor. You can keep doing this by then taking one of those matches and seeing who else matches you and that new match. In this way you can build a list of people that all appear to match through a common ancestral couple. You will need to validate your hypothesis with each one of them. They may connect further back on that line rather than your known ancestral couple. Using people who share 25cM up to 200 cM is a good range. I recommend taking screen shots and printing them, so that you can make notes and see them in a group.

Ancestry DNA

On Ancestry, you can use the coloured dot system. I have used my eight 2X gt-grandparent couples and given each one a different coloured dot. You can do this on your "DNA Matches" page. Once you find a known 2nd or 3rd cousin, give them the dot colour that represents your common ancestral couple. Then go to the "Shared Matches" page to see who shares DNA with

both of you – and give them the same colour of dot. Repeat this with the top match in your shared list and give any new matches the same colour of dot. Repeat with the next match and continue in that fashion. Pretty soon, you will have a large genetic network where you can look at their trees, use the shared # of centimorgans (cM) and the charts from either Ancestry or The Shared cM Project (see Resources) to work on the relationship and/or communicate with your match on the Message system at Ancestry. Filters at the top of your "DNA Matches" page will allow you to see the group by their shared colour dot. There is also a Notes field on the shared match's page where you can jot down information about that match.

FamilyTreeDNA

At FamilyTreeDNA, go in and link your known matches to their places in your attached family tree. This will help the company to sort your matches into "paternal", "maternal" and "both" lists. On the "Family Finder – Matches" page, find shared matches by selecting your known 2nd cousin by putting a checkmark to the left of their name, and then click on the "In Common With" button. On each of these shared matches, put a note of the probable shared ancestral line in their notes section (you could also use a spreadsheet if you like that better). Take the first match and see who else shares DNA with you and the new match. Note the same ancestral line in their notes field. In this way you can use these notes to form a genetic community to research. Continue with this method until you have found all the various matches for that cluster. You can then take their usernames and put them (10 at a time) into the "Matrix" tool (found on your Home page) to see if these cousins match each other. Then do genealogy to confirm the ancestral couple. You can send e-mails directly to these matches.

MyHeritage DNA

Go to your "DNA Matches" page, choose your known 2nd cousin match by clicking on "View Match" in their section. This will bring up a comparison page where you and your match can compare data. Further down the page, a list of "Shared DNA Matches" shows up. You will see who shares DNA with both of you, as well as seeing how much DNA they share with your match. Take the top match on that list and check out their "Shared DNA Matches" and add any new names to your list. There is a Notes field beside your match on your "DNA Matches" page. You can contact your match from a link near their name on the "DNA Matches" page. This goes through an internal messaging system at MyHeritage.

DNA Painter Tools

DNAPainter.com is a website where you can find tools to help you work with your DNA better. The Shared cM Project is the best tool to investigate possible relationships using the amount of shared DNA. There is also a Tree Tool where you can upload a GEDcom and get an ancestral pedigree chart in both a tree and a fan chart format. You can mark ancestors with verified lines and see DNA inheritance patterns. Advanced areas include chromosome mapping (painting) and the "What Are The Odds?" tool which allows you to explore probabilities of various hypotheses of relationships using many cousins shared cMs.

Tips for Making First Contacts

- ▶ include the name of the person you are asking about & the company - some people administer more than one person at more than 1 company
- ▶ keep it short – they don't care about your research
- ▶ say it's ok if they don't know a lot about genetics or genealogy
- ▶ ask a specific question – e.g. "It looks like we match on the Collier line. Do you recognize that name?"
- ▶ provide an easy way out- "If you don't have time to respond right now, that is ok! Please just write back to let me know you are out there."

Resources

The Leeds Method with Ancestry's Colored Dots
https://www.danaleeds.com/the-leeds-method-with-dots/
Shared Centimorgan Project
https://dnapainter.com/tools/sharedcmv4
What Are The Odds Tool
https://dnapainter.com/tools/probability
Cousin Relationships Explained
https://www.familysearch.org/blog/en/cousin-chart/
MedBetterDNA Chrome Extension (must use the Chrome web browser; for Ancestry.ca only)
https://chrome.google.com/webstore/search/medbetterdna?hl=en
Your DNA Guide Blog – particularly well written explanations
https://www.yourdnaguide.com/ydgblog
YouTube has many videos – Search on "DNA clustering"
https://www.youtube.com/
Your Testing company should have videos and/or FAQ's to help you maximize your use of the site.