

Finding the clues they left behind: 6 tips for searching death records

TIP: Death rises to the top

Searching for a death record? Include a death date in your search on Ancestry.com by including “death” as a life event in the search box. When producing search results, the Ancestry.com search engine attempts to match all of the details you’ve included. And since death information is only included on records created after death, these records will be nearer to the top of your search results.

TIP: Where did their story end?

Death records were often held at the state level, so use the map at the bottom of the Search page to get a list of the death records available on Ancestry.com for each state. Start by selecting the state you’re interested in. After you select the state, make sure to check the Resources tab, where you can also check the Resources tab, where you’ll learn more about the overall availability of a state’s vital records and how to order originals.

TIP: Persons of interest

Who provided the details on the death certificate? It may have been a relative, a friend or someone else entirely. Dig around a little to uncover the relationship between the deceased and the informant. You’ll also get a better idea of how reliable the death certificate information is likely to be once you know who gave it.

TIP: Common ground

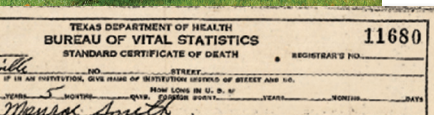
Burial locations listed in death records and obituaries can lead to a cemetery, where you’ll often find other relatives buried nearby. Can’t visit in person? Call or write the cemetery for more information. They may even provide you with the names of everyone buried in the family plot.

TIP: Missing persons

See a gap of more than a couple of years between the ages of children in a census record? Or notice a difference between the number of children living and born to a woman in the 1900 or 1910 census? Either can be an indicator that a child died. Search for a death index or certificate to see if you’re correct.

TIP: Remarried

You know the woman you’re tracing remarried, but you’re not sure of the name she took. Search through the Social Security Death Index using just the woman’s first name and date of birth. You may have to sift through a lot of results, but if you find someone who feels like a good fit, you can do a little research to find her marriage records, which could include her former surname.



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