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How Many Family Files

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Updated 2/14/2000 by Leister Productions

One question about Reunion family files that is asked frequently is, "should I keep all my data in one family file, or should I divide the branches into two or more files?" Before you decide, you should have an idea of how you want to work with your own family.

If any two branches of your family are related to each other in any way, it's best to keep at least those branches within the same family file. Otherwise, you will end up with duplicate records in different family files -- this is too difficult to maintain and should be avoided. There are pros and cons to combining or separating families; trying to keep positive, here are a few pros for each.

Pro: One Family File

One obvious **benefit** of leaving all data in one family file is the creation of reports and charts that include your entire family, like a pedigree chart where you are the source person. The same would apply to reports created for your children: both the paternal and maternal sides should be available.

Example: Separate Families - One Pedigree

Here's an example: I have two main family files, one for my **Paternal** family (Dad's line), and one for my **Maternal** family (Mom's line). I can do this efficiently because there was never any relationship between their branches (at least that I've found so far). My own family card is included in both; I'm usually the source person of each file, so I can view the relationships from my point of view.



Paternal Family File



Maternal Family File

The drawback to this system is the pedigree chart for myself. When I create my pedigree chart from within my Paternal family file, my mother is the only person who appears from her family line. The outcome is reversed when I create a pedigree from within my Maternal family file -- my father is the only one in his line.

Combining Family Files

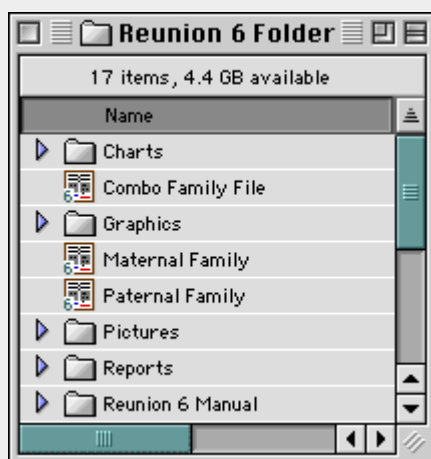
To create an entire pedigree chart for myself, I had to combine the two family files. The first step was to make a copy of each original family file. I renamed one of the copies "Combo Family File," and opened it. Then I chose **File -> Import/Export -> Import Family File**. I chose the other

family file (Maternal) in the Open window.

In the Import window, I chose to import All People [although I could have marked my direct line first and imported only them, I figured I might as well go all the way] and Sources, too.



I could choose to Flag all the imported people, but this Combo file is only temporary, so I just leave the default to None. I clicked the **Import** button, and now the Combo Family File includes my ancestors on both sides.



The Combo file solution is only temporary because it contains duplicate records of the other two files. The first time I change something in one of the original files, the Combo file is obsolete. [Good thing it's easy to make another!]

Pro: Separate Family Files

If you have two or more separate families with no duplicates, there are advantages to keeping them in separate family files.

- The speed of some operations in Reunion -- the smaller the family file, the less time it takes to perform searches and create lists. It would also take you less time to scroll through smaller lists of people.
- In one large family file, keeping track of the same surname occurring in different branches of the family may become difficult. By breaking down the family into one or more branches, your

surnames are separated and become easier to follow.

- Sharing data: your father's sister is probably not interested in your mother's great-grandfather, for instance. You'll have an easier time pruning your reports and charts if the family file is isolated, meaning you won't have as many people to wade through to get to the targeted few.

Some examples of separate family files are: one family file for each of your grandparent's surnames, or one family file for yourself and one for your spouse.

R.I.P.

One last thing to consider: the loss of all of your data at one time if the one and only family file is damaged or destroyed. If your data is spread over several files, the loss of one file may be easier to bear. Most of us will experience that gut-wrenching emotion when a file or an entire hard drive goes "toes up." Don't be caught without a backup [**Help -> Search for Help, "Backup"**].

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