

TAKING THE NEXT STEP IN GENEALOGY: A LOOK AT THE GENEALOGICAL PROOF STANDARD

INTRODUCTION

There are two types of genealogists: hobbyists and family historians. I know, because I've been both. The hobbyist enjoys logging on to her or his favorite genealogy program and doing what I call "playing genealogy," that is, merrily clicking on each new little green leaf and adding new relations to the program. And there's nothing wrong with that. It's fun to watch that tree grow and share your discoveries with your family.

But at some point, you may, as I did, decide to take your hobby to the next level and examine your family tree. Do these people really link up? What was my reasoning for that line? What standards are these other people on the genealogy site using, whose trees I accepted without question? That's when you're ready to take the next step.

This lesson introduces you to the GPS. No, not the Global Positioning System you use in your car and your phone. This GPS helps you answer those questions you have about your family tree and step up your genealogy game to the next level.

WHAT IS THE GPS?

GPS is the abbreviation for Genealogical Proof Standard. It is a standard developed by the Board for Certification of Genealogists from 1997-2000 to help differentiate acceptable from unacceptable conclusions; in other words, test our evidence to make sure our work is trustworthy and longstanding. Some of the reasons for using the GPS: It helps us produce trustworthy family histories, and enables future generations to build on our work. It also gives genealogists and others who read and use our work after us a framework for assessing our research results.

THE GPS RESEARCH PROCESS

How do we use the Genealogical Proof Standard in practice? The standard has five components. If a genealogical conclusion meets all five parts, it's said to be proved. If only one element isn't met, it is unproved. Go to the next slide to learn about those elements.

THE RESEARCH PROCESS (drag and drop)

Step 1 – Question

Step 2 – Gather evidence

Step 3 – Test hypotheses

Step 4 – Establish conclusions

Step 5 – Prove

DO YOU REMEMBER?

What do you remember about the research process? And how are your reasoning skills? Find out with this game that tests your learning. Click Next to begin.

QUESTIONS FOR GAME

1. Formulating research questions makes it easier to find proof. One characteristic is they relate to a documented person. What is the second characteristic?
 - *They seek specific information about that person. [C]
 - *They are found in an online database.
 - *They look for random information about that person.
 - *They are found in someone's family tree.
2. What is primary information in genealogy?
 - *Reported by an eyewitness [C]
 - *Reported by someone who obtained it from someone else.
 - *Cannot be identified as to who said it or where it came from.
 - *First information you discover.
3. Which of these is *not* a characteristic of derivative records?
 - *Written report of an action, event or observation, often made at the time or soon after [C]
 - *Abstracted information from prior records
 - *Transcribed a prior record or part of it by hand, keyboard or other technology
 - *Reproduced with alterations.
4. Which of these categories of genealogical evidence answers a question all by itself?
 - *Direct evidence [C]
 - *Indirect evidence
 - *Negative evidence
 - *All evidence
5. Which of these criteria are descriptive of a reasonably exhaustive search?
 - *All of the above [C]
 - *At least two independently-created evidence items in agreement
 - *All sources competent genealogists would examine
 - *All findable sources that relevant sources and indexes suggest
6. What is one important goal guiding our selection of sources to examine?
 - *Using accurate sources [C]
 - *Using sources that are easy to get to
 - *Using sources transcribed from original sources
 - *Using sources found online
7. What is the first step in the activities in the genealogical research process?
 - *Identify sources likely to contain relevant information to our research question [C]
 - *Create digital images of sources
 - *Take good notes about how we arrived at the location
 - *Talk to local residents
8. Which of these are sources to identify other sources?
 - *All of the above [C]
 - *Family History Library Catalog
 - *WorldCat
 - *Cyndi's List
 - *Periodical Source Index (PERSI)
9. Determining if a source is authored, original or derivative is an important test of analysis. What is the second test of analysis?

- *Determining if a relevant item is primary or secondary [C]
 - *Determining if a source is old
 - *Determining if a source is easy to get to
 - *Determining if a source has value
10. Which types of records could contain errors or fabrications?
- *All of the above [C]
 - *Birth record
 - *Family Bible record
 - *Marriage license
 - *Will
11. What may the same handwriting, ink and writing utensil in the family record portion of a family Bible indicate?
- *They were all written in at the same time [C]
 - *No special information
 - *They were written by a relative
 - *They were wealthy people
12. What is genealogical correlation?
- *A process of comparing and contrasting [C]
 - *A method of determining the author of a source
 - *A way to estimate birth and death dates
 - *A prerequisite for research
13. How does ignoring a conflict affect our research?
- *Calls our research, reasoning and conclusion into question [C]
 - *Has no real effect on our research
 - *Allows us to resolve it at a different time
 - *Simplifies our research process
14. If only one source supports one side of the conflict, while multiple sources support the opposing side, what can you conclude about the unsupported information?
- *The unsupported information is likely erroneous. [C]
 - *The unsupported information is likely true.
 - *The unsupported information should be set aside and ignored.
 - *The unsupported information should be included anyway.
15. If we have an opinion that one side is correct without conclusion or proof, what words should we use in expressing that discussion?
- **Perhaps* and *possibly* [C]
 - **Please* and *thank you*
 - **Generally, on this occasion, and scholars believe*
 - *We just should not express such an opinion.
16. What is the simplest and most common way genealogical evidence appears?
- *Direct evidence and no conflict. [C]
 - *Resolved conflicting direct evidence.
 - *Resolved conflict between direct evidence and indirect or negative evidence.
 - *Indirect evidence, negative evidence, or a combination of the two

17. Where does proof only exist?
 - *In writing [C]
 - *In a speech
 - *In a blog post
 - *In an announcement at a conference
18. What is a footnote containing one or two citations and a sentence presenting a conclusion known as?
 - *Proof statement [C]
 - *Proof summary
 - *Proof argument
 - *Proof discussion
19. What is a documented list or narrative stating facts that support or lead to a conclusion known as?
 - *Proof summary [C]
 - *Proof statement
 - *Proof argument
 - *Proof discussion
20. What is a lengthy documented narrative explaining why the answer to a complex genealogical should be considered proved known as?
 - *Proof argument [C]
 - *Proof summary
 - *Proof statement
 - *Proof discussion

RESOURCES

These resources are must-reads for the serious genealogist. All are available on Amazon in Kindle or print format.

Much of the information in this lesson comes from Thomas W. Jones' *Mastering Genealogical Proof*.

Click Next to continue.

RECAP

In this lesson, you learned about how to take the next step in your genealogical research. You learned what the Genealogical Proof Standards are and how to apply them to your research. You learned about the research process, and you played a game that taught you some important facts about the process.

Thank you for your attention, and I wish you happy and fruitful researching!