

## Using MyHeritage Cousin Finder™ with DNA Matches

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MyHeritage has recently introduced Cousin Finder™, a new genealogy feature that uses the power of family tree matches to find members of MyHeritage who are your blood relatives — cousins — with whom you share common ancestors. Cousin Finder™ then lets you easily get in touch with them so you can collaborate and gain new insights about your shared ancestors and family history.

Think of Cousin Finder™ as a new way to find DNA Matches, but without a DNA test. The MyHeritage members that Cousin Finder™ reveals may be relatives you already know about, but you didn't know they use MyHeritage. In many cases, they might be new relatives you've never heard of before. Unlike DNA Matches, Cousin Finder™ shows precisely how you are related to each relative. With Cousin Finder™, it's easy to grow multiple branches of your family tree. DNA guru, Diahan Southard, encourages us to make our family tree into a bush, and it appears that Cousin Finder™ is a handy way to add more collateral descendants to our trees. Cousin Finder™ is a free feature on MyHeritage, but contacting relatives requires a subscription.

How it works - - To enjoy the benefits of Cousin Finder™, you need to have a family tree on MyHeritage with Smart Matches™ to other family trees. The larger and more detailed your family tree, the better. Of course, since Cousin Finder™ uses trees to generate the cousin list, you need to vet the cousins' trees to ensure that the family relationship is accurate.

One of the core features of MyHeritage (if Smart Matches™ are enabled), is that it constantly compares your family tree to millions of other family trees on MyHeritage to find matching tree profiles, which are called Smart Matches™. Every Smart Match™ is an opportunity for you, or for the other tree manager with whom you match, to learn something new from each other (and sometimes both of you can learn something new from the other's research).

Cousin Finder™ takes Smart Matches™ to the next level by automatically analyzing all of your Smart Matches™ to identify all cases where one or more of your direct ancestors appear in a matching family tree, and are also blood relatives of the site manager or of other MyHeritage members who are associated with individuals in that tree. The people with whom you share at least one common

ancestor are your cousins, and Cousin Finder™ displays all those people, and gives you useful options for sorting and filtering the list. Depending on factors such as the size of your tree, the level of detail of your genealogical research (the more life events, dates and places you entered into your tree, the more you empower MyHeritage to find useful matches for you), and some degree of luck, Cousin Finder™ may reveal anywhere from dozens to hundreds of cousins, creating a focused list for your research.

Cousin Finder™ vs. DNA Testing - - People take a MyHeritage DNA test or upload DNA data to MyHeritage from other services for various reasons. Some are interested only in learning more about their ethnic roots and where their ancestors came from. But many DNA test takers are interested in the DNA Matches, which allow them to:

- \*Find blood relatives they didn't previously know about
- \*Enjoy the opportunity to contact their DNA Matches and learn from them, since each DNA Match is a member of MyHeritage and isn't an unreachable individual in some family tree or historical document
- \*Add more people to their family tree using information they learn from the DNA Matches

However, many of the genealogists who use MyHeritage have still not taken a DNA test. And even if you are one of the millions who have taken a MyHeritage DNA test, there are many of your cousins out there who have not. That's exactly where Cousin Finder™ comes in! Cousin Finder™ will give you all the advantages listed above, without taking a DNA test. Plus, even if you have taken a DNA test, it will enable you to make new discoveries via members of MyHeritage who haven't taken a DNA test themselves and would not come up in your DNA Matches. All this value comes from the power of family trees.

Some critics may remark, and rightfully so, that family trees need to be verified, as they contain many errors and are not as strong a "proof" of a blood relationship as a DNA test. That's correct, but it is always possible to use DNA to verify any new connection that you uncover using Cousin Finder™. In other words, think of Cousin Finder™ not as a substitute for DNA testing, but as a complement to it.

Cousin Finder™ vs. Smart Matches™ - - Smart Matches™ are matches between individuals in your family tree and those in the millions of other family trees on MyHeritage. While Smart Matches™ are a useful starting point for growing your family tree, they can often be overwhelming due to the huge amounts of raw data. Many users of MyHeritage find that they don't have the time to review all their Smart Matches™ and look for all the useful information that they may glean from them, because the nuggets of genealogical gold are sometimes mixed in with large amounts of non-useful information.

MyHeritage has several features that overcome this by giving you easier ways to work with your matches. For example, last year we released Hints, a highly useful feature that presents new details from your matches within the context of an individual profile. Cousin Finder™ provides an innovative new way to crystallize the information from your matches to gain new insights. It does this by using your Smart Matches™ to extract only those people who are related to you through common ancestors, who can be easily contacted, and are likely to be interested in researching those common ancestors.

Using Cousin Finder™ - - To access Cousin Finder™, log into your account on MyHeritage, hover over the Discoveries tab on the main menu, and click "Cousin Finder." Cousin Finder™ will spring into action and start scanning your matches to find other MyHeritage members with whom you share a common ancestor. It can take several minutes for it to display a list of the relatives found, sorted by proximity, i.e., those who are most closely related to you will appear first, followed by more distant relatives. You can see when Cousin Finder™ was last updated on the top right of the screen. Update the results at any time by clicking "Recalculate".

Each relative is displayed on a card. The card provides useful information to help you understand your relationship to this person and help you determine if it would be worthwhile for you to contact them. If you decide to get in touch, click the Contact button which uses the MyHeritage Inbox. The Inbox feature is easy to navigate and was recently updated for improved functionality. Remember, you need to be a MyHeritage subscriber in order to contact relatives.

The card displays the relative's name, photo (if available), age, and country. You can click the relative's name to see their profile page on MyHeritage. If you have a

DNA Match with this person, a purple DNA Match label is displayed. If they are already a member of your family site, a “Site member” label is displayed. If you haven’t yet invited them to become a member of your family site, you can do so from the “Invite to site” link.

The card also provides useful information to help you gauge the level of activity of this person on MyHeritage and the depth of their genealogical research. It displays how long ago this user joined MyHeritage, when they last visited, the size of their family tree, and the number of photos they’ve uploaded. The date of their last visit can indicate how active they are on MyHeritage. The more recent their activity, the more likely they may be to respond once you contact them through MyHeritage. Users with a larger family tree might have more information to share with you, as they are highly interested in genealogy and potentially more committed to helping others.

As mentioned above, Cousin Finder™ is based on Smart Matches™. Click “More details” on the bottom left of the card to see the number of pending and confirmed Smart Matches™ you have with this individual’s tree. Both links are clickable and will take you to a page that lists all Smart Matches™ from that family tree. While Cousin Finder™ offers an easier way to understand and manage your matches, it’s also a good idea to revisit your Smart Matches™ from time to time, and if anything seems incorrect, you can reject those matches and recalculate Cousin Finder™.

Information regarding your relationship to this person appears on the right side of the card. The relationship is displayed at the top. This relationship is calculated based on available family tree data. It could be that your relationship is actually closer than this prediction suggests. Click the relationship or the “View relationship” link to open a special version of the Relationship Diagram, which shows the relationship path between you and this relative.

This Relationship Diagram is special in that it is not solely constructed based on your family tree, but from a combination of your family tree and the matching family tree that produced the Smart Match™ through which this relative was found. Individuals taken from the relative’s tree are indicated with a dashed border around the node and a small tree icon. These nodes are great potential additions to your family tree. You will need to do this manually. You can click any node in the

diagram to show more information about the person. From the details popup, you can click “View profile” to go to the profile page for this individual.

Directly below the relationship, the card displays which branch of the family this cousin belongs to, along with a color coding designation. The color coding follows the same color coding standard that we use for family trees. Click the “I” icon if you need a reminder of the color codes and the ancestral branches they represent. You can filter the list to show cousins from a specific branch of your family.

Next, the card displays the names of the common ancestor(s) you and this cousin share, together with an explanation of how those ancestors are related to each of you. On the bottom right of the card there are two buttons: one to view the relative’s tree, and another to contact them. Getting in touch with a relative with a matching tree is an important step that can lead to breakthroughs in your research. If you’ve previously contacted the relative via MyHeritage, an indication that says “Previously contacted” will appear directly below the Contact button, as in the example below.

By default, Cousin Finder™ displays only your direct relatives. If you wish, you can expand the list to also show relatives through marriage by clicking “Show spouses of cousins” in the filter menu. The reason we added this is because it’s usually best to contact your cousins directly. However, if they are deceased, or not interested in genealogy, contacting their spouses might be a good alternative.

To hide all the relatives in the list that are already members of your family site (i.e. to avoid Cousin Finder™ telling you what you already know), uncheck “Show members of your site.”

The Cousin Finder™ list can be sorted two ways. The default order is by the proximity of your relationship, with the closest blood relatives appearing first. You can also sort the list alphabetically by last name followed by first name.

## Tips to get the most out of Cousin Finder™

If you have an excellent family tree elsewhere, but not on MyHeritage, now's the perfect time to import it to MyHeritage as a GEDCOM file and unleash the power of Smart Matches™ and Cousin Finder™ on your family tree.

If you already have a great family tree on MyHeritage, but you disabled Smart Matching™ at any point in the past, you'll need to enable it from your privacy settings to take advantage of Cousin Finder™. Conversely, if for any reason you don't want anyone else to find you on their Cousin Finder™ list, turn off Smart Matches™ for your family tree in the privacy settings.

If you have Smart Matches™ but they are few and far between, try growing your MyHeritage tree further by adding more individuals and more vital life events, dates, and places to receive more matches. Once you have more Smart Matches™, Cousin Finder™ will provide you with much more value.

Cousin Finder™ can be very useful for sourcing relatives from branches of your family tree that you are particularly interested in, who you can encourage to take a MyHeritage DNA test (or you can offer to gift them the DNA test yourself). The benefit of testing additional relatives from a branch of interest is that you will receive a strong DNA Match with that person, and thereby know the origin of all your shared DNA Matches with that person. That DNA Match will point out your shared DNA segments. Those shared DNA segments come from the shared ancestors you have with them on one side of your tree. Any other DNA Match you have that you currently cannot pinpoint, who has one or more of these same DNA segments (or parts of them), can then be identified as being a descendant of those same ancestors. You will be able to focus your research on those DNA Matches in your line of interest. This is based on the triangulation of DNA Matches and provides an excellent way to harness DNA to research branches of your family tree that you are most interested in researching further.

Summary - - Cousin Finder™ is a unique feature, exclusive to MyHeritage. The credit for this innovation goes to Uri Gonen, who has been a prolific member of our Product team since 2005. Cousin Finder™ was further fine-tuned in a series of brainstorming sessions between Uri Gonen and Gilad Japhet, MyHeritage's Founder and CEO, who also named this feature. Gilad and Uri typically

collaborate on many other genealogical innovations, with contributions from and collaboration with other members of the MyHeritage Product team.

Cousin Finder™ provides an easy way to discover and get in touch with other members of MyHeritage who have the same ancestors as you. Many of the users who try this feature for the first time are delightfully surprised by how many of their cousins are already using MyHeritage, and they had no idea! By contacting them through MyHeritage, inviting them to join your family site, and potentially encouraging them to take a DNA test, you can open new doors to discoveries that may have been closed off until now, as your cousins are likely interested in exchanging information with you about your common ancestors, and maybe meeting you in person.

Source: MyHeritage blog  
<https://blog.myheritage.com/2025/03/introducing-cousin-finder-gain-dna-level-insights-without-a-dna-test/>  
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