5 Ways to Refresh Your Research With DNA

It’s a new year, which means it’s a great time to hit the refresh button on your research. The AncestryDNA test can be a perfect way to do that because the results consistently update. That’s part of the fun of taking a DNA test: You never know what you will find out, and the chances for discovery just keep on coming. Here are a few tips to help you reboot your research with AncestryDNA.

1. **New Ancestor Discoveries**

New Ancestor Discoveries are generated when you are a strong genetic match with others who have taken the AncestryDNA test and share a common ancestor in their trees. You don’t have that common ancestor in your family tree, so we are suggesting that this New Ancestor Discovery is a possible relative. You can use the tools on the site to explore the relationship. If you aren’t sure if you have a New Ancestor Discovery, after you log in to your Ancestry account, go to the DNA tab and check your DNA homepage. If you have a New Ancestor Discovery, it will show up on your results page below your DNA ethnicity and matching results but before your DNA Circles™. See the names listed on each card? These people aren’t in your family tree, but they might belong there. Connections can go back as far as the 1700s. [Watch this video](#) to see a walk-through of how to use this feature.

2. **Shared Ancestor Hints**

This is a one of our most popular features. Once your DNA test is attached to your tree, AncestryDNA goes to work trying to identify common ancestors with your DNA matches, using your tree and the trees of your matches. Use the Hints filter to discover where a shared ancestor has been identified in your trees.
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Review your tree and your match’s to ensure that the research is solid. If you notice any discrepancies, contact your new-found cousin and invite them to work together to figure things out. Keep track of how many shared hints you have on your homepage and check out new ones. Updates can happen weekly.

3. Shared DNA with Matches

One of the newest features is Shared Matches. This feature is extremely valuable in understanding how you might be related to your matches. The Shared Matches filter will show you which other matches you and any given match on your list share in common. The list will include 4th-cousin matches or closer. When you click View Match, the Shared Matches filter appears on the detail page for each of your matches. If you need help, click on the question mark for more information.

Shared Matches might help you determine which family line you share with a match or give you more evidence that you’re related to a specific person or match.
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4. Get another person tested

One of the easiest ways to hit the refresh button on your research is getting another family member tested. Because of genetic inheritance you won’t have the same results, so getting another family tested can give you results you don’t have now. We would encourage you to get a parent tested if possible—that way you can use the Mother or Father filters that only show up if you have had a parent tested. If your parents aren’t available, test a sibling or aunt/uncle. Each family member can provide a unique piece of your genetic story. Buy a DNA test now.

5. Reach out to a cousin match

On the profile page for each of your matches you will find a big, green Send Message button. Use this to communicate with your matches. You never know what you can find out by reaching out to a cousin. Like my grandmother would say, “It never hurts to ask.” A quick tip on messaging others: Keep it short and sweet; ask only one or two questions. You don’t need to overwhelm them with a history of the family right off the bat. Make sure to introduce yourself. Offer to share what you know. Establish a relationship. And respond to messages you get, even if you don’t know the answer.

Check back often. All these tools and features will update automatically. Trying any one of them might give you the boost you need to discover something new about your family story and give you that fresh look at your research.