

USING AI IN GENEALOGY

For beginners using AI in genealogy, good practice exercises include using AI for transcription and translation of old documents, summarizing historical records and books, generating citation templates for sources, and brainstorming research questions by asking the AI for relevant record types and locations. These exercises help users practice effective prompting and understand AI's capabilities and limitations, emphasizing the need to fact-check all AI-generated information. [[1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#)]

Practice Exercises:

1. **Document Transcription and Translation:**
 - **Exercise:** Find a sample of old, difficult-to-read handwriting from a document (like a will or letter) and use an AI tool to transcribe it. [[1](#), [5](#)]
 - **Goal:** To see how well AI can decipher cursive and unfamiliar language, and to understand the limitations of the AI's accuracy. [[1](#), [2](#), [5](#)]
2. **Record Summarization:**
 - **Exercise:** Provide the AI with a short, complex document, such as an obituary, a newspaper article, or a portion of a census record, and ask it to summarize the key information. [[1](#), [3](#), [5](#)]
 - **Goal:** To learn how to extract essential data points and understand the context of historical documents. [[1](#), [2](#)]
3. **Citation Generation:**
 - **Exercise:** Give the AI details from a specific record you found (e.g., the 1940 census record of an ancestor) and ask it to create a properly formatted citation for that source. [[3](#)]
 - **Goal:** To understand how to use AI to format and organize information, which is a crucial step in proper genealogical documentation. [[3](#), [6](#)]
4. **Brainstorming Research Questions:**
 - **Exercise:** Describe a general research goal, like "finding my great-grandfather's immigration record," and ask the AI to suggest specific types of records that might contain this information and why they are relevant. [[2](#), [4](#)]
 - **Goal:** To discover new avenues for research and learn what information is typically found in different types of records. [[2](#), [4](#)]
5. **Generating Research Plans:**
 - **Exercise:** Provide the AI with your current research summary and a specific research question. Ask it to suggest a logical, step-by-step plan to answer your question. [[4](#)]
 - **Goal:** To practice structuring research goals and to receive guidance on prioritizing steps and records. [[4](#)]
6. **Photo Restoration:**
 - **Exercise:** Provide the AI with an image and ask it to fix whatever is wrong with it, scratches, missing pieces, faded, etc.
 - **Goal:** To see which AI program corrects your image the best.

Tips for Beginners:

- **Fact-Check Everything:** AI is a tool to assist, not a definitive source of truth. Always verify any information, dates, or individuals the AI provides with original records. [[2](#), [7](#), [8](#)]
- **Use Clear Prompts:** The quality of the AI's response depends on the clarity and specificity of your input. Be specific in your instructions. [[1](#), [4](#)]
- **Keep a Log of Prompts:** Keep track of the prompts that work well for you and their results. This will help you refine your process for future use. [[9](#)]
- **Be Aware of AI Limitations:** AI cannot access behind-logins data on sites like Ancestry or FamilySearch, and it is not a subject-matter expert. [[2](#), [4](#)]

AI SIG organizing ideas

- **Consider Joining a Community:** Engage with other genealogists to share experiences and learn how others are effectively using AI tools, according to English Ancestors. [[10](#)]

AI responses may include mistakes.

- [1] <https://www.journeytothepastblog.com/2025/05/10-ways-i-use-artificial-intelligence.html>
- [2] <https://familytreemagazine.com/resources/apps/ai-genealogy-prompts/>
- [3] <https://lineages.com/how-to-use-ai-in-your-family-history-work-a-beginners-guide/>
- [4] <https://denyseallen.substack.com/p/good-ai-prompts-genealogy>
- [5] <https://familytreewebinars.com/webinar/7-tips-for-using-ai-as-your-genealogy-assistant/>
- [6] <https://generationsgenealogy.com.au/genealogy-timeline-with-ai-getting-started/>
- [7] <https://marketing.ces.ncsu.edu/ai-guidance/>
- [8] <https://www.familysearch.org/en/blog/ai-developments-genealogy>
- [9] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jovfVUVApac>
- [10] <https://englishancestors.blog/2024/11/15/using-ai-for-genealogy/>