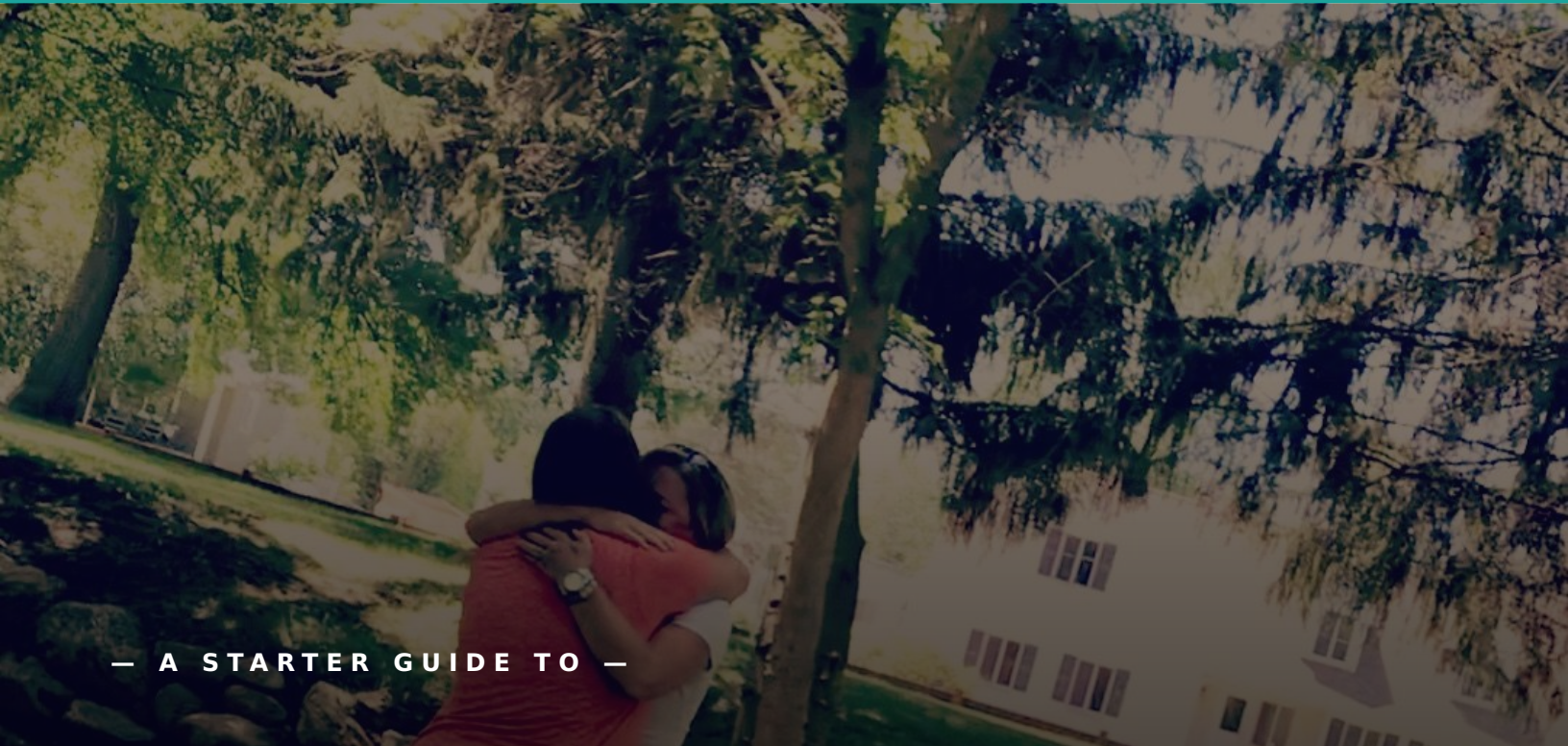




— A STARTER GUIDE TO —

Finding *Birth* Parents

Three steps to reconnect with the family you have not yet met. A guide for adoptees and searchers, written by the volunteer Search Angels who do this work every day.

WELCOME

You are not *alone* in this.

If you are reading this, you are likely searching for a biological parent, sibling, or other family member you have never known. Maybe you have known for years. Maybe you just found out. Either way, you have taken the first step that matters: **you started looking**.

DiscoverFamily.net is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Our team of volunteer Search Angels has helped people across the country reunite with biological family, and we do it at no cost to you.

This guide walks you through the three steps we recommend every searcher take. It is short on purpose. The most important thing is to start.

THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT STEP

*If you only do one thing after reading this guide, **take a DNA test**. Almost every reunion we have facilitated started with a single test kit.*



Kim with her newly found biological father, meeting for the first time. Many of our reunions start with a single DNA test kit.

A NOTE ON HOW WE STAY FREE

Some links in this guide are affiliate links. When you order through them, a small commission funds our volunteer work. If you use them, thank you. If not, our help is free either way.

HOW TO READ THIS GUIDE

Three steps, in order. Read it cover to cover, or skip to Step 1 and start there. We made it short on purpose because momentum matters more than mastery.



— First —

01

Take a *DNA* Test

This is the step that opens every door. DNA testing connects you to relatives you did not know you had, and those relatives are often the bridge to finding the person you are searching for.

Why *Ancestry*, and why now.

Every person who shows up as a DNA match shares a common ancestor with you. A first cousin match means a shared grandparent. A second cousin match means a shared great grandparent. Even distant matches — third and fourth cousins — can be enough to trace a path back to your biological parents.

A REAL STORY

From a third cousin to her mother in a month.

Our very first successful case started with a third cousin match. From there, with help from a second cousin, we reached the adoptee's biological mother within a month. Every story is different and timing varies, but cousin matches are how most modern reunions begin.

WHY WE RECOMMEND ANCESTRYDNA

We recommend starting with AncestryDNA for one simple reason: it has the largest database of tested people in the world — roughly **27 million**. More people in the database means more cousin matches, and more matches means a better chance of finding the connection you need.

Ancestry also has the best family tree tools. Most of their users have built trees attached to their DNA results, and for adoptees and searchers that is gold. A tree connected to a cousin's DNA can shortcut weeks of research.

WHAT ABOUT 23ANDME?

In 2025, 23andMe filed for bankruptcy, and its database was sold to a new nonprofit entity. Many users were rattled by the uncertainty. We still consider 23andMe a useful tool for some searches, but for a first test we recommend Ancestry for its size, stability, and family tree integration. Your Search Angel can help you decide if a second test or upload makes sense for your case.

How to *get* tested.

- 1** Order an AncestryDNA test kit at **DiscoverFamily.net/ancestry** (this link supports our nonprofit).
- 2** When the kit arrives, follow the instructions to provide a saliva sample.
- 3** Mail the kit back in the prepaid box.
- 4** Create your account online and register the kit using the ID inside.
- 5** Results typically arrive in six to eight weeks. You will get an email when they are ready.
- 6** Log in to see your ethnicity estimate and your list of DNA matches.

PRO TIP FROM A SEARCH ANGEL

One test, three databases.

Once your Ancestry results come back, you can download your raw DNA file and upload it — for free or for a small one time fee — to **MyHeritage, FamilyTreeDNA, and GEDmatch**. This puts your DNA into multiple databases and multiplies your chances of finding the right match. We will walk you through this if we believe it is the best next step.

COMMON WORRIES, ANSWERED

Is my DNA safe? Ancestry has clear privacy controls, and you decide what is shared. You can delete your data at any time.

What if I do not find anyone at first? That is common. The database grows every day, and a second cousin match is often enough to start.

What if I cannot afford a test? Ancestry runs sales around Mother's Day, Father's Day, DNA Day in April, and Black Friday. Watch for those, or contact us. In some cases we can help — we frequently have donated DNA kits available.



A NOTE FROM ONE SEARCHER

*In a week's time my
Search Angels had found
my father and my half
siblings.*

*I had hit my brick wall years ago. I had given
up on finding my biological father.
I reached out, never expecting answers.
More to come later...*

— JOYCE L.

DiscoverFamily.net client, April 2025

— Second —

02

Gather Your *Story*

While you wait for your DNA results, collect every piece of information you can about your birth and adoption. Small details can break a case wide open.

— REAL REUNIONS —



*Tiffany & her birth father,
reunited.*

*“We have 31 years of
catching up to do.”*

— TIFFANY, VIRGINIA

The detail that *broke* the case.

A REAL STORY

In one of our cases, the detail that broke everything open was that the adoptee's maternal grandfather had been a **County Clerk** at the time of the birth. That single fact let us cross-reference public records and confirm the biological mother's identity. You never know which detail will be the one.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- **Official documents:** birth certificate, amended birth certificate, adoption decree, court papers, attorney records, hospital records.
- **Personal items:** letters, journals, photos, any questionnaires filled out at the time of birth or adoption.
- **Stories:** conversations with adoptive parents, relatives, family friends — anyone who was around at the time.
- **Non-identifying information:** many adoption agencies will release a summary of biological family medical and background details on request. Ask, even if you have asked before. Policies change.

HOW TO GATHER IT

Talk to your adoptive parents and relatives. Ask gently and ask more than once. Record conversations with their permission. Do not be discouraged if memories conflict.

Capture everything, even the parts that seem wrong — the inconsistencies themselves can be useful clues.

Scan or photograph every document you find and keep a digital backup in a folder you can share with us. Email yourself a copy as a safety net.

Some states give adult adoptees full access to their original birth certificate. Sixteen states, as of late 2025. Check yours.

— A FIRST MEETING —



Donna meeting her maternal birth family for the very first time.

Every reunion begins with someone deciding to look. We help with the rest.

— Third —

03

Get *Help.*
We're Here.

The path to finding biological family can be long, emotional, and confusing. You do not have to walk it alone. We exist to help.

Meet your *Search Angel*.

DiscoverFamily.net pairs you with a volunteer Search Angel — a trained genetic genealogist who will be your partner through the search.

WHAT WE DO

- i.* Review your DNA results and identify the most promising matches.
- ii.* Build out family trees from your matches to find the most likely candidates for your biological family.
- iii.* Provide any available information for newly found relatives, and walk you through next steps.

All of this is **free**. We do ask that you give us access to your DNA results and any documents you have gathered. We cannot help you without them.

“

They didn't just give me answers. They gave me closure, connection, and a part of myself I had always been missing.

— DIANNE S., DISCOVERFAMILY.NET CLIENT

THE PATH FORWARD

Reach out when you are ready. Whether you have your DNA results in hand or you are still deciding whether to test, our team is here to help you think it through. There is no pressure, no waitlist, and no cost.

In the words of the *families* we have helped.

5.0★

GOOGLE RATING

37+

FIVE-STAR REVIEWS

\$0

WHAT WE CHARGE

Stats current at the time of publication. Read the latest at DiscoverFamily.net.

By Monday we were discovering my biological father and his side of the family. It was an amazing experience that we are still in awe of.

— TOM P.

Took them 2 days before I had a HS photo of my birth mother! Talk about shock! We have made contact and talk weekly.

— LAURA G.

I have been looking for my dad my whole life. DiscoverFamily.net made this possible! We have 31 years of catching up to do.

— TIFFANY, VIRGINIA

In just under one week they were able to find my biological father and solve a mystery. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

— ALLEE S.

Troy and Mike came on like superheroes and found him! 20/10 would recommend. Thank you guys! Changed my life!

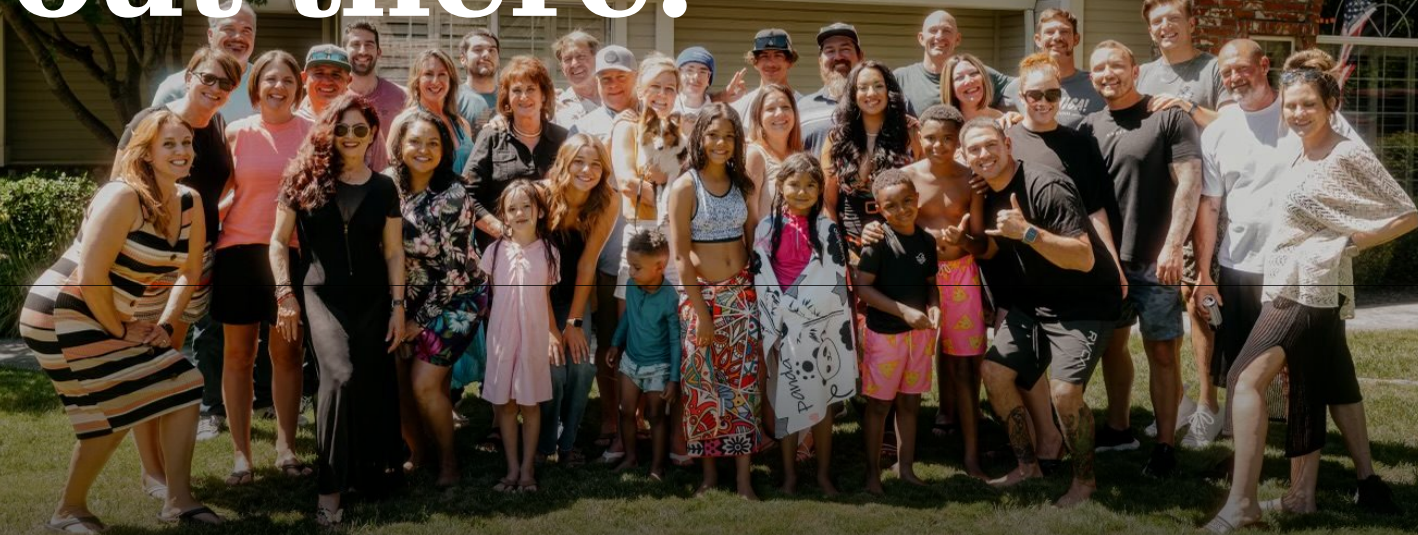
— ANTHONY H.

DiscoverFamily did what no one else could — and they did it for free. I am forever grateful.

— DIANNE S.

— YOUR NEXT STEP —

Your family *is* out there.



One of many extended families now reunited and celebrating together.

— READY WHEN YOU ARE —

Take the *next* step today.

STEP ONE

Order Your DNA Test

DiscoverFamily.net/ancestry

WHEN YOU'RE READY

Request a Search Angel

DiscoverFamily.net/request-help

DiscoverFamily.net

A 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Always free. Always volunteer.

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