

“Uncovering a DNA Surprise”

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I'm not going to share in this handout any personal particulars of the DNA investigation discussed in my talk. I will instead list generally helpful information. If you are a FGS member you can always view the video of the full presentation at the Members Only area of our website.

Many of us will have one or more DNA surprises in our DNA match list. These may be unknown relatives OR MPEs (Misattributed Parental Events). ALL OF OUR MATCHES are in fact in our family tree. How do we uncover these surprises? FIRST identify and place into your tree as many known matches as possible! Placing 2nd cousins and greater will be very useful.

In some cases you can solve your DNA mystery using matches from only one DNA website.

However you often need to fish for matches in more ponds:

If so, test with these four companies: [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com), [23andMe](https://www.23andme.com), [MyHeritage](https://www.familytree.com), [Family Tree DNA](https://www.familytreedna.com).

All of these companies will have reduced price sales a few times a year. Note that Family Tree DNA is the only company to do atDNA (the usual test), in addition to mtDNA and Y-DNA tests that may also be very useful. Upload your DNA raw data to [GEDmatch.com](https://www.gedmatch.com) where many tools are available.

Also upload raw data from Ancestry.com and 23andMe to FTDNA and MyHeritage.

Upload your family tree to these websites and stake out where the DNA matches lie in your tree. E.g. Ancestry.com will then enable “Thru-Lines” to find possible placement for many new matches.

Caveat: “Thru-line” predictions may be based on erroneous family trees. Confirm/prove (as possible) the actual placements. Sort your cousin matches into at least four groups: one group for connecting thru one of each of your four grand-parents. Your immediate family members and descendants are in all four groups, your first cousins are in two groups, more distant cousins are in one group, except to the extent that endogamy occurs.

For each match determine the MRCA: Most Recent Common Ancestor(s) If the MRCA is a single spouse instead of a couple, you have a half relationship. Matches will share segment(s) of DNA coming from a MRCA. Determining the MRCAs of your matches will allow you to map out where much of your DNA came from at DNAPainter.com. Identifying matches that have no trees and don't communicate with you is an important skill!

To uncover a DNA mystery you must generally determine how much DNA they share with several matches who are within the same tree. For a DNA mystery match at Ancestry.com you must ask them to tell you their amounts of shared DNA with the various individuals in that tree, OR Ask them to share their “DNA Ethnicity and Matches” with you under their “DNA Settings”. While, for a DNA match at MyHeritage, 23andMe, and GEDmatch you are able to see how much DNA is shared between all those who share DNA in common. This is very useful!

At 23andMe, MyHeritage, FTDNA and GEDmatch you can additionally map the shared segment data on chromosomes. This allows you to find identical DNA segments that two or more individuals will share – called “triangulation”. These identical shared segments likely come from the same common ancestor(s). It is best to collect your triangulated segment data from various companies at DNApainter.com. All individuals who share these matching regions likely descend from the same common ancestor(s). In any DNA exercise it is also important to establish whether endogamy complicates the DNA analysis. Look for possible inter-marriage between earlier ancestors and check for endogamy (whether your parents are related) in a DNA kit [here at GEDmatch.com](http://GEDmatch.com)

Summary Points:

To place unknown matches, it REALLY helps to have already placed many known matches into your existing tree. Increase the number of helpful matches by fishing in many ponds – test at several companies and transfer raw DNA data. Goal: Find as many helpful matches as possible between the unknown match and known matches in your tree. Use logic, shared cM, triangulation, and WATO to narrow down the possible placement.

Suggestions for engendering communication and trust:

Offer initial information that is innocuous and helpful. Employ confidentiality where appropriate and needed. Avoid use of terms like “illegitimate” or “out of wedlock”. I often affirm : “All children are very legitimate”. If contact might be sensitive, write a personal mailed letter and give them time to respond.

Suggestions for targeted DNA testing:

I use BeenVerified.com (\$), Spokeo.com (\$), FaceBook, LinkedIn, Google... to find contact info for living people. Consider first contacting a spouse, close relative or friend of the desired target. Consider contacting a relative who is doing genealogy for the family, that built their online tree, posted pictures, etc.

Suggested Resources:

MANY YouTube videos are available. DNA Groups of many sorts on FaceBook.

Independent advice is available at: ISOGG.org website and Wiki. E.G. Compares different DNA testing companies, much more.

Setup a free or paid account at the DNApainter website. Use the shared cM tool and WATO tool.

Roberta Estes : dna-explained.com

Diahan Southard : yourDNAGuide.com

Book/eBook with step-by-step help for different scenarios

For-fee coursework/training

Feel free to contact me for more information and possible help:

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