

# Exploring Your DNA Circles



Anna Swayne – AncestryDNA Educator

## Introducing DNA Circles: Taking another look into all your matches

DNA Circles re-imagines what DNA matching can do. It goes beyond finding a common ancestor with your DNA matches to link you to additional AncestryDNA members with the same common ancestor, thus creating a Circle of people who are all related.

You can find your DNA Circles on your DNA homepage under the ethnicity estimate and DNA matches buttons.



**Kenny Freestone**  
This test is shown to matches as genealogy\_man

Select another test ▾

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**Ethnicity estimate**



Regions:

- 64% Great Britain
- 16% Europe West
- 11% Ireland
- + 3 Other regions

See full ethnicity estimate

**DNA matches**



Quick Links:

- 59 Shared ancestor hints
- Starred matches
- 74 4th cousins or closer

View All DNA matches

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**DNA Circles** BETA < 1 of 2 >



**Thomas Freestone**  
3rd Great-Grandfather  
(1795-1858)  
Circle members:22



**Ann Winter**  
3rd Great-Grandmother  
(1812-1888)  
Circle members:22



**Robert T Jones**  
4th Great-Grandfather  
(1818-1905)  
Circle members:39



**William Grey**  
2nd Great-Grandfather  
(1853-1926)  
Circle members:9

Each circle is based on a common ancestor. If you have an Ancestry membership, once you click on a Circle you can see all the members in the Circle, how they are related to your ancestor, and who else they have in their family tree. This is where DNA Circles really shines. Being able to see a collection of your DNA matches centered around a common ancestor all at once gives you a new tool to do more with your new-found cousins. It makes it easier to exchange photos, stories, and other new information to add to what you already know about your ancestor. In short, it makes collaborating with your new extended family easier than ever.

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Here is an example of a DNA Circle with William Grey as the common ancestor. It includes nine members who all have William Grey in their family tree and have also taken a DNA test.

MEMBER <a href="#">Learn about Circle members</a>	CIRCLE MEMBERSHIP CONFIDENCE	CONNECTION TO KENNY FREESTONE	
<b>Kenny Freestone</b> 2nd Great-Grandson	Strong 		
<b>P.F.</b> (administered by genealogy_man) Great-Grandson	Strong 	TREE MATCH DNA MATCH	<a href="#">View Details</a>
<b>N.F.</b> (administered by genealogy_man) 2nd Great-Granddaughter	Strong 	TREE MATCH DNA MATCH	<a href="#">View Details</a>
<b>K.F.</b> 2nd Great-Grandson	Strong 	TREE MATCH DNA MATCH	<a href="#">View Details</a>
<b>E.F.</b> 3rd Great-Granddaughter	Strong 	TREE MATCH DNA MATCH	<a href="#">View Details</a>
<b>E.F.</b> 3rd Great-Granddaughter	Strong 	TREE MATCH DNA MATCH	<a href="#">View Details</a>
<b>L.S.</b> Great-Granddaughter	Strong 	TREE MATCH	<a href="#">View Details</a>
<b>M.W.</b> 2nd Great-Grandson	Strong 	TREE MATCH DNA MATCH	<a href="#">View Details</a>
<b>LF</b> 3rd Great-Granddaughter	Strong 	TREE MATCH DNA MATCH	<a href="#">View Details</a>

DNA Circles can potentially uncover new relatives that DNA matching alone would not have found. Because you inherit only fractions of DNA from your distant ancestors ([read more about genetic inheritance](#)), you may have inherited different parts of your ancestors' DNA than many of your cousins. This means it's very possible that there will be people in your DNA Circle with whom you are not a direct genetic match but who do match others in the group and share the same ancestor in their family tree. It's like meeting a friend of a friend—or in this case a cousin of a cousin. The more people who take the test, the bigger your Circle can get.

Visit the Ancestry.com Learning Center at [www.ancestry.com/learn](http://www.ancestry.com/learn).

For account questions or technical help, call 1-800-262-3787.

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## DNA Matches and Tree Matches

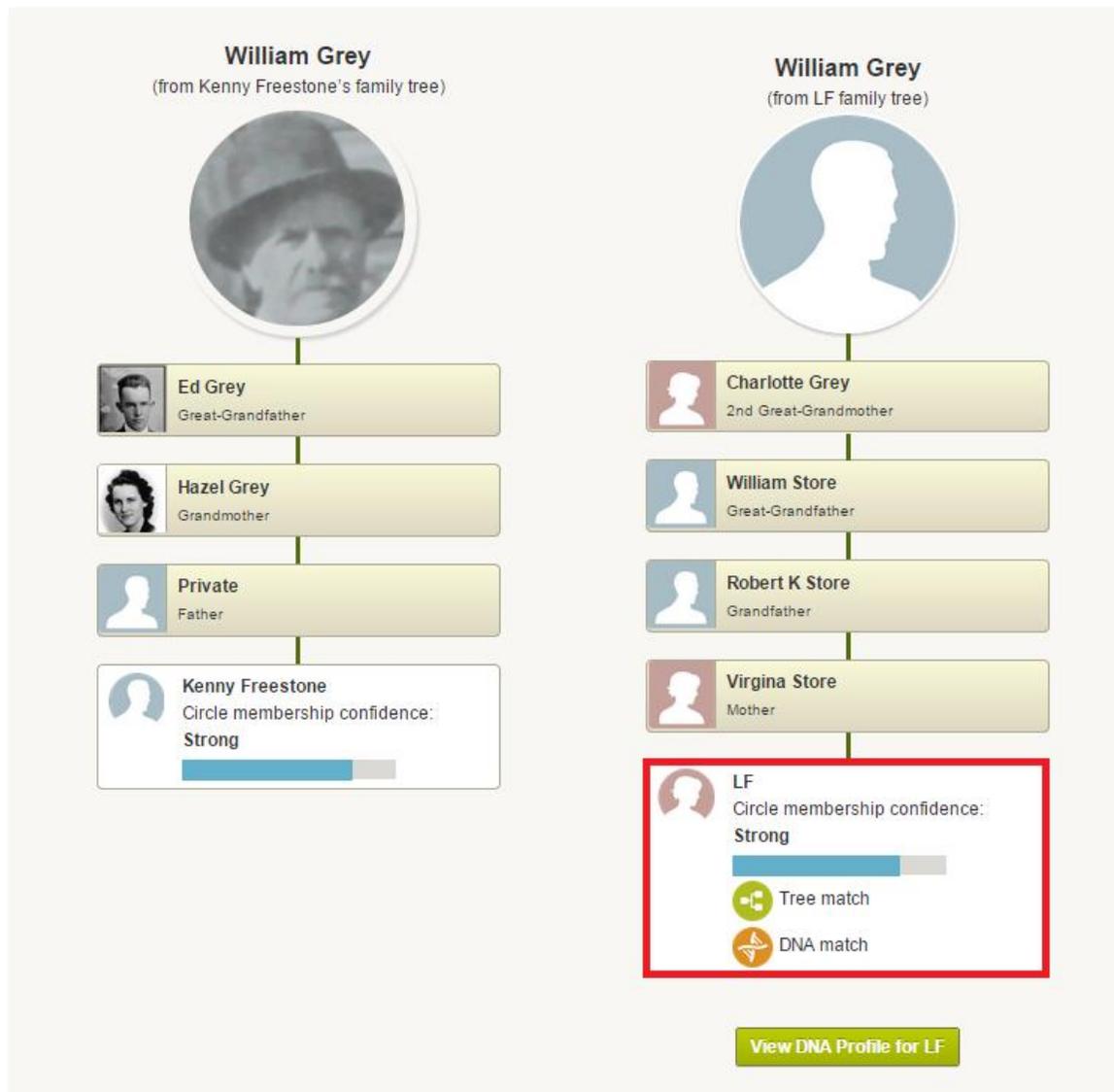
There are two types of matches you'll find in DNA Circles: DNA matches and tree matches. The DNA Circle below includes LF, a tree match and DNA match, and L.S., a tree-only match. We've highlighted them in red boxes to show the difference between the two.

MEMBER <a href="#">Learn about Circle members</a>	CIRCLE MEMBERSHIP CONFIDENCE	CONNECTION TO KENNY FREESTONE	
<b>Kenny Freestone</b> 2nd Great-Grandson	Strong <div style="width: 100%;"><div style="width: 100%;"></div></div>		
<b>P.F.</b> (administered by genealogy_man) Great-Grandson	Strong <div style="width: 100%;"><div style="width: 100%;"></div></div>	TREE MATCH DNA MATCH	<a href="#">View Details</a>
<b>N.F.</b> (administered by genealogy_man) 2nd Great-Granddaughter	Strong <div style="width: 100%;"><div style="width: 100%;"></div></div>	TREE MATCH DNA MATCH	<a href="#">View Details</a>
<b>K.F.</b> 2nd Great-Grandson	Strong <div style="width: 100%;"><div style="width: 100%;"></div></div>	TREE MATCH DNA MATCH	<a href="#">View Details</a>
<b>E.F.</b> 3rd Great-Granddaughter	Strong <div style="width: 100%;"><div style="width: 100%;"></div></div>	TREE MATCH DNA MATCH	<a href="#">View Details</a>
<b>E.F.</b> 3rd Great-Granddaughter	Strong <div style="width: 100%;"><div style="width: 100%;"></div></div>	TREE MATCH DNA MATCH	<a href="#">View Details</a>
<b>L.S.</b> Great-Granddaughter	Strong <div style="width: 100%;"><div style="width: 100%;"></div></div>	TREE MATCH	<a href="#">View Details</a>
<b>M.W.</b> 2nd Great-Grandson	Strong <div style="width: 100%;"><div style="width: 100%;"></div></div>	TREE MATCH DNA MATCH	<a href="#">View Details</a>
<b>LF</b> 3rd Great-Granddaughter	Strong <div style="width: 100%;"><div style="width: 100%;"></div></div>	TREE MATCH DNA MATCH	<a href="#">View Details</a>

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If you look at match LF, you can see how this match descends from William Grey and the connection strength this person has to the group.



Since LF is a genetic match we can see what the predicted relationship is by clicking the **View DNA Profile for LF** button. This will also allow you to look into this match in more detail.

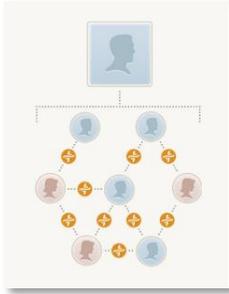
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Now take a look at L.S., a tree-only match. This means you don't actually share DNA with L.S., but L.S. does share DNA with others in the group. Remember, these are DNA Circles, so DNA is the ticket into the Circle. In this case, even though there isn't a direct genetic connection to you, the confidence level is strong. That means that L.S. shares a strong genetic connection to others in the group that you share DNA with as well but doesn't share DNA directly with you. This is the power of AncestryDNA, finding not only those who match you but also those who match you via others who have the same common ancestor. Take some time to dive into this new feature and explore, and revisit your DNA Circles often because as the database grows you can get a new or expanded DNA Circle at any time.

The screenshot displays two family tree diagrams side-by-side. The left diagram is titled "William Grey (from Kenny Freestone's family tree)" and shows a vertical line of four boxes: "Ed Grey (Great-Grandfather)", "Hazel Grey (Grandmother)", "Private (Father)", and "Kenny Freestone (Circle membership confidence: Strong)". The right diagram is titled "William Grey (from L.S.'s family tree)" and shows a vertical line of four boxes: "Abe Grey (Grandfather)", "Ray Grey (Father)", "L.S. (Circle membership confidence: Strong, Tree match)", and a button "View DNA Profile for L.S.". The L.S. box is highlighted with a red border. At the bottom of the interface are two navigation arrows: "View previous match in this circle" and "View next match in this circle".

## So, How Does It Work?



DNA Circles starts with well-proven DNA matching technology to find your distant cousins among other AncestryDNA members. Then we look at all of the matches together to find people who are interconnected.

This is where the power of having an Ancestry tree connected to AncestryDNA test results comes into play. Using family trees, we look for an ancestor shared across a group of DNA-related people. When AncestryDNA finds one, a DNA Circle is created.

The good news is that we've trained the computer to do the hard stuff like DNA matching, tree comparisons, and triangulation for you. So you get to focus on taking this discovery and building on it to make a few more of your own. You can learn more about DNA circles and read a white paper by clicking on the help link on your DNA homepage. To access the help link, select one of your DNA Circles and click the question mark at the top-right of the page.

## What if You Don't Have a DNA Circle Yet?

Not every AncestryDNA member will have a DNA Circle. Here are some important details about how DNA Circles are created that can help explain why you might not have one.

1. **Have a "public" family tree linked to your DNA results.** If you don't have a family tree, it's free to start one. If you have a tree, make sure it's linked to your DNA results, set to be shared publicly, and goes back to the most distant ancestor you know. You can use research tools on Ancestry to help. I would strongly encourage linking your DNA results to a tree, even if that tree has limited information. DNA can be a powerful tool for unlocking family discoveries, and having even a small tree will help get you on the path without delay. (Standard privacy rules still apply for DNA Circles.)
2. **A DNA Circle requires three or more people.** To form a DNA Circle we need at least three separate family units. (Family units consist of relationships of first-cousin or closer.) Then we need at least three of these units that have the same common ancestor in their public trees to make a Circle. Mom, Uncle Joe, and you will make up a family unit, but not a DNA Circle, but having additional extended family members can increase your DNA Circle connection strength or potentially extend your reach, since another family member may have inherited DNA that could link you to another Circle.
3. **Reach out to second cousins or more-distant family members.** Having more people in your family tested will increase the likelihood that you will be in or create a Circle and will make the Circle more powerful in terms of its potential reach.
4. **DNA Circles cover seven generations (you, plus six generations back).** If you have matches that could be in a Circle but share a common ancestor past seven generations, they will not show up in a Circle. They will still show up as matches in your regular DNA matches list, but the cutoff for Circles is seven generations. Early analysis showed that more-distant relationships were less reliable and may form DNA Circles around inaccurate data. Since DNA Circles is in BETA, we are being a little more conservative to ensure more confidence in the results. This is something we will continue to analyze and may change over time.

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5. **You must be an active subscriber (any level) to view DNA Circles.** Having an Ancestry membership is not a guarantee that you will have DNA Circles, but if you do have DNA Circles, a membership will allow you to view them.
6. **DNA Circles will continue to grow.** As the database grows and as you expand your tree, you will have more chances to get a DNA Circle.
7. **Be patient.** DNA testing relies on cutting-edge science and technology, and there will be more to learn as time goes on. Check out the help material found under the question mark in the DNA matches section and DNA Circles section on the website.



[Still have questions? Watch Crista Cowan walk through these features on AncestryDNA? Update to Matching and DNA Circles.](#)