

Getting Kids Excited about Family History

Looking for ways to get the next generation involved in family history? Here are 8 of our best ideas.

Family History Bingo

Create a bingo card with up to five columns and five rows. In each square, put a family member's picture. Put the names of all the pictured family members into a bowl, then call out names until someone gets five in a row, column, or diagonally. See this [example on our Pinterest page](#).



Some tips:

1. We recommend using close-up photos so kids can easily make out who is pictured. Also, make sure the photos are roughly the same sizes.
2. Use coins, cereal, or round paper cut-outs for bingo markers so you don't ruin your beautiful cards.
3. Not especially savvy with designing bingo cards? Here's a [great family bingo template we found](#).
4. To really motivate the kiddos, make it a points or rewards based game where they win something at the end.

Cemetery Scavenger Hunt

Our own Crista Cowan likes to take her nephews on tours of local cemeteries and gives them clues to find their own relatives. Once the hunters discover the correct headstone, she shares who they were, how they're related, and meaningful stories she's discovered about them. She's now known among her nephews and nieces as the go-to person they can ask about their family history.

If you want to introduce your kids to the wonders of a graveyard but don't have relatives at your local cemetery, [Climbing My Family Tree](#) has free printable scavenger hunts, including a chart of symbols, which is helpful for those unable to read. For older children, there is a hunt with a more exhaustive list of symbols they can find around their nearest cemetery.

A trip to the cemetery is also a great opportunity to teach kids about the dos and don'ts of cemetery etiquette. Always check with the local cemetery to see what rules they have that are specific to their property. And of course, keep a close eye on children at the cemetery to make sure they don't get injured. Don't let them lean on markers that may be unsteady, and watch for sunken spots and other hazards.

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Where in the World?

Maps are a great way to illustrate to children where their ancestors lived and to show migration paths. We have a good selection of maps on [our Pinterest board](#). If you connect the location to a story about the ancestor(s) who lived there, children will be more interested and more likely to remember it.

Use identifying information and put place markers on the map. For example, you could include photos of your ancestors or flags with their names on them on the places where they lived.



Road Trip!

Make special memories with your children by taking them on road trips to places that are significant to your family. If your family lived in an area for a long time you may find that a street, park or body of water was named after a relative. Sharing an important story from your family's past on the spot where it happened can turn it into a powerful memory.

Family Journalist



If you have a future journalist on your hands or an older child, challenge them to capture interviews with family members. In particular, have them talk to older generations about their life experiences.

[Download our handy PDF](#) with suggested interview questions to get the ball rolling. We recommend recording these interviews so you have them forever; there's nothing that can replace the sound of a grandparent's voice. Here are a few questions to start with:

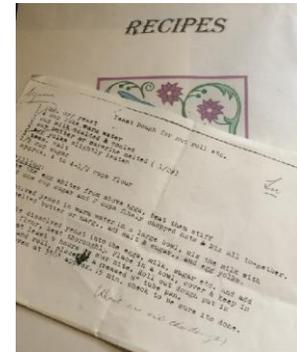
- What kind of clothes and hats did they wear in those days?
- What kind of houses did people typically live in at that time?
- Did they have electricity? Indoor plumbing? Appliances?
- What games did they play when they were young?
- What was the main entertainment?
- What did people eat? (Asking about dessert can yield surprising answers!)
- What kinds of toys did kids play with when they were young?
- What kind of music or dancing was popular?
- Who was president when that person was born? Whom did they first vote for in a presidential election? What historical events do they remember?

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Family Cookbooks

Family gatherings often center around food, and in many families, recipes that have been passed down through the generations are part of the family story. Dishes with inexpensive ingredients may have been created by necessity during the Great Depression or because of rationing during World War II. Get your family involved in compiling a family cookbook that includes both the recipes and the stories that go with them. What was traditionally served at certain holidays and why? Who was best known in the family for her (or his) delicious pies?

You can also re-create those recipes and take photos to include in the book. This may be the most fun – and most delicious – part of the project!



Create a Family Tree

It's important for children to understand the familial relationships between them and the people around them and a great way to teach this is by having them fill in their own family tree. You'll find free blank forms in the Ancestry [Learning Center](#). Or for more tech-savvy older children, have them start a free family tree on Ancestry. Even if you already have a tree, letting them build one themselves helps reinforce the relationships as they see the tree grow. Have digital copies of family photographs available so they can attach them to people in the tree.

The new LifeStory view on Ancestry will incorporate events from their ancestors' lives and put them into a narrative form that they can then edit, adding stories you've told them about each person. Historical insights will help them get a better feel for their family's place in history as well.



Story Time

Make story time special by telling the young people in your family stories about your own childhood and what life was like back in the day. Tell them stories about the people you remember growing up and the ordeals your family endured. Studies have shown that children who know more about their families and past struggles are more resilient and tend to cope better in difficult times. So let them know that they are from a strong and fascinating family. In turn, they'll pass that on to future generations.