



Western Australian Genealogical Society Inc.

Member of Australasian Federation of Family History Organisations Inc.
and Federation of Family History Societies (UK)

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STEPS

Hints for Researching your Family History

STEPS

This acronym was developed by one of our WAGS members. It is a methodology designed to help you focus, and a useful way to remember, the context of your research. It is also the **Why, When, What, Where, Who** and **How** of your genealogical research.

S = Social Context. (Why)

Each of us lives our life, more or less within the boundaries and various influencing factors of the society in which we live. We make our decisions based on the way in which we are influenced by these factors. In the same way our ancestors were affected by the *Social, Economic, Political, Historical, and Military* influences on the Society in which they lived. Each of these factors will have influenced the way they lived and decisions they made. Understanding these factors will help us understand **why** they may have moved from one part of a country to another, or perhaps left the country of their birth and migrated overseas.

T = Time. (When)

Having a focus on the period that we are looking for our ancestors will help us to identify the right person. The Time we are looking at will also reflect the Social Context. Which Century are we looking in? What Decade? Was there an important event in a particular year? Was there a War was in progress? The **when** will help us to focus on where we should be looking for information.

E = Events. (What)

Births, Baptism/Christening, Marriage/Divorce, Death & Burial are the main events that we focus on to obtain the keys to our ancestors. But there are many other important events such as; Migration, Education, Crime, Probate, Residence, Religion, Travel, Occupation, Military service, to mention a few. Each of the **what** factors has an event attached. Concentrating your research on these events should reveal records which show the experiences of our ancestors.

P = Places. (Where)

This is focusing on Geographical locations. If we know that they migrated overseas, then it gives us a place to begin. In which Country, County or State, Village or Town did they live? Did they live or work in a house or on a farm? Which Church they attended? Knowing **where** they lived will give us an insight to the lives our ancestors lived, and lead to many other information sources.

P = People. (Who)

Who we are looking for will also lead us in new directions. Ancestors, Descendants, or other Relations such as Spouses, Parents, Uncles and Aunties, or Grandparents all have other categories attached to them. Were they Pioneers, Convicts, or Religious? What occupation did they have? Were they Schoolteachers, Carpenters, Masons, Miners, or Blacksmiths? Did they do Military service? All of these **who** categories have the potential to find other Sources of information to further our search.

S = Sources. (How)

How we “prove” our research validity is generally through documentary evidence. Sources are many and varied, and are located worldwide. Some are on the Internet, some are in Repositories, some are available through Governments services, and many are available at the WAGS Library. Using the above **STEPS** guide to help focus your research, will enable you to identify the correct sources on **how** to prove your connections.

What are your next **STEPS**? We recommend that you attend one of the many educational courses that the Society offers. These are designed to cover the various stages of your genealogy research, there is something for everyone. Come along and learn. Course details, times and venues appear in the WAGS journal, “**Western Ancestor**”, they can also be obtained from the front desk at the Western Australian Genealogy Society Library, or, have a look on our website at <http://wags.org.au> under Education & Courses.