

England and Wales Census

England “How to” Guide, Beginner Level: Instruction

April 2016

GOAL

This guide will teach you what information can be found in the England and Wales census, and where to access the censuses.

INTRODUCTION

Census records help you locate your ancestors at a given place and time. Censuses can provide clues that help lead to other records. Additionally, they help identify the “right” person by the relationships in the household.

The following are some of the ways a census may help in your family research:

- Gives the birthplace of your ancestor
- Stated age leads to an approximate birth year
- Names family members and visitors in the household
- Establishes relationship to head of household
- Gives birthplaces and indirectly, approximates birth years for members of the household
- Places the household in a particular place at a particular time
- Browsing adjacent pages shows neighbors who could be relatives
- Occupations may be a clue leading to other records

Years Available

For England and Wales the first population census giving persons’ names was taken in 1841 and has been taken every 10 years thereafter. For privacy reasons, a 100-year closure on British census records exists. Therefore, only the 1841 through 1911 censuses are currently available.

Census dates

1841 – June 7	1851 – March 31	1861 – April 6	1871- April 3
1881 – April 4	1891 – April 6	1901 – April 1	1911 – April 2

Other censuses existed before 1841 are referred to as pre-1841 censuses. For more information on pre-1841 census records, read the FamilySearch Wiki article found at the following link: https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/England_Census

Important Searching Tips:

- Remember that families usually stayed close together, so reading the whole film or reviewing adjoining pages of a census can be profitable.
- Your ancestor may be living with his wife and family, but his brother in the next parish may have his parents living with him. Look for similarities of birthplaces and dates, which can give clues to relationships.
- Some words, including names, may be abbreviated. See below for more information.
- The 1841 census is unique in that enumerators were instructed to round the ages down to the next lower multiple of five. The exceptions are children under 15 years of age, whose ages were exact. It also only gives Yes or No indicating whether or not the person's birth was in the same county he or she was living in.
- Beginning with the 1851 census, the information listed includes: name, age, parish and county of birth, occupation, and relationship to the head of household for each person.
- The census record may also list the birth country for people born outside of England. This can be verified by using multiple sources.
- When browsing census images, a family may be spread across two pages. If the family you seek is found at the bottom or the top of a page, check the previous or following page for more family members living in the same household.
- If you're having trouble locating a census record for a particular family, try your search using the names of different members of the family.

HOW TO

Census Search Strategies

When working with the census, you should do the following:

1. Look over the family information and determine which census year would be most helpful and where the family would most likely be living.
2. Start by searching the indexes on familysearch.org, www.findmypast.co.uk, or www.ancestry.com.

Census Records: FamilySearch.org

FamilySearch.org is a free website. The 1841 through 1911 England and Wales censuses are indexed on familysearch.org. However, the search results often do not give as many details as other the websites mentioned. FamilySearch does not provide all the images, but has links to www.findmypast.co.uk which does have the images. You can access the images while using a computer at the Family History Library or a Family History Center using either the library account or your own personal account. The images cannot be viewed from home unless you have your own subscription to FindMyPast.

On the home page of familysearch.org, click on the word **SEARCH** to get to the records page. Click on England on the map on the page, then click on England in the drop down menu.

The page comes up with a list of records. You can then choose one of the census years or just enter the information requested to see what records FamilySearch comes up with.

Census Records: Ancestry.com

Ancestry.com is a subscription website available without charge at the Library and Family History Centers. In the Family History Library, it is accessed from the **Guest Desktop** home page by clicking **Subscription Websites**, and then **Ancestry FHL edition**. It is also available to LDS Church members, for home use, who sign up using their FamilySearch login information. If you are a member of the LDS Church, you can sign up for a free Ancestry.com account by clicking on this link: <https://familysearch.org/partneraccess>.

The home page shows a search form, which will search all of the Ancestry databases in one search. To search in a specific census year, click on the word "Search" at the top of the page. When the options appear, click on "Census and Voter Lists". This brings up a page where you can search all censuses. If you are looking for English census, click on UK Censuses. If you want to search just a specific census, scroll down click on the specific census year.

Census and Voter Lists
View sample images and collection details

SEARCH ☐ Match all terms exactly

First & Middle Name(s) Last Name

Year Location

Birth City, County, State, Country

Lived In City, County, State, Country

Any Event City, County, State, Country

Add family member: Father Mother Sibling Spouse Child

Father First & Middle Name(s) Last Name

Mother First & Middle Name(s) Last Name

Sibling First & Middle Name(s) Last Name

Spouse First & Middle Name(s) Last Name

Child First & Middle Name(s) Last Name

Keyword

e.g. pilot or "Flying Tigers" ▾

Gender Race/Nationality

-- Select --

SEARCH Clear search

Narrow by Category

- U.S. Federal Census Collection
- U.K. Census Collection
- Canadian Census Collection, 1851-1916
- 1700s Censuses
- 1800s Censuses
- 1900s Censuses

Featured data collections

- 1940 United States Federal Census
- Australia, Electoral Rolls, 1903-1980 **UPDATED**
- U.S., Indian Census Rolls, 1885-1940

VIEW ALL IN CARD CATALOG

Census Records – Findmypast.co.uk

FindMyPast www.findmypast.co.uk is another subscription website available without charge at the Family History Library and Family History Centers. In the Family History Library, it is accessed from the **Guest Desktop** home page by clicking **Subscription Websites**, and then **FindMyPast**. The image of the home screen shown below shows the drop-down list that appears when you rest your cursor on the 'Search Records' heading.



Census, Land & Substitutes

Census records are especially helpful in order to trace ancestors through each generation of a family tree. You may follow where a relative was located through each decade, watching families grow, new unions fourth and ancestors branch out.
[Learn more](#) [Search tips](#) [Useful links](#)

Who	First Name		Last Name	
	<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Name variants		<input type="checkbox"/> Name variants		
When	Year	Give or take -/+ 2yrs	Year Of Birth	Give or take -/+ 2yrs
	<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>	
Where	World			
	<input type="text"/>			
Other Household Member	Member First Name		Member Last Name	
	<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>	
Address	House Number		Browse House Name	
	<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>	
Record collection	Browse Record collection			
	<input type="text"/>			
Record set	Browse Record set			
	<input type="text"/>			

Search Census, Land & Substitutes

Near the bottom there is a “Record Set” field where you can put in the specific year for the census.

In the practice section of this guide, you will be locating the same family in multiple census years. When you search for your own ancestors, you should try to find them in **every** census record available. By doing this, you can note and evaluate data differences across multiple census years.

Abbreviations

Sometimes, the census contains abbreviations. For example, instead of writing out a family’s last name over and over, the census taker could write the word “Ditto”. This abbreviation itself was most often abbreviated as “D^o.” Often, if the entire family was born in the same county or parish, the census taker may have used the “Ditto” or “D^o” instead of writing it out.

Other words may be abbreviated. For example, if a person’s name is William, it may be abbreviated to Wm. Occupations are also commonly abbreviated, such as the most common occupation found in the census – “Ag Lab,” meaning agricultural laborer.

Further information

- For more information, see the link: https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/England_Census.
- You may also want to view the FamilySearch Learning Center presentation “[England Beginning Research Series Lesson 2: Understanding Census Records](#)”
- For a list of abbreviations you may find in the census, see the link: <http://www.census-helper.co.uk/census-abbreviations/>

PRACTICE

Using any of the three websites mentioned above, familysearch.org, ancestry.com, or findmypast.com, find Henry James Davis in the 1861 England census. He was a carman, born about 1838 in Wapping, Middlesex. He should be age 23 with his family, consisting of wife Ann 21, daughter Ann, 6 months, and his sister, Maria, 12. They lived in St. George in the East parish. We’ll also find this family in the following census years: 1871, 1881, 1891, and 1901.

For each census, list the names of all family members and their ages, the civil parish, the occupation of the head of household, and the birthplace of the head of house. **Spell each name as it appears on the census.**

***Hints:** Remember that the names may not always be spelled the same. If an initial search is not successful, try using variations of the father's name. A search using another family member's name may be useful, but keep in mind that children often left home at an early age. Be aware that people often used different dates and/or places of birth on different censuses. Try using exact match with different combinations of the person's name. Also, less is better!*

1861 Census

Location: St. George in the East

Registration District: St George in the East

Civil Parish: St. George in the East

Name	Age	Birthplace	Occupation
Henry J Davis	23	Wrapping, Middlesex	Cooper
Ann	21	Aldgak, Middlesex	
Ann Davis	6/12	St George in the East	
Maria Davis	12	Shadwell, Middlesex	

Although not indicated on this chart, always check relationships listed in the census as they may provide important clues.

1871 Census

Location: St. George in the East

Registration District: Bethnal Green

Civil Parish: Bethnal Green

Name	Age	Birthplace	Occupation
Henry James Davis	32	St. George in the East	Cooper
Ann E Davis	30	St. George in the East	
Ann C Davis	10	St. George in the East	
Minnie E Davis	5	St. George in the East	
Edward W Davis	10 months	Bethnal Green	

1881 Census

Location: London

Registration District: London City

Civil Parish: St. Botoph

Name	Age	Birthplace	Occupation
Henry Davis	42	London St. Georges E.	Labourer
Ann Davis	40	London St. Georges E	
Minnie Davis	15	London St. Georges E	
Edward Davis	10	London Bethnal Green	
Arthur Davis	8	London Mile End	
Eleanor Davis	6	London Mile End	
Alice	4	London Mile End	

1891 Census

Location: West Ham

Registration District: West Ham

Civil Parish: West Ham

Name	Age	Birthplace	Occupation
Henry Davis	52	London	Cooper
Ann Davis	50	London	
Alice Davis	14	London	

1901 Census

Location: Mile End Old Town

Registration District: Mile End Old Town

Civil Parish: Mile End Old Town

Name	Age	Birthplace	Occupation
Henry Davis	62	St. George in the East	Hackney Carriage Driver
Ann Davis	60	London	
Edwd W Davis	30	London	

With these results for each census you see they were in different parishes but probably didn't move around much. You see the children go and then come back. When you are looking at the census, check around on the page for the children, as they may be living very close.

Using the results of the census, let's look at some of the things you found:

1. In how many different locations did this family live? **He lived in four different residences: St. George in the East, London, West Ham, and Mile End Old Town**
2. How many different occupations are given for the father? **He had three different occupations: cooper, laborer, and Hackney carriage driver.**
3. Are the ages consistent from census to census? **Yes.**
4. Are the birthplaces consistent from census to census? **No. The birthplaces were not consistent usually because the information wasn't given by the individual whose birthplace is given.**

ACTIVITY

Now, test your skills you have learned in this "How to" Guide. The Activity is a way to check your knowledge and let you know you've mastered the Guide! [Click here](#) to try out the Activity.