# Chapter 2: Research and Ethics

In this chapter, you will study GPS 1, GPS 2, and ethics. You will learn the following:

* The benefits of planning and tracking your research
* How to plan and track your research
* How to know when you’ve completed “reasonably exhaustive research”
* How to use complete and accurate source citations
* How to ensure ethical genealogical behavior
* How to protect against plagiarism

## GPS 1: Conducting Reasonably Exhaustive Research

### Study Questions

* SQ: What does it mean to conduct reasonably exhaustive research?
* SQ: Why do you need a research plan?
* SQ: What are some suggested steps in research planning?
* SQ: What types of resources can you use to ensure your research plan includes a breadth of available and relevant sources?
* SQ: What is the purpose of a research log?
* SQ: What are the basic elements of a research log?
* SQ: What are some common errors to avoid?
* SQ: How should you determine when your research is finished?

The first step in the Genealogical Proof Standard is to conduct reasonably exhaustive research. What does that mean? The word research goes beyond a simple search typed into an internet browser. Research is systematic; it is planned. The phrase "reasonably exhaustive" indicates that a researcher has identified and searched all available and relevant sources. Research plans and research logs are tools to help ensure that you have efficiently and effectively searched a breadth of available and relevant records, not just those that are easily accessible.

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### What is a Research Plan?

“A good research plan helps you organize your preparations. You must go through this process if you expect to meet your objective(s) effectively and efficiently. A good genealogical research plan includes an orderly sequence of logical steps.”1

To create a research plan, you will do the following:

1. Study and analyze known information.
2. Determine a focused question you need to answer. This is called a research objective.
3. Identify, list, and prioritize sources that might answer your research question, using books or websites known as reference resources.
4. Note where the sources are located and how to access them.

#### Identify Sources Using Reference Resources

What sources should you include in your research plan? Seasoned genealogists use reference books and websites to identify available records for a specific time and place to address the specific research goal or objective.

##### Reference Books

The following reference books (or resources) are some of the books used by professional genealogists in the United States (and United Kingdom for Ancestral Trails) to guide them in their research. You are invited to bookmark these books in your internet browser for later use if you feel they may be of use to you. You may wish to search the internet for other reference books that relate to the country where you intend to complete research. You may wish to explore the books when you are able.

* Professional Genealogy, A Manual for Researchers, Writers, Editors, Lecturers, and Librarians, Elizabeth Shown Mills, ed.
  + Portions of Professional Genealogy are available to you as a Pathway student(or BYUI). Access these portions by going to [Gale Genealogy Connect](https://go-gale-com.pathway.idm.oclc.org/ps/start.do?p=GENVRL&amp;u=byuidaho&amp;aty=ip) and entering Professional Genealogy in the search bar.
* [Red Book: American State, County, and Town Sources](https://wiki.rootsweb.com/wiki/index.php/Red_Book:_American_State,_County,_and_Town_Sources) by Alice Eicholz, ed.
* [The Source: A Guidebook to American Genealogy](https://wiki.rootsweb.com/wiki/index.php/The_Source:_A_Guidebook_to_American_Genealogy) by Loretta Dennis Szucs and Sandra Hargreaves Leubking
* Ancestral Trails: The Complete Guide to British Genealogy and Family History by Mark D. Herber.
  + You may wish to check the entry for [Ancestral Trails](https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/674484?availability=Family%20History%20Library) in the FamilySearch Catalog to determine if Ancestral Trails is available through a library near you.

### Tips for International Students

To find reference books and websites that might be helpful resources in your research, use a search engine or the address bar of your internet browser.  Enter different search terms until you find what you are looking for.  For example, you could enter “genealogical reference books” + Brazil. Select the results to determine how valuable the resources might be. If you don’t find what you are looking for, you could try different search terms like “genealogical resources in Brazil.” Another option is to use the [FamilySearch Wiki](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Main_Page). Enter the name of your country in the search box and then explore the results, especially the research guide.

One option is to ask other people who have done work in your country. The FamilySearch Wiki has a page for finding [genealogical groups in different countries](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/FamilySearch_Genealogy_Research_Groups). Many of these groups are social media groups. Find a group for your country and ask the group about resources they use to find which records are available. You might also search the internet with terms like “genealogical organizations in Japan.” These organizations might have websites with information about resources in your area. There may also be a contact box near the bottom of the page where you can email or call with questions.

##### Websites

The following websites will help you identify sources to include in your research plan by determining what records should be searched for a given time and place. Many of these websites include worldwide sources. You are invited to bookmark each site in your internet browser for later use.

* [Cyndi's List](https://www.cyndislist.com/us/)
* [GENUKI](https://www.genuki.org.uk/)
* [WorldGenWeb](https://www.worldgenweb.org/)
* [USGenWeb](https://www.usgenweb.org/)
* [FamilySearch Research Wiki](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Main_Page)
* [FamilySearch Catalog](https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/search/)

##### Common Errors to Avoid When Identifying Resources

A common error is to assume that all the information a genealogist needs is found in census and vital records or only the records accessible on certain websites. These records are valuable and informative, but do not reflect all the records necessary for reasonably exhaustive research. Remember, conducting reasonably exhaustive research means searching all available and relevant records. This is why it is important to use reference resources to identify all available and relevant records.

### Conducting Research

Conducting research is the main focus of GPS 1. A researcher searches all available and relevant sources that have been listed in the research plan and records them in a research log.

#### Research Logs

After you, as a researcher, have defined a research goal and developed a well-structured research plan, then, and only then, may research begin. As you research, you must record the results of the planned research in a research log. Your completed research log shows that you followed and completed your planned research. You may need to follow up on the research problem if it wasn't solved, but you would use a new plan and research log (or extend your first plan and log, according to your preference).

A research log should be very specific and detailed so that anyone could recreate the same research session simply by following the research log. The format and elements of a research log can vary, but there are some basic elements that must be included in every research log.

It is likely the information you need to include will exceed the space available on a single-page research log. You can establish a numbering system to organize the additional pages. A computer spreadsheet is also a valuable way to keep a research log.

##### Basic Elements of a Research Log

1. Name of researcher
2. Date of research
3. Name of person being researched
4. Specific research goal
   * Example: Identify the parents of Charlotte Wells who was born in May 1911 in Camden County, New Jersey.

5.  Specific details for each source searched

6. Description of the source as a whole (book, database of images, and so on). This is recorded before researching the source

7. Description of how each source was searched (search terms used, filters applied, spelling variations searched, etc.)

8. Description of the results (**information not found, information found**, analysis of information)

9. Full citation of any found documents (page number, document number, and so on) This is recorded after searching the source.

##### Optional Resource

Learn more and view sample research logs at the FamilySearch Research Wiki page [Research Logs.](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Research_Logs)

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### How to Ascertain Whether Research Is Reasonably Exhaustive

After creating a research plan, conducting research, and logging the results in a research log, how do you know when the research is complete, or reasonably exhaustive? The researcher should ask himself or herself the following questions:

1. Have I answered my research question?
2. Have I searched across a breadth of records, not just the ones that are easily available? Have I searched many different record types? Have I looked in all relevant sources?
3. Have I used relevant methods and strategies to help me find less obvious evidence that could strengthen my conclusion?2
4. As much as possible, have I replaced information found in derivative records with information found in original documents?
5. Have I found enough information to resolve any conflicts?

## Ethics and GPS 2: Complete and Accurate Source Citations

### Study Questions

* SQ: What is the purpose of a code of ethics?
* SQ: Which major genealogical organizations have created codes of ethics?
* SQ: What is the definition of plagiarism?
* SQ: What acts are considered plagiarism?
* SQ: What are the reasons genealogists should cite their sources?
* SQ: What information should be included in your source citations?
* SQ: What resources are available to help you write citations?

In order to understand the importance of writing complete and accurate source citations in our genealogy work, you first need to understand the importance of having high ethical standards.

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### Ethics

As a genealogical researcher, you will need to uphold high ethical standards. These standards should be upheld by any researcher in any situation including but not limited to personal research, consultant guidance, professional research, and educational research.

To help us uphold high ethical standards in genealogy, genealogical organizations have written codes of ethics, or rules and ethical practices, that any researcher can follow. Members of each organization who sign the code of ethics are expected to abide by that code when dealing with other members of the organization, consumers, and the genealogical community in general.

One thing to note is that while some details listed in the codes of ethics may differ slightly, the principles that underlie the codes of ethics are the same from organization to organization and from country to country.

Read the Genealogical Ethics article from the FamilySearch Wiki included in this chapter. The code of ethics for the Association of Professional Genealogists (APG) is included in this FamilySearch Wiki reading. Notice what is included in the APG Code of Ethics.

### **Ethical Standards and Guidelines**

Ethics are moral principles by which we conduct ourselves. Most of us have a clear definition of right and wrong! Perhaps a hundred times a day we are making such subconscious distinctions. The same principles of integrity guide us in family life, social life and business life.

It may be repetitive to say more about professional ethics in this sixth module—you have already absorbed much about research standards and professional standards. You don’t want to jeopardize your business image or client relationships by the slightest perception of operating in a less than upright, forthright fashion. You don’t have to reinvent the wheel or wonder what is right or acceptable in a given situation, because appropriate conventions have already been established.

Here is a sample Code of Ethics, one which every member of the international Association of Professional Genealogists (APG) must sign and return with their membership fee. Similar organizations based in other countries have variations on the same theme, as can be seen on their websites.

### APG Code of Ethics

As a member of the Association of Professional Genealogists I agree that professionalism in genealogy requires ethical conduct in all relationships with the present or potential genealogical community. I therefore agree to:

1. Promote a coherent, truthful approach to genealogy, family history and local history.
2. Present research results and opinions in a clear, well-organized manner; fully and accurately cite references; and refrain from withholding, suppressing, or knowingly misquoting or misinterpreting sources or data.
3. Promote the trust and security of genealogical consumers.
4. Advertise services and credentials honestly, avoiding the use of misleading or exaggerated representations; explain without concealment or misrepresentation all fees, charges, and payment structures; abide by agreements regarding project scope, number of hours, and deadlines and reporting schedules; keep adequate, accessible records of financial and project-specific contacts with the consumer; and refrain from knowingly violating or encouraging others to violate laws and regulations concerning copyright, right to privacy, business finances, or other pertinent subjects.
5. Support initiatives that preserve public records and access to them.
6. Be courteous to research facility personnel and treat records with care and respect; support efforts to locate, collect, and preserve the records by compiling, cataloguing, reproducing, and indexing documents; refrain from mutilating, rearranging, or removing from their proper custodians printed, original, microfilmed, or electronic records.
7. Promote the welfare of the genealogical community.
8. Give proper credit to those who supply information and provide assistance; refrain from (or avoid) knowingly soliciting established clients of another researcher; encourage applicable education, accreditation, and certification; and refrain from public behaviour, oral remarks or written communications that defame the profession, individual genealogists, or the Association of Professional Genealogists.

As you can see, this Code covers the important aspects of professional work and deportment. To a great extent, ethical conduct is simply a matter of common courtesy and consideration for others. A few additional thoughts:

* Respect is a two-way street; you earn it by giving it.
* Please and thank you are still fundamental politeness, even in these days of hasty emails.
* Keep abreast of your business management and correspondence.
* If you say “yes” to a project, follow through to timely and thorough completion.
* If you say “no” to a project, stick to your decision; don’t interfere with those who said yes.
* Always show up on time for an appointment or a meeting.
* When you don’t know the answer to something, be honest and say so.
* Postal mail requires a self-addressed envelope and stamps for a reply.
* **Remember number five above**: Take the time to assist with committees or letter-writing when records access and preservation affect you—not only as a researcher—but as a citizen and taxpayer.

Further guidelines have been outlined by the National Genealogical Society (NGS) to address a half dozen detailed situations you will recognize—research, use of sources and resource centres, technology, sharing information, web pages and self-education. They are also featured on the [NGS](http://www.ngsgenealogy.org/) website. Note that some are labelled Guidelines while some bear the more powerful word Standards. Each one embodies careful thought. It is good for us all to review these wise statements from time to time.

Reference:

National Institute, "Genealogical Ethics,”

FamilySearch

(https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Genealogical\_Ethics\_(National\_Institute) : accessed 26 April 2023). The original content for this article was contributed by

[The National Institute for Genealogical Studies](http://www.genealogicalstudies.com/)

in June 2012. It is an excerpt from their courses

Methodology - Part 1: Getting Started, Methodology - Part 2: Organizing and Skillbuilding, Methodology - Part 3: More Strategies, Methodology - Part 4: Effective Searching and Recording, Methodology - Part 5: How To Prove It

, and

Methodology - Part 6: Professional Preparation and Practice

  by Louise St Denis, Brenda Dougall Merriman and Dr. Penelope Christensen.

The Board for Certification of Genealogists (BCG) and the International Commission for the Accreditation of Professional Genealogists (ICAPGen), and other genealogical organizations publish codes of ethics. Part of these codes of ethics that may help you as you study GPS 2 are listed below:

From “Genealogist’s Code of Ethics” by the BCG:3

* I will not publish or publicize as a fact anything I know to be false, doubtful or unproved; nor will I be a party, directly or indirectly, to such action by others.
* I will identify my sources for all information and cite only those I have personally used.
* I will quote sources precisely, avoiding any alterations that I do not clearly identify as editorial interpretations.
* I will not represent as my own the work of another. This includes works that are copyrighted, in the public domain, or unpublished.
* I will not reproduce for public dissemination, in an oral or written fashion, the work of another genealogist, writer, or lecturer without that person’s written consent. In citing another’s work, I will give proper credit.

#### Optional

[Board for Certification of Genealogists (BCG) Genealogist's Code of Ethics](https://bcgcertification.org/ethics-standards#genealogists-code-of-ethics) ICAPGen also publishes the Genealogist's Code of Ethics written by the BCG.

[ICAPGen Professional Ethics Agreement](https://icapgen.org.customers.tigertech.net/wp-content/uploads/Ethics-Agreement.pdf)

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### Plagiarism

One way to uphold high ethical standards is to avoid plagiarism. Plagiarism is an issue in every aspect of personal, educational, scholarly, and professional work. Most people wish to avoid plagiarism but do not know what plagiarism actually is nor how to successfully avoid it.

To learn about plagiarism, go to the [Understanding Academic Honesty](https://www.byupathway.edu/understanding-academic-honesty.pdf). Study the section about Plagiarism. Become familiar with the different types of plagiarism.

* Though this reading is specifically for students, it relates to any kind of work.
* Remember, by attending BYU-Pathway, you agree to follow the BYU-Pathway Honor Code, which includes not participating in any activity that involves plagiarism. Notice how you can follow the Honor Code regarding academic honesty.

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### GPS 2: Complete and Accurate Source Citations

The second element of the Genealogical Proof Standard  is “Complete, accurate citations to the source or sources of each information item contributing … to answers about that identity, relationship, event, or situation.”4 Therefore, as a genealogist, you will cite your sources carefully. A genealogist’s citations are complete and accurate. A citation is attached to every item of information collected from a source. Though information can be cited in a bibliography, footnotes, endnotes, or in-text, genealogists usually use footnotes.

Being able to correctly cite sources is an important skill for you as a genealogist. Citing sources correctly does the following:

* Connects narrative text or a genealogical event to a source.
* Demonstrates the extent of your research and the quality of the sources.5
* Allows a genealogist or client to know how to find the original record.
* Shows future genealogists where information was found.
* Provides a way for other researchers to verify the accuracy of your research.
* Upholds high ethical standards to avoid plagiarism.

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#### What Does a Citation Include?

Though citations can become very technical, each one should contain the name of the author, title of the source, and publication information.

**Author:** The author is the creator of a record. This is either a person or an entity.

**Title:** The title is the official name of a source.

**Publication:** The publication information tells the reader how a document was published. For digitized original records available in online repositories, the online repository is considered part of the publication information.

The publication information is never complete on its own. Just like a full citation for a book would include more than the name or address of the library where the book was found, a full citation will always include more than the URL where an image was found. Publication information in a citation will also provide all relevant details about how to find the source again. The citation will include “the record’s present location [and the] specific location within the record from which an item of information was taken.”6

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#### What Format is Used to Write Genealogical Citations?

For now, you will refer to the FHGEN 110 Citation Instructions in your course for citation instructions for this course. In future FHGEN units you will learn to write citations. Genealogists use the following resources to know how to write citations. You are invited to bookmark these for later use.

##### “Guide to Citing Sources”

As a student in the FHGEN program, you will find the “Guide to Citing Sources” (located in the Student Resources module of every FHGEN course) to be particularly helpful. This resource gives examples of the most commonly used citations. Please spend some time familiarizing yourself with its contents.

##### The Chicago Manual of Style

The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) is the manual used in the FHGEN program at BYU-Pathway for basic citations. Students can access The Chicago Manual of Style through the BYU-Pathway Library.

Though the entire CMOS book is valuable, section **14.23** is a particularly helpful resource for students looking to find examples of various citations.

CMOS also has sections on page formatting, publishing, style and usage, and indexing.

##### Evidence Explained

Evidence Explained, by Elizabeth Shown Mills, is the standards manual followed in the FHGEN program at BYUI for genealogical citations not found in CMOS. A digital copy is not available through the McKay Library. While it's not a required purchase, it is suggested that students who plan to become professionals consider acquiring a copy or finding one at their local library so that they can access it regularly. You can learn more about Evidence Explained and see examples of citations by visiting the [Evidence Explained](https://www.evidenceexplained.com/)

### Tips for International Students

When you are ready to perform personal or professional genealogical work, it is important that you learn the standards for writing citations in your country. One way to do this is to ask other people who have done work in your country. The FamilySearch Wiki has a page for finding [genealogical groups in different countries](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/FamilySearch_Genealogy_Research_Groups). Many of these groups are social media groups. Find a group for your country and ask where you can find citation standards for your country.

You can also search the internet to determine what style of citations are used in your country. For instance, you could try entering the terms “genealogical citations in Africa,” or other terms, in the address bar or search bar. You might also search for “genealogical organizations” in your country. These organizations might have websites with information about resources in your area. There may also be a contact box near the bottom of the page where you can email or call with questions. The [FamilySearch Wiki](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Main_Page) also provides information about different countries. Enter the name of your country in the search bar and explore the results.

1. FamilySearch, “Basic Genealogical Research Plans (International Institute),” (https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Basic\_Genealogical\_Research\_Plans\_(National\_Institute) : accessed 23 February 2023).
2. Elizabeth Shown Mills, "Reasonably Exhaustive Research," updated 4 March 2016, <http://www.evidenceexplained.com/quicktips/reasonably-exhaustive-research-0>.
3. Board for Certification of Genealogists, "Code of Ethics and Standards” (<https://bcgcertification.org/ethics-standards/code/> : 1 January 2019)
4. Board for Certification of Genealogists,Genealogy Standards, 50th anniversary edition (Nashville, TN: Ancestry, 2014), 1.
5. Board for Certification of Genealogists, The BCG Genealogical Standards Manual, 50th anniversary edition (Orem, UT: Ancestry Publishing Company, 2001), 3.
6. Board for Certification of Genealogists, The BCG Genealogical Standards Manual, 50th anniversary edition (Orem, UT: Ancestry Publishing Company, 2001), 2.

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