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You can learn a lot about yourself by studying your genealogy. Tracking your family through history can help you assess where you came from. In this section we will examine genealogy and the best ways to study genealogy. Advertising advertising from the top of my head, I know a lot about my mother, a fair amount about a woman who gave her life and practically zilch about those who came before her. Time just moves much faster than we realize, with seriously important ancestors disappearing into the background, despite having often lived a long, full and memorable life. Creating several genealogical notes will paint a broad and interesting picture of the kinfolk that helped shape your family. The idea of starting work on a heritage album may seem daunting, but in reality it can be a full-fledged, enlightening and - dare I say it - fun activities to share with the entire brood. So what are you waiting for? Take your computer, phone or hit the craft shop and get started already! Here are some tips. Content advertising Figuring out how part of the past in neat little pages may seem daunting, but it shouldn't be. All it takes to start a family curiosity study, explains avid genealogical scrapbooker Nancy Merrill. Start with an interview with your parents and then talk to the older surviving family members. They can often get you on the right track to finding records and add dimension to the names and faces of ancestors left before your time. Advertising technology can also facilitate a process that used to be quite tedious. If your extended family is computer literate, consider creating a Dropbox or other cloud storage area through which they can provide you with photos and scans of documents, or just have them mailed or brought favorites to your next family event. Family tree software can have a lot to do with keeping details organized and easy to access. It's also smart to leave your creation open to future inclusions by selecting notes with pages that can be added or reordered when new photos or tidbits become available. Keep in mind that you can't always wrap people or pages with a neat bow. My maternal grandparents were born in their rural Georgia homes in the early 1900s, leaving our family with nothing in the way of a registered birth certificate. This lack of official documentation can be easily replaced by photographs and personal accounts of their lives and interests. You don't have to be the next Martha Stewart to put together an attractive and informative heritage album. The possibilities are endless and completely up to your personal tastes and abilities. While many decorations and layout options exist, some caution against going hog wild, and instead offer the following a smaller approach. Patient genealogist Stick to one color scheme throughout the book, so that the pages flow more naturally into each other. Serious scrapers often shy away from multi-photo collages in favor of one or two dominant photos for a more dramatic and less chaotic effect. Advertising However, it is quite possible to have fun with decorations, photos and layouts without going over the top. Longtime genealogy and scrapbooking buff Joan Kramer points to workshops known as cultures that are often available in craft stores to learn the basics of layout and design. Scrapbooking is all about creating beautiful, archivally safe souvenirs, Kramer explains. There are countless documents, stickers, ribbons and other decorations that combine the creativity of a scrapbooker with the beauty of photos and other souvenirs. It's super-easy to lose focus in the process of creating, especially if you're showing off a large family, so develop a theme of sorts before the first photo hits the page. For example, if your pedigree is filled with proud servicemen and women, think of the book, which highlights various industries, achievements, wars and other details of their service in the military. Or dedicate the entire album exclusively to women in your genealogical history and their achievements. By choosing a theme or focus, you will avoid clutter and irrelevant information. Scrapbooks are often made to serve as meaningful gifts, so consider your target audience before and throughout the process. Something you do for your 70-year-old father would be very different from what you would do for your 3-year-old child, says Kathleen Cogbill Warr with Old Dead genealogical services. A child's notebook can include photos of toys and children from the past, as well as simple captions. For the elderly person, more information about family history and pages of letters. Advertising Even if you start from scratch, legacy album content tends to grow exponentially, thanks to research and enterprising family members. Rarely does a standard book have room for every detail you would like to include, so consider using pockets to add depth to your family's history. For example, copies of additional photos, recipe cards featuring great great-grandmother Ruth's legendary pecan pie and DVDs containing ancestral interviews are definitely up to the interactivity factor of any genealogical note. Your favorite family stories are hidden in your pockets, or use the accordion fold of various photos that the reader can add up, suggests Lucina Verish, who has been studying and maintaining her family's family roots since she was 12. Three-dimensional items, such as children's bracelets, can also be included on the page or tucked into a storage pocket, that everything in the book is acid-free and won't hurt other items, Verish cautions. Also, never stack the stack scraps on each other as these 3-D items can push through other pages. Advertising People would normally like to see how ancestors fit into the shape of their lives, and there are a few simple and interesting ways to illustrate this. Graphic genealogy or genealogical tree is a simple and effective way to demonstrate family relationships. An old friend has a family tree that shows his family's connection to the British queen Elizabeth. Another method for bringing the past to the present (without the help of Michael J. Fox or DeLorean) is to mount photos of ancestors side by side with those of living relatives. They may not be 100 percent identical, but it can be astounding to see how the family's trademark nose, eyes or jaws are still alive and kicking today. Pepper photos with information comparing similar interests or personality traits to further illustrate the blood connection. Advertising Another way to bring the old days in now is to show a comparison of the costs of common items like Coca-Cola, car, newspaper or acre land. This will put changing times in quick perspective, especially for young children. Or, feature information about the most popular movies and songs then and now, as well as political information such as the president or the dominant party. Many scrapers prefer to store original documents and photographs in acid-free archive boxes rather than expose them to potentially harmful items. It would seem that benign objects, such as newspaper clippings, can damage other treasures over time with their ink and acidity. Instead, use high-quality copies and be sure to store the scan digitally for storage. In addition, the original documents can be quickly destroyed by an errant glass of water or a curious toddler. Scrapbooks are designed to be shared, put out on a coffee table for family and friends to enjoy, says genealogy expert Kramer. So create them in a way that won't completely stress you out when people start thumbing through them. On the other hand, scanning and reproducing documents allows you to manipulate the size to include more information than you might have on the traditionally page-sized note. It also pays to take simple extra steps to preserve the authentic look of your heritage documents and photos. Verish encourages scrapbookers to mimic the look of the original photo documents as much as possible. There are high-quality cotton photo essays, or even canvases, that work well with old photos, says Verish. A high-gloss portrait of the beginning of the century will look out of place in your album. Advertising digital notes have become increasingly popular in recent years affordable, easy-to-use online services, many of which offer regular groupon promotions and sales. While many artisans prefer the act of physically composing their own work of art, the benefits of digital albums do not Discount. From a practical point of view, the only items needed for a digital book are the basic computer and genealogical elements that need to be scanned. In contrast, many traditional scrapbookers boast entire rooms full of jewelry, trendy scissors and other tools. So if you have a little space going digital can be a serious square meter-ins. Electronically created albums are also much cheaper. For anything that has to do with traditional scrapbooks, I'd easily spend a couple hundred dollars on them, but for digital I tend to spend about \$30, explains Warr. The biggest drawback is that you can't really put fun 3-D decorations out there for decoration, or include original documents. Another important shaken is that digital scraps can be produced in multiple quantities, making them easier than ever to give as gifts. Advertising years ago, of the best meanings a new addition to my family presented to my parents with a crest bearing our last name. Unfortunately, no one ever told her that our nickname was changed from Khoury to Cory when crossing the United States border, so the crest . . . Well, it had nothing to do with us. My mom, being the sweet soul that she had, kept her lips sealed and hung it on the wall anyway. I want to view that, just like the favorite phone game, the information invariably gets deformed over time. That doesn't mean you shouldn't start with word-of-mouth accounts and interviews. Just don't charge them on paper if you've done a wee bit about 'dig' to confirm their authenticity. Resources such as Ancestry and Find a Grave are strongly recommended by experienced genealogists to provide fact-finding services. They can check the correct spelling of names, dates of birth/death and burial place. However, sometimes you need to take an old-fashioned route to find the details you want. There is now a lot of information on the Internet: However many times you still need to get the paperwork to make sure you have the right family, explains genealogist and scrapbooker Nancy Hill. There are some wonderful genealogy libraries around. Some key U.S. locations include the Family History Library (the largest family library in the world), run by the Church of Latter-day Saints in Utah, and the Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, Indiana, which has special supplies for those who have researched British, Canadian and African-American ancestors, as well as other records. Advertising genealogy scrapbooking isn't just about people you share DNA with. Relics, whether significant monetary or sentimental value, often deserve a place in your historical account. My great aunt gave me that belonged to the family, Merrill said. Then I took a picture of them and added them to the page so that future generations know where the items in my porcelain cupboard originated. In addition to the photos, add a small amount of details about the origin of the item (s) as they came into your possession and even their estimated current value (if you know it) to help future generations trace their way through time. Consider this your personal Antiques Roadshow! Advertising If you've been there, done it with a note or two, consider using a different environment to show your love for the line. Locketts with old-fashioned photos are a long-loved part of heritage, while everything you can fix a printed image, from magnets to other types of jewelry, is a very public and vintage way of displaying your roots. Merrill produced a pedigree item that is equal to the functional and beautiful part, in the form of six generations of matriline Victorian-style fan. The traditional fan hand includes names and photos ranging from Merrill himself and dating all the way back to his third great-grandmother. After my father passed away, I dusted off his war medals and mounted them in a shadow box, along with a particularly brutal photograph of him in Vietnam. They hang proudly in my living room next to a similar display of World War II and Korean War medals by his uncle, where they are regularly admired by history buffs. I appreciate these parts for their historical significance, but even more so because they remind me that I am a descendant of some pretty amazing people. And really, isn't that what heritage preservation is all about? HowStuffWorks looks at what is required by law to join the Cherokee Nation. As a particularly non-cunning person (even my wobbly emojis), I shied away from scrapbooking until I got married and found how easy and pleasant it is. Inspired by the many amazing genealogy scrapbookers I interviewed for this article, my plan is to hunker down and produce an album pedigree that my kids will cherish. Of course, keeping it out of my 2-year-old's hands until he is equally messy and devastating is a whole other challenge. Related articles Patient Genealog: 9 Tips for Creating a Legacy Album Someone Actually Wants to Read. October 10, 2012 (September 15, 2014) Nancy. Interview by email. September 14, 2014.Kramer, Joan. Interview by email. September 15, 2014.Merrill, Nancy Lockwood. Interview by email. September 9, 2014.Scrapbooks by design. Genealogy and scrapbooking: Match Made in Heaven. 2014 (September 15, 2014) etc. Genealogical Research Councils. 2014 (September 14, 2014) Lucina. Interview by email. September 8, 2014.Warr, Kathleen Cogbill. The old dead People.com. Interview by email. 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