

Our speaker this month was Helen Shimek. Her presentation was "An Overview of DNA Testing and What to Do Once You Receive Your Results". Here are some notes from the meeting, as well as two attachments from the meeting.

All the companies that do DNA testing also produce an "ethnicity estimate" that gives some indication where your ancestors came from, up to 500 years ago. Remember they are only estimates, and sometimes not very good ones. Helen gave an example of results from her and her sister, who share the same ancestors, but for which their results were as much as 40% different. Have fun with them, just don't put too much stock in them. Generally most people find 23AndMe gives the most accurate results.

yDNA and mtDNA tests only trace the direct male and female line, respectively. They can have use in special situations. All the companies that give you matches to find your cousins, and hopefully your ancestors, use autosomal DNA testing. It looks for matches in small parts of your DNA to find people who share those parts, indicating a possible common ancestor. Autosomal DNA testing can generally find cousins where you share an ancestor five or so generations in the past.

Retail prices for a DNA test run about \$100, but companies run sales multiple times a year where the cost can be in the \$60 - \$70 range. If you're doing your first DNA test Ancestry is the best choice because it has the largest database of other people who have tested, so you're most likely to find a genetic cousin there. Once you've tested, you can transfer your DNA to other sites to see if you get any matches there. Uploading to another site is either free or low cost. Here are the possibilities. Note that you can not transfer your DNA to Ancestry from any other site.

If you tested at Ancestry or 23andme, you can upload your raw data to GEDMATCH, FTDNA and MyHeritage

If you tested at FTDNA, you can upload to GEDMATCH and MyHeritage
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Ancestry: <https://www.ancestry.com>

23andMe: <https://www.23andme.com/>

GEDMATCH: <https://www.gedmatch.com>

FTDNA: <https://www.familytreedna.com/>

MyHeritage : <https://www.myheritage.com/>

Once you've tested, you can explore your match's trees to see if you can identify a common ancestor and/or communicate with them via the site's messaging system or email. You have choices on how much of your tree you put online. You can put nothing, names of ancestors you're researching, or your partial or complete tree. The more you make available for others to see the more they will be able identify common ancestors for you.

DNA testing can get quite complicated and these notes only scratch the surface of Helen's talk. If you want to explore DNA testing in more depth, the International Society of Genetic Genealogy is an excellent and unbiased source:

<https://isogg.org/>

Here is their page that compares the major DNA testing companies:

https://isogg.org/wiki/Autosomal_DNA_testing_comparison_chart