

What is an Abstract?

A genealogical abstract is an inventory of the most important details of a genealogical document. They can be used to quickly get all the important points out of the document, so they can input it into their research on your/ their family tree software later.

The trick to abstracting is to be able to quickly scan a genealogical document and decide what is really important to know and what can be left out.

The following are items you should include:

- Names of parents
- Names of children
- Names of grandparents
- Names, including maiden names, of spouses
- Places where the document was written
- Residence of your ancestor in the document
- Date the document was written
- Any other pertinent dates in the document, such as birth, death & marriage dates
- Dates of places for military service
- Place of birth, death, and marriage
- Place of birth, death, and/or marriage of parents

These are just some examples. Once you have looked at a large number of genealogical documents, you will get an idea of what is the most important information for your research. You will also become adept at quickly scanning a document to get that information and write it down.

When abstracting, always cite the source at the bottom of your abstract.

There may be interesting personal information on your ancestor in the document that doesn't end up in the abstract, and you may want a record of it for additional information on your ancestor's personality.

Always bring a notepad and pen or pencil with you when you go to archive buildings, courthouses, and places where original documents are located. Sometimes, the documents are too delicate to be photocopied or scanned, so abstracting them is the only way to get information from them. On most trips, you will be working with the original document.

With your abstract, you can get important information from documents that have not been published online, and put that information in your research when you get home. The goal of producing an abstract is to get the most important genealogical information, the information that will further your research in new ways. Once you know how and when to use an abstract, you will see their genealogical value.

- The preceding was an abstract I created from the internet article entitled, "What is an abstract and why do you need to use them in genealogical research?"

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