

# How Am I Related to My Thousands of DNA Matches?

By Ruth Campbell, PLCGS

Discover Your Roots March 2023 Handout

## Step 1 - Get to Know Your DNA Matches

- Check to see how many DNA matches you have!
- How many of your DNA matches do you know?
- Do you know the relationships of your highest centimorgan (cM) matches?
- When looking at your matches you want to understand cM - the higher the number of cM the closer the relationship.

## Step 2 - Understanding Estimated Relationships

- Use The Shared cM Project 4.0 tool in DNA Painter to determine relationships.
  - <https://dnapainter.com/tools/sharedcmv4>
- The chart is an example of relationships by cM.

The Shared cM Project by DNA Painter 4.0

Parents	Sibling	Half Sibling	Grandparent	1st Cousins	2nd Cousins
3485 2376-3720	2613 1613-3488	1759 1160-2436	1754 984-2462	866 396-1397	229 41-592

- 1st cousins share grandparents, 2nd cousins share great grandparents, 3rd cousins share great great grandparents and so on!

## Step 3 - Who is your Best Known Match (BKM)

- Try to find a DNA match with a Common Ancestor under their public tree status.
- Analyze the common ancestor feature using Thru Lines and see if that makes sense to you. Thru Lines is only as good as the researched TREE! Tread lightly!
- Use The Shared cM Project 4.0 tool in DNA Painter to determine relationships.
  - <https://dnapainter.com/tools/sharedcmv4>
- Go to the shared matches option and set up a color coding system for the grandparent sets.  
**Example:** Maternal Great Grandparent (M1G Kelly/Heid), Maternal Great Great Grandparents (M2G Smith/Jones), Paternal Great Grandparent (P1G Fraser/Collin), Paternal Great Great Grandparent (P2G Burns/Fretwell).
- Assign a colored dot to each of the shared matches that are ICW (in common with) you and the matches.

## Step 4 - Find Your Best Mystery Match (BMM)

- Find your Best Known Match (BMM) by looking at ALL Matches and find the first match that doesn't have a dot by it!

## Step 5 - Communicate With Your Best Mystery Match (BMM)

[The DNA Company] says that we share \_\_\_cM of DNA. That puts us in the range of 2nd-3rd cousins. I would love to connect with you and figure out our common ancestor. I have family history information that I would love to share with you. You can contact me through the [DNA company] messaging system, or via email at [\_\_\_@\_\_.com]. I look forward to hearing from you! - FamilyLocket.com

OR

Dear [name or username],

It is good to meet you here at [name of testing company]. I am amazed at the things I have been able to find out with my DNA. I'm trying to learn more about my [grandfather, great grandmother, etc]. I think you can help, since we share some DNA. Whatever you might be willing to share about your family tree could help me build mine. If you have a family tree, would you be willing to share it with me? Or could you tell me the names of your [parents/grandparents] and where they were from? Even if you don't have time for this right now, or if it makes you uncomfortable to share information, could you please just reply and let me know you received my note? Best, Your Name

Diahan Southard, "Contracting DNA Matches.pdf", <https://www.yourdnaguide.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/ContactingDNAMatches.pdf>

## Step 6 - Take Your BMM and Investigate

If you don't hear back from your BMM don't be shocked! The Ancestry DNA Message system does tell you when the message you wrote was delivered and if it was read. I have several BMM that haven't read my message from 2 years ago. Some people just don't access Ancestry after taking their DNA test. This is why you need to do additional investigating to find an email or other means of communicating if possible.

- ❖ Google using quotes ""
- ❖ Use other DNA testing companies to see if full name shows up or gives an email address like (Gedmatch)
- ❖ White Pages
- ❖ FastSearchPeople.com
- ❖ Instagram
- ❖ Facebook
- ❖ Newspapers
- ❖ Obituaries

## Step 7 - Do Genealogy! Do Genealogy!

- Create a Master Research Tree (Make the TREE PRIVATE and UNSEARCHABLE)! Let the hints roll to figure out who the MRCA (Most Recent Common Ancestor) is.
- Build trees for your DNA matches! Yes you will need to do other people's genealogy!

## Few Key Points to REMEMBER

1. DNA never LIES!
2. Your thousands of DNA matches with more than 20 cM are most definitely your Cousins!
3. The key to success for DNA is to find out which set of grandparents your DNA matches belong to!!! MRCA (most recent common ancestor) To find the MRCA you have to do GENEALOGY!!!!
4. Always be considerate and compassionate with family members when DNA reveals buried family secrets. People have the right to know the new revealed relationships but they Don't Have to Have a Relationship! As hard as that is! Be respectful!
5. Each of your Ancestors who have gone before you has a SOUL! They once had dreams, hopes, failures, trials, disappointments, successes and courage to ENDURE! Take time to learn about them! They are not just a name, birth and death date on a piece of paper. You are where you are today BECAUSE of THEM!!

## DNA + Genealogy = Success

### My Favorite Websites, YouTube Videos, Podcasts and Books

Legacy Family Tree Webinars offers FREE webinars on Wednesdays' or subscription \$49 yr.

FamilyLocket.com - blogs, ecourses, podcasts (RLP - Research Like A Pro series)

Diahan Southard - Your DNA Guide ([www.yourdnaguide.com](http://www.yourdnaguide.com))

BYU Family History Library - YouTube

FamilySearch Library Classes and Webinars

FamilySearch Wiki

"Research Like A Pro" Book by Diana Elder and Nicole Dyer (HANDS Down best bang for your buck on how to properly research! Easy steps to follow!

"Your DNA guide the book" by Diahan Southard

"The Family Tree Guide to DNA Testing and Genetic Genealogy" by Blaine Bettinger

Contact:

Ruth Campbell

LetsTalkDNA2022@gmail.com

Facebook - Ruth Hewitt Campbell & Let's Talk DNA

# Let's Organize Your 2nd Cousins into Grandparent Groups Using the Leeds Method!

By Ruth Campbell, PLCGS  
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"The goal of the Leeds method is to help you quickly identify groups of people in your match list who are likely to share a common ancestor with each other."<sup>1</sup>

"...It is a simple and colorful way to organize your DNA matches using color-coded clusters."  
- Diahn Southard

Leeds Method of Organizing DNA Matches - <https://www.yourdnaguide.com/leeds-method>

## Free Download from YourDNAGuide by Diahn Southard

Communicate better with your DNA matches

Organizing your DNA matches into genetic networks will help you identify where they belong on your tree. So can directly communicating with your matches. But it can get discouraging when your matches won't answer you back! That's why Diahn Southard created a free downloadable guide: "Talk to Your DNA Matches Like a First Date." Her strategies and tips—even a sample email to send—can help you reach out with more confidence and get better responses!

GET MY FREE DOWNLOAD FOR CONTACTING MATCHES



**Dana Leeds**  
**Creator of The Leeds Method website**  
<https://dnawithdana.com/>

*The Leeds Method is based on 2nd-3rd Cousins*

## Step 1: Go To Ancestry TO ALL MATCHES -don't separate by parents!

- Look for cM matches between 400-90 - this should give us a 2nd cousin range. We don't want to include 1st cousins because match us on either our parental or maternal side.
- First stick with 2nd & 3rd cousins! However, lack of 2nd cousins can cause lots of clusters. After consolidating your clusters, if you still have more than 4 clusters it could be you don't have enough 2nd cousins.
- The best scenario is that your chart should have 4 clusters with each cluster representing a grandparent set.

<sup>1</sup> Organizing DNA Matches Leeds Method - Diahn Southard, [www.yourdnaguide.com](http://www.yourdnaguide.com).

**Step 2: Open up a Google Sheet or Excel or use a paper chart and colored pencils to assign a color to your first DNA match.**

**Step 3: Open first DNA match shared matches and assign each of them the same color in the same column.**

**Step 4: Locate the first person on the list who does not have a color assigned and assign them a color in the next column and so forth until you have assigned all your DNA matches from 400-90 cM's.**

Do go to Dana Leeds Blog to get more detailed step by step instructions. This is a very powerful and simple method to determine who your DNA matches MRCA is.

<https://www.danaleeds.com/category/color-clustering/>

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Contact:

Ruth Campbell

LetsTalkDNA2022@gmail.com

Facebook - Ruth Hewitt Campbell & Let's Talk DNA