

GSSCC - - DNA Special Interest Group
compiled by Gail B. Burk - - April 7, 2026

DNA Courses at RootsTech 2026

Online sessions - - Recorded and accessible on the RootsTech 2026 schedule

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/schedule?day=2026-03-04>

Africa: DNA, A New Hope for African Genealogy - - John Mark Peter-Brown

Genealogical research in Africa presents unique challenges due to limited historical records. However, advancements in DNA testing provide a groundbreaking avenue for tracing ancestry and reconstructing lost lineages. All levels session. Syllabus and slide deck available to download.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/africa-dna-a-new-hope-for-african-genealogy>

Caribbean Genetic Genealogy - - Naomi Cortes Child

Caribbean records are often scarce, endogamy is common, and complex admixture can obscure DNA match lists. In this practical session, you'll learn the basics of how to untangle endogamous clusters, identify meaningful matches, and use admixture results to guide your personal research. We'll cover ways to navigate gaps in documentation. The session highlights research in Puerto Rico, but the strategies will benefit anyone pursuing island-based family history. Intermediate level session. Syllabus and slide deck available to download.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/caribbean-genetic-genealogy>

DNA Analysis Methodology: Defeat the Genealogy Gremlin - - Karen Stanbary

Learn the tried-and-true methodology to achieve accurate results using DNA for genealogy. This lecture discusses the evaluation of match pedigrees to identify potential snafus and demonstrates mitigation strategies to address the problem. Don't let researcher confirmation bias pollute your family trees! Sponsored by BCG and ICAPGen. Advanced level session. Syllabus available to download.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/dna-analysis-methodology-defeat-the-genealogy-gremlin>

DNA Evidence Analysis with AI - - Nicole Dyer

Learn how artificial intelligence tools can streamline your DNA analysis workflow. This session covers practical applications of AI for clustering DNA matches, creating descendancy diagrams, and interpreting genetic data. We'll explore how tools like ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini can help with the Leeds Method, network graphs, and pedigree triangulation. You'll discover

techniques for using AI to generate diagrams and convert research reports into charts. We'll also cover privacy considerations. Labeled as intermediate level session; should be labeled as advanced session. Syllabus available for download.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/dna-evidence-analysis-with-ai>

DNA Misconceptions - - Kelli Bergheimer

Often our misconceptions can lead us astray. In DNA analysis, sometimes we fall into surname traps, wrong assumptions, and confirmation bias. Learn how to recognize your misconceptions and address them. All levels session. Syllabus available for download.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/dna-misconceptions>

DNA Swim School – Part 1: Floating with One DNA Match - - Diahan Southard

In this beginner session, we'll focus on just one DNA match. We'll show you how to set a simple, clear research goal, then guide you through how to choose a match that can help you take your first meaningful step. You'll get a friendly walkthrough of your testing company's match list tools, so you know what all those menus, labels, and numbers are really telling you. Beginner level session. Syllabus available to download.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/dna-swim-school-part-1-floating-with-one-dna-match>

DNA Swim School – Part 2: Treading Water with Your Matches - - Diahan Southard

Now you'll discover how to work with a whole network of matches. This session introduces "The Plan," a simple step-by-step approach to working with your match list. You'll learn how to use your Best Known Match (BKM) and Best Mystery Match (BMM) to start building a genetic network. We'll show you how to focus on the matches with trees and use them to take your next steps. Beginner level session. Syllabus available to download.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/dna-swim-school-part-2-treading-water-with-your-matches>

DNA Swim School – Part 3: Swimming Toward Your Ancestors - - Diahan Southard

In Part 3, we go beyond grouping matches to figure out how they're related to each other and to you. This session is about what to do when the simple path doesn't appear. You'll learn how to take stock of what you do know, test hypotheses using tools like Shared Matches of Matches (SMoMs) and WATO (What Are the Odds?), and follow a process to move forward. Intermediate level session. Syllabus available for download.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/dna-swim-school-part-3-swimming-toward-your-ancestors>

DNA's FAN Club: Using Shared Matches To Solve Genealogical Mysteries - - Paula Williams
Friends, Associates, and Neighbors help with our paper trail research, and shared DNA matching is just as critical. We'll explore the powerful DNA tool. All levels session. Syllabus available for download.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/dnas-fan-club-using-shared-matches-to-solve-genealogical-mysteries>

Finding Cousins and Confirming Connections: Practical Strategies for Descendancy Research - - Janalee McBride

Learn how to trace forward from a known ancestor to find living relatives and build out descendant lines with confidence. This class explores practical strategies for conducting post-1900 descendancy research using obituaries, vital records, newspapers, directories, and online tools. You'll also discover how to use social media ethically and effectively. Beginner level session. Syllabus available for download.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/finding-cousins-confirming-connections-practical-strategies-for-descendancy-research>

Genealogy for your Descendants - - Janna Helshtein - - Sponsored by: MyHeritage

In this moving and eye-opening lecture, we explore the stories, memories, and small everyday moments that shape the legacy we leave behind. You'll discover how to document your life with intention, preserve your voice for future generations, and create a legacy of the heart that will outlast time. All levels session. Syllabus available to download.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/genealogy-for-your-descendants>

Illuminating Our Ancestors: Are We Done Peering Through The Keyhole? - - Dave Vance

From recent innovations to ideas still taking shape, this session explores evolving advances in DNA testing and proposes future capabilities that will make today's genetic genealogy seem like peering at our ancestors through a dim keyhole. Sponsored by FamilyTreeDNA. All levels session. Syllabus and slide deck available for download.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/illuminating-our-ancestors-are-we-done-peering-through-the-keyhole>

Let The Circle Be Unbroken: How DNA Reconstructs Enslaved Families - - Shannon Christmas

Learn how to combine DNA test results with documentary evidence to trace enslaved ancestors, demolish brick walls, and bridge gaps in enslaved family narratives. Intermediate level session. Syllabus available to download.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/let-the-circle-be-unbroken-how-dna-reconstructs-enslaved-families>

The Lost Child - - Nick Barratt

This session tells the story of a grandmother's parentage and tackles the ultimate brick wall for an English genealogist: informal fostering prior to official adoption records, for a child born overseas without any parental details. The session follows research across three continents to uncover who her parents were, and what happened to them, showcasing a range of research techniques in the process. Intermediate level session. Syllabus and slide deck available to download.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/the-lost-child>

Mapping Maternal Connections: Where Science Meets Genealogy on the mtDNA Tree of Humankind - - Roberta Estes - - Sponsored by: FamilyTreeDNA

Explore FamilyTreeDNA's expanded mtDNA Tree of Humankind and learn how maternal DNA testing reveals ancient origins, migration paths, and family connections across time. Intermediate level session. Syllabus available to download.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/mapping-maternal-connections-where-science-meets-genealogy-on-the-mtdna-tree-of-humankind>

The More, the Merrier! Collaborating with Your DNA Cousins - - Paula Williams

Have a bunch of DNA matches but you don't know who they are? Looking for ways to get them to answer your messages or get excited about your research? Learn how to make connections with your DNA matches and collaborate effectively! All levels session. Syllabus available to download.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/the-more-the-merrier-collaborating-with-your-dna-cousins>

Prevention through Connection: Connect with relatives, Reduce inherited disease risk - - Martha Kaiser; Brian Shirts - - Sponsored by: ConnectMyVariant

Learn how family history can save lives. Millions of people have a genetic mutation but don't know it. This webinar shows how genealogy can find those who have a mutation so they can work with their doctors to prevent cancer. Join a community of extended relatives who are dedicated to finding the ancestor where the mutation originated in their families. All levels session. Syllabus and slide deck available to download.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/prevention-through-connection-connect-with-relatives-reduce-inherited-disease-risk>

Using Autosomal DNA Analysis to Identify an Ancestor's Likely Parents - - Alice Childs

Using a case study, this session will illustrate how multiple test takers, DNA networks, half relationships, and maternal surnames can be combined with documentary evidence to pinpoint the

most likely parents for an ancestor. This advanced-level session is sponsored by BCG and ICAPGen. Advanced level session. Syllabus and slide deck available to download.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/using-autosomal-dna-analysis-to-identify-ancestors-likely-parents>

Your Genes, Your Story: Exploring MyHeritage DNA - - Gal Zrihen

Sponsored by: MyHeritage

This session explores the latest tools and features MyHeritage DNA offers to help you connect with relatives, understand your origins, and uncover meaningful stories hidden in your gene, including advanced DNA Matches and ethnicity reports to cutting-edge features like the recently updated Theory of Family Relativity™. All levels session. No syllabus or slide deck.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/your-genes-your-story-exploring-myheritage-dna-with-gal-zrihen>

In-person only - - no recordings, but syllabi and slides often available for download

Adoption, DNA, and the search for identity: insights from a personal and professional journey - - Dr. Penny Walters All levels session. Syllabus and slide deck available to download.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/adoption-dna-and-the-search-for-identity-insights-from-a-personal-and-professional-journey>

Big Y for Real-World Genealogy: Using Case Studies to Demonstrate Y-DNA Tools - - Janine Cloud - - Sponsored by: FamilyTreeDNA; Intermediate level session. Syllabus and slide deck available to download.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/big-y-for-real-world-genealogy-using-case-studies-to-demonstrate-y-dna-tools>

DNA Basics You Need to Know - - Drew Smith

Beginner level session. Syllabus and slide deck available to download.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/dna-basics-you-need-to-know>

DNA Case Study: Finding an 1877 Birth Father with Genetic Affairs, BanyanDNA, and No Birth Record - - Patricia Coleman - - Intermediate level session. Syllabus and slide deck available to download.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/dna-case-study-finding-an-1877-birth-father-with-genetic-affairs-banyandna-and-no-birth-record>

End of the Line: Using DNA to Trace Orphan Train Origins - - Kate Penney Howard
Intermediate level session. Syllabus and slide deck available to download.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/end-of-the-line-using-dna-to-trace-orphan-train-origins>

Family Ties in Your Genes: Using DNA to Grow Your Tree - - Gal Zrihen
Sponsored by: MyHeritage; all levels session. No syllabus or slide deck.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/family-ties-in-your-genes-using-dna-to-grow-your-tree>

Foundling Brickwalls & Breakthroughs - - Lorie Cousin; Kara Rubinstein Deyerin
Sponsored by: Untangling Our Roots. Beginner level session. Syllabus and slide deck available to download.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/foundling-brickwalls-breakthroughs>

From Virginia to Guam: Tracing A Black Family via DNA and Maritime Records - - Andre Kearns - - Intermediate level session. Syllabus and slide deck available to download.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/from-virginia-to-guam-tracing-a-black-family-via-dna-and-maritime-records>

Hi, We're Related! Successful Communication With Your DNA Matches - - Michael D. Lacopo
Intermediate level session. Syllabus available to download.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/hi-were-related-successful-communication-with-your-dna-matches>

How to Use Rare Disease Mutations to Find Relatives - - Brian Shirts
Sponsored by: ConnectMyVariant; all levels session. Syllabus and slide deck available to download.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/how-to-use-rare-disease-mutations-to-find-relatives>

Mitochondrial DNA to Z: My Results Are Back, Now What? - - Roberta Estes
All levels session. Syllabus and slide deck available to download.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/mitochondrial-dna-to-z-my-results-are-back-now-what>

Strategies to Analyze Endogamous DNA - - Alec Ferretti

Advanced level session. Syllabus and slide deck available for download.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/strategies-to-analyze-endogamous-dna>

Tackling Surprises in Your DNA Results - - Adina Newman

Intermediate level session. Syllabus available for download.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/tackling-surprises-in-your-dna-results>

What's Brewing at MyHeritage? A Sneak Peek - - Gilad Japhet

Sponsored by: MyHeritage. All levels session. No syllabus or slide deck.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/whats-brewing-at-myheritage-a-sneak-peek-with-founder-and-ceo-gilad-japhet>

What's New and What's Coming at GEDmatch - - Tom Osypian

Sponsored by:GEDmatch. All levels session. No syllabus or slide deck.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/whats-new-and-whats-coming-at-gedmatch>

Y-DNA to Z: My Results Are Back, Now What? - - Roberta Estes

All levels session. Syllabus available to download.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/y-dna-to-z-my-results-are-back-now-what>

Your Genes, Your Story: Exploring MyHeritage DNA - - Ran Snir

Sponsored by: MyHeritage. All levels session. No syllabus or slide deck.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/session/your-genes-your-story-exploring-myheritage-dna>