Foreign Language Research
Tools for Reading Genealogical Documents

FamilySearch
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With a little help, you can read foreign language documents!

LOCATING DOCUMENTS ON FAMILYSEARCH

Most indexes on FamilySearch come from FamilySearch collections.

When the index entry is linked to a document, click on the **camera** icon and find the entry.

When the index entry is **not** linked to a document:

1. Click on the entry to view all information from the index.

2. Look for the GS Film number.

3. In FamilySearch, click on **Search**, then click on **Catalog.**

4. From the catalog screen, click on **Film/Fiche Number**, then enter the film number.

5. In some catalog entries, there may be multiple film numbers. Click on the **camera** icon next to the correct film number. If there is not a camera icon, the film has not yet been digitized. FamilySearch is currently working to digitize their microfilm collection.

6. Use the catalog entry to identify the item number (if applicable). Then search for the document. In most cases, records are organized by record type (i.e. baptisms), then chronologically. Use the catalog entry to identify the order in which the records are organized.

READING DOCUMENTS: RESOURCES

Genealogical Word Lists

- Lists key words found in documents, as well as an alphabetized list of pertinent words. Remember, not all possible words are in the lists.

- Found at FamilySearch Wiki (go to FamilySearch, click on **Search**, then click on **Research Wiki**). In the search box, type in the name of the country. Then in the right column under "Background," click on the word list in the needed language.

- You can do a word search through the document – hold down the **Control** key and hit **F.** Then type in the word (either in English or in the other language) to identify the word.

"How to" Guides

- Step-by-step guides for using websites, genealogical resources, specific record types, and reading foreign-language records and handwriting.

- "How to" Guides are available for reading birth, marriage, and death records in several languages.

- Most Guides contain an **Instruction** (the "How to"), an **Activity** (practicing the "How to"), and an **Answer Key** (confirmation you know how to use the resource).

- Found at FamilySearch Wiki (go to FamilySearch, click on **Search**, then click on **Research Wiki**). In the search box, type in **How to Guides**. Select the continent, then the country of interest.

Reading the document

1. Identify names

2. Identify dates – find the month first, then the day and year. Remember, the date may be written out. Dates give a sort of "answer key" to how letters were written in the document

3. Identify action verbs (born, married, died) and relationship words (son, mother, husband)

4. Identify places

   - For finding town names, use:

     o Gazetteers (dictionary of place names)

     o Online maps such as Google maps

     o Wikipedia articles - look for **province-level** jurisdiction in the **same** language as the document. To change the language from English, look on the left side of the webpage until you find the heading **Languages**. You will need to know the name of the language in the language – for example, French would be listed as Français. Click on the language to get to the article in the language.

     o Look for a list of all locations within the province

     o Use Google Chrome to translate the webpage into English. Right-click on the page and select **Translate to English.**

FAMILYSEARCH RESEARCH COMMUNITIES

1. Go to http://community.familysearch.org. Be sure to click on agree until you get to the main page.

2. Click on **Groups.**

3. Type in your country name in the search box. Then join the group.

4. Post your document or question in the group, or answer others' questions if you feel confident.