

Rules For Genealogy

From: or-roots

1. Treat the brothers and sisters of your ancestors as equals ... even if some of them were in jail.
2. Death certificates are rarely filled in by the person who died.
3. When visiting a funeral home, wear old clothes, no make-up, and look like you have about a week to live ... the funeral director will give you anything you ask if he thinks you may be a customer soon.
4. The cemetery where your ancestor was buried does not have perpetual care, has no office, is accessible only by a muddy road, has snakes, tall grass, and lots of bugs ... and many of the old gravestones are in broken pieces, stacked in a corner under a pile of dirt.
5. A Social Security form SS-5 is better than a birth certificate because few people had anything to do with the information on their own birth certificate.
6. The application for a death certificate you want insists that you provide the maiden name of the deceased's mother ... which is exactly what you don't know and is the reason you are trying to get the death certificate in the first place.
7. If you call Social Security and ask where to write for a birth certificate, tell them it is for yourself ... they won't help you if you say you want one for your great-great-great-great-great-great-grandfather who died in 1642.
8. When you contact the state vital statistics office in your home state and ask if they are "on-line" and they respond, "on what?," you may have a problem.
9. A census record showing all twelve children in a family proves only that your ancestors did not believe in birth control.
10. Work from the known to the unknown. In other words, just because your name is Washington doesn't mean you are related to George.
11. With any luck, some of the people in your family could read and write ... and may have left something written about themselves.
12. It ain't history until it's written down. (See #19)
13. A genealogist needs to be a detective. Just give me the facts, ma'am.
14. Always interview brothers and sisters together in the same room. Since they can't agree on anything about the family tree, it makes for great fun to see who throws the first punch.
15. The genealogy book you just found out about went out of print last week.

16. A good genealogical event is learning that your parents were married. 17. Finding the place a person lived may lead to finding that person's arrest record.

18. It's really quite simple. First you start with yourself, then your parents, then your grandparents ... then you QUIT ... and start teaching classes in genealogy.

19. If it's not written down, it ain't history yet. (See #12)

20. In spite of MTV, computer games, and skate boards, there's always a chance that your grandchildren will learn how to read someday.

21. "To understand the living, you have to commune with the dead, but don't commune with the dead so long that you forget that you are living!"

[Ken Jackson](#)