AncientIreland.ie
Walking in Ancient Steps

Irish Genealogy Starter Guide

A practical path from family stories to evidence.



Clonmacnoise monastic site, County Offaly — Ingo Mehling — CC BY-SA 3.0

Photograph source and licence

A digital guide from AncientIreland.ie

Cover: a photograph of the identified site. This guide supports research and planning; records, admission and provider terms can change.

Irish Research: a practical digital guide

1. Begin with what you can evidence

Write down what you know about one person: their name, approximate dates, relatives and places. Ask permission before recording or sharing living relatives' information. Distinguish a remembered story from a record you have checked.

2. Find the place

A county is a starting point. A townland, parish, registration district or street can be more useful. Record place names as they appear, then note possible modern spellings separately. Do not merge two people just because they share a surname.

3. Choose a records service

IrishGenealogy provides historic civil and selected church material. GRONI provides Northern Ireland historic registration searches. PRONI and the National Archives have different archive collections. Check coverage at the source before paying for a search.

4. Read the whole record

Compare occupations, addresses, witnesses, ages and relatives. Save a citation alongside each document or transcript reference. A copied family tree is a clue to investigate, not evidence for every relationship it contains.

5. Connect one generation at a time

Work backwards from a person you can identify reliably. Explain why each record belongs to that person. If evidence conflicts, retain both versions and note what could resolve the disagreement. Do not fill a missing generation with a guess.

6. Keep a research log

Log successful searches and those that found nothing. Record the website, collection, terms, date and next action. Keep original documents unchanged and your interpretation separately, so you can revisit decisions.

7. Use DNA as another enquiry

Matches may suggest relationships worth investigating. They do not, by themselves, prove descent from a named ancient king or identify one ancestral culture. Review consent, privacy, deletion and sharing terms before testing or uploading data.

Sources & further reading

- IrishGenealogy: civil and church records
- GRONI historic records
- PRONI and Northern Ireland archives
- National Archives census search
- NLI Catholic parish registers

Choose your next step

Build a family tree · Find Irish records · Understand DNA tools

Useful links

https://www.irishgenealogy.ie/faq/

https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/go-groni-online

https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/archives-family-and-local-history

https://nationalarchives.ie/collections/search-the-census/

https://registers.nli.ie/help?locale=en

Starting your family-history research

Pick one ancestor

Begin with someone whose identity and relationship to you are supported by family documents.

Collect what you have

List names, places, dates and relatives who may know more. Keep uncertain dates as ranges.

Write a question

For example: which record could establish this person’s place of birth? Identify the evidence needed before searching.

Log your search

Record the collection, terms and outcome, then choose the next check.

Your research planner

A simple research plan

Use one row for each search. Record the person, question, source, date, result and next step. A search that finds nothing can be useful when you know which collection and date range it covered.

Keep evidence together

Keep original documents, citations and interpretation separate. Use consistent file names and a recoverable copy. Avoid putting living people’s information in a public tree without permission.

Your notes & next actions

Question or task	Source / date	Next action