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Beginning with Reunion

by [Jan McClintock](#)

(Updated 2/8/00 by Leister Productions)

The article and its follow ups are especially for those of you who are new to Reunion software. Whether you are just beginning your family research or have years of family history data on paper, here are a few tips for getting up and running with this software.

Let's start with "the big picture." Hopefully you will already have read the section in the electronic manual called **Overview** [[Help -> Contents -> Overview](#)]. Reunion is a database, software that holds data and allows you to manipulate that data. Reunion does **not** perform the actual family research, although you can use the software to great advantage while doing the research yourself. It holds the genealogy information that you (or someone else) has already found.

You enter your data into a Reunion family file, and using the family card as the main screen, you can move around and view your family in many different ways. Reunion uses the data you enter to make lists and create charts and reports.

The **Tutorial** is a good way to learn how to enter data [[Help -> Tutorial](#)]. I urge you to go through the Tutorial and get the hang of it. Don't rush yourself -- this is supposed to be fun! You can even create a new, test database to play with, and then throw it away when you get serious.

If you already have genealogical information, either from your own or a relative's research or from a published family history, you have a ready-made family file waiting to be entered.

If you do not have previous genealogy experience and are just beginning your research, there is only one place to start -- with yourself. As the tutorial suggests, make yourself the first (Home) family card, and enter all the applicable data in the default fields that Reunion has already made available: your name, birth date and place, marriage info, occupation, etc. You will be able to change anything you wish later, so don't get bogged down in details right away. Go on to your siblings, your parents, their siblings, and their parents, until you no longer have any information to enter. Here are a few tips, and more will follow in the next article:

- Don't worry about filling in every blank -- even if all you know is a name, enter that. I have many family cards with only a first name.
- For now, stick with the facts. You will have some decisions to make later about where to put additional information, but again -- don't overdo the details for now.
- Enter women's names using their birth name or maiden name. This is standard practice in family history, since it allows you to follow

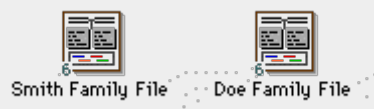
their "genealogy." If you enter the married name in the Last Name field, it will be very difficult to follow a woman's birth family in your research (and what happens if she marries three or four times?).

Decisions, decisions

How Many Family Files?

You enter people on family cards in Reunion, and the cards are collected in a family file. You can keep your data in as many separate family files as you wish; each one is independent of the others, and only one family file can be open at a time. See the article "[How Many Family Files?](#)" for more information about choosing the number of family files to use. Although you can later split a family file into more than one, or add two or more family files together, it's best to make this decision **before** you start entering data.

The electronic manual gives some advantages of using either a single or multiple family files. An example of using multiple family files is your family file and your spouses family file. [[Help -> Search for Help, "Multiple families"](#)]



Forward or Backward?

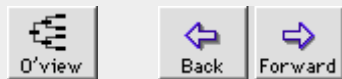
There are also different opinions about the order in which people should be entered in Reunion (or any other genealogy software). Obviously, since the software creates links between people as you enter them, entering data willy-nilly is NOT the way to go here. Most genealogical sources recommend that you conduct your **research** from the known to the unknown; most of the time that means starting with your own immediate family and working into the past. However, when you **enter** that data into the computer, you have more choices.

Basically, you can enter people in two chronological "directions": starting with the present and going back in time, or starting from the past and coming forward in time. The order you choose may depend on the type of data that you have:

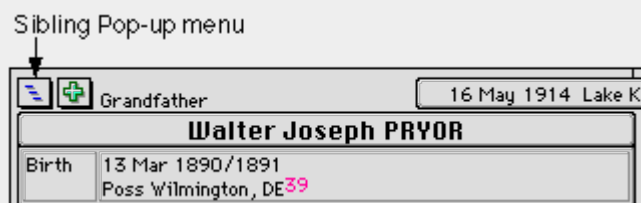
- If you have a pedigree chart only, you will probably want to start with the source person and enter parents of parents of parents -- going back in time.
- If you have a published family history, you may want to start with the earliest ancestor and enter children of children of children -- coming forward in time.

Getting Lost... and Found

When entering data in either direction, you will inevitably branch off into siblings and spouses, and pretty soon you may forget where you are. Luckily, Reunion has lots of ways to keep you on track. The visual way is the **Overview** button [**Help -> Contents -> Overview**]. This will show you a mini pedigree chart of the family you are working on. You can also use the **Back** button to see the last family card at which you were looking, and the **Forward** button lets you return to the card on which you are working.



To navigate within an immediate family, use the **Sibling** pop-up menu. This saves you from having to go back to a parent card first before being able to choose a different child. [**Hey - it's the little things that count, especially if you have to enter or edit data for hundreds of people!**]



The **Home** button takes you right to the family card that you designate as the "headquarters" of your family file. This is the card that you see when you open a family file. To choose the home card, use **Options -> Startup** and click on the **Home** tab; or easier yet, go to the chosen person's card and drag their button to the Home button on the toolbar.



You can also take advantage of other navigation and finding features, like Bookmarks [**Help -> Search for Help, "Bookmarks"**] and **Find** [**Help -> Search for Help, "Finding People"**], both of which are also buttons on the family card toolbar. The Bookmarks button is a pop-up menu that lists each of the last 50 people that you have added or edited. [**You can even add people to this list if you haven't changed their card by dragging and dropping their button onto the Bookmarks button.**] Start using this feature by choosing the **Bookmarks** button pop-up menu, and selecting Turn On.



The **Find** button opens a window where you can type in a person's first and/or last name. Click the **Find** button to hop to their family card.



In [Part 2](#), we'll talk about data-entry details...

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