

"SPELLING DUSN'T COWNT"

1 Back in the day folks couldn't spell and many could barely write, so how a name sounds is more important than how it's spelled. Use wild card or Soundex searches to help find variant spellings of names.

**ASSUME NOTHING**

2 Check all your facts, don't assume that any particular document is right or wrong, and always try to find other independent sources to corroborate your facts as much as possible. Verify, verify, verify. For instance, don't assume that:

- your ancestors were married
- census information is accurate
- vital (or other) records were correct
- your ancestor's life events were recorded
- ancestors had the same name as their enslaver

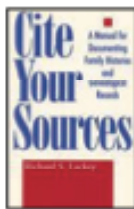
USE DISCRETION

3 **Never lie** in your genealogy reports, but use discretion when reporting family information, especially when it involves living relatives.

ALWAYS DOCUMENT YOUR SOURCES, NO MATTER HOW MUCH THEY CONTRADICT ONE ANOTHER

4 Over time, you will compile more data and those once seemingly contradictory pieces of evidence may prove to be just the pieces of the puzzle you need to prove or disprove your theory. Be consistent as you cite your sources. There are standard citation formats, but

even if you just make up your own format for listing your sources, be consistent with it. You want your descendants to be able to retrace your steps, so you always cite your sources.

**MOST DATES ARE APPROXIMATE**

5 It's okay to state that someone was born "abt. 1845," or died "May 1915" if you don't have an exact date or where various documents have different dates. Which date is "correct?" They all are.

**IF UNSURE, SAY SO**

Future researchers will thank you for being honest if you simply say that you cannot prove a specific fact, yet you "suspect" such and such is true. Don't fudge the facts. Ever.

**YOU CANNOT DO IT ALL ONLINE**

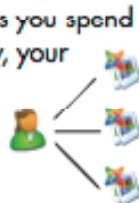
7 Yes, we love doing research online and there's nothing better than using the computer to find new sources, view digital images of original documents and even connect with relatives. For genealogists, the internet will never replace the wonderful work of libraries, county courthouses, archives, and historical societies. Do as much as you can online, then turn off your computer and hit the bricks!

**JUST BECAUSE IT'S ONLINE DOESN'T MEAN IT'S TRUE**

8 The internet is a wonderful thing but it's filled with oodles of bad information. Don't make the mistake of believing anything you find online at face value. Verify against other sources, even if you paid for the information you found online. Consult the original source whenever possible.

PASS ALONG YOUR RESEARCH

No matter how many decades you spend researching your family, your research will never be done. Plan on passing along your research to the next generation's



researchers. Leave excellent notes, cite all your sources, explain your shorthand ... in essence, leave your research the way you'd have liked to have found it.

DON'T DIE WITH YOUR STORIES STILL IN YOU

10 Giving credit to Dr. Wayne Dyer for his "Don't die with your music still in you," we want to remind you to tell the stories as completely and as accurately as possible. Genealogy isn't about just doing research. Genealogy is about telling the stories and ensuring that your ancestor's legacies live on for generations to come. Without the stories, the research won't do anyone much good. The legacy of your ancestors rests in your capable hands. Doing the research is fine, but always remember that you have been chosen to **tell their stories**.

**DNA IS NOT A TRUMP CARD**

11 DNA is just one of **many** possible sources of information you can use to verify or deny a relationship. Human error occurs when the results are transcribed, thereby providing false information. DNA results should **always** be used in concert with other sources.

ANYTHING YOU POST ONLINE WILL BE "BORROWED"

12 You need to accept the fact that any family information you post online will be "borrowed" or outright stolen, and you will probably not get credit for all your hard work. This is the nature of the beast... the internet. Get over it.

SPREAD THE WORD

You have our permission to use/publish these Golden Rules as much as you like. Just give us credit for them, okay?