

Getting Started with atDNA Part 1: Clustering

The process of clustering or grouping your DNA matches into genetic networks is an essential part of using autosomal DNA for genealogy research. This class will introduce the concept of clustering and walk you through the process of grouping your own DNA matches.

The Clustering Process

After taking a DNA test, most people have thousands of DNA matches. Clustering is the process of grouping DNA matches by the ancestor or ancestral line on which they appear to relate. Creating clusters will allow you to organize your matches and then focus on the matches that will help solve your research goal.

To create a cluster, follow the steps below:

1. Choose a match with a known relationship.
2. View shared or in-common-with matches.
3. Create a cluster; name the cluster for the known, common ancestor.
4. Add matches shared between you and the known match to the cluster.
5. Repeat.
6. As you identify the relationships between you and each match, view shared matches and add to the appropriate cluster.

Clustering Tools and Resources

As you start clustering your matches, consider how some of the following tools and resources might help.

Color Coding: Ancestry DNA and MyHeritage DNA let users assign matches to groups which are identified by a name and color. Currently, users can create 24+ different groups. Carefully plan how to use these groups to create clusters. One popular method is to assign a different color to each parent, grandparent, and great-grandparent. As matches are identified as belonging to these ancestors (either by determining a relationship or through share or in-common-with matches), add them to the group.

AutoClusters: Some websites will build clusters for you. Auto-Clusters are available from MyHeritage, Genetic Affairs, GEDMatch, and DNAGedcom. Note that AutoClustering is usually a Tier 1 or subscription service.

Leeds Method: The Leeds Method is a process of clustering your matches by grandparent. Learn more about the Leeds Method at <https://www.danaleeds.com/the-leeds-method/> or <https://www.yourdnaguide.com/leeds-method>.

Spreadsheets: When working with DNA matches, it may be necessary to create your own lists of clusters and matches using spreadsheets. You may choose to create a new tab for each cluster or follow the Leeds Method. Spreadsheets are also great tools for building clusters of matches across companies.