

Navigating Ancestry's DNA Testing Process

There are many steps between purchasing your AncestryDNA kit and receiving your results. Hopefully this guide will help you find your way through the various stages and head off any problems before they arise. The final page of this guide has a handy sheet to list all the relevant information about a test and record its progress through the system.

Ancestry offers many helpful articles in their Support Centre (<https://support.ancestry.co.uk/s/>). I've included links to these to make it easy to read the current guidance at any time. All the links I've added go to the Ancestry.co.uk site – occasionally there are regional variations (for example, if you post a sample back from the UK it should arrive within 20 business days, but from Canada the guidance is to allow 30 business days) so it might be worth checking the local version of Ancestry's support site if you're not based in the UK.

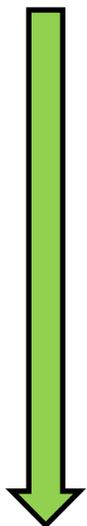


This link will take you to an overview of all the available DNA Support Articles on Ancestry: <https://support.ancestry.co.uk/s/article/UK-DNA-Foundations>

A Step by Step Guide:

Order DNA kit(s)

When you order a DNA testing kit you don't have to specify who is going to be taking the test. If you want to buy kits for other people to use, you can. When the kit is used, the person providing the sample will need to activate it within their own Ancestry account.



The total price you pay covers the kit itself, all delivery/shipping costs, and permanent access to the results. You do **not** have to have an Ancestry subscription to take a DNA test, but, if you have one, it will give you access to more of Ancestry's features to use when working with the results – including the ability to see the trees of your matches. If you don't currently have a subscription, you may find that Ancestry offers you a discounted price after you have taken the test, so it might be worth waiting a while. Ancestry's gives a full breakdown of what is available with and without a subscription here: [AncestryDNA and subscriptions](#)

If you decide to buy a kit as a gift, be aware that the packaging may give away the contents of the parcel! If you're trying to surprise someone and there's a chance that they'll see the package when it's delivered, you might want to consider having the kit delivered to a different address (you can request this when you place the order).

If you want to send a kit to someone else (in the same country) you can arrange to have it delivered directly to them – but you need to let them know to expect it, as the parcel will arrive with nothing to indicate who has ordered it. You cannot buy a kit and have it delivered directly to someone in another country.

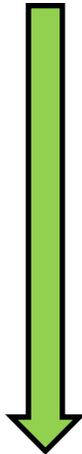
Shipping Costs



Shipping costs do seem expensive – in the UK there is a choice between expedited shipping (£19.99) and standard (£9.99). However, it covers delivery to you by courier and the return of your sample to the lab in America (via Ireland if you are returning a sample from the UK).

Also, if for any reason you need to have your kit replaced – if your order does not arrive, your sample gets lost in the post, or can't be processed - you will not have to pay any further shipping charges.

New Rules?



In July 2017 Ancestry altered the activation process. **Every adult who tests is now required to use their own Ancestry account to activate their test.** Even your 100-year-old Great Aunt who has never used a computer in her life and does not own a mobile phone! This change was implemented to give individuals control over their own DNA results. In theory, it means that the person who tested should always be able to access their results by signing in to their personal Ancestry account where they activated their DNA test. Results can be shared with others and, just as importantly, the person who tested can choose to remove anyone they have invited to access the results.

If you and your partner share an Ancestry account, and both decide to test, one of you will need to set up a new Ancestry account. If you decide to test any of your children who are under 18 their tests can be still be activated within your account.

Many people want to test relatives who have no technological skills – or (shockingly!) have no interest in the actual DNA results. **The changes that Ancestry implemented do not stop you from managing kits on behalf of other people, nor do they make the process more expensive.** It means a little more work – each person who tests needs a unique email, a Registered Guest (free/no subscription required) account on Ancestry, and you then need to go through the process of being invited/accepting the role of manager. The end result is that the results are accessible within the manager's account **as well as** the account of the person who tested.

Email address



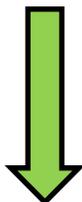
Each Ancestry account must be linked to a unique email address. If the person taking the test does not have their own personal email account, they will need to create one. There are many email providers who offer free accounts – Gmail, Yahoo, Outlook etc.

Progress updates, including notification that the results are ready, will be sent to the email address associated with the Ancestry account that was used for activation. Even if the person who tests already has an Ancestry account, it is worth double-checking that they know which email address is linked to their account - and that they still have access to that email account. It is always possible to check the progress of the test, or view the results, by signing in to the Account used to activate the test, but having a working email address will make life easier.

Another point to bear in mind is that if you ever forget your account password, reset instructions will be sent to the email listed on your Ancestry account. Ensuring you have a current, accessible, email address on file really is worthwhile.

To check which email account is linked to your Ancestry account, and update it if necessary, follow the steps in this Ancestry guide: [How to Change your Ancestry Account Email Address](#)

Ancestry Accounts

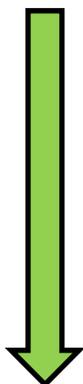


If the person who tests already has an Ancestry account (especially if the existing account has a current subscription and has already been used to build a tree) there is no need to make a new account for a DNA test – just use the account that already exists.

If you have persuaded someone to test and they don't have an Ancestry account, you can create one on their behalf if you hold Power of Attorney for them. For other adult testers you can work with them and help them set up a free Registered Guest account at Ancestry. Ancestry's guidance on activating kits on behalf of other people can be found here: [Inviting Someone to Activate their Test](#)

Ancestry's guide to creating a free, Registered Guest account can be found here: [Ancestry Guest Registration](#)

Take the Test



Instructions on how to take the test are provided in a leaflet within the kit and a copy is available in this Ancestry guide: [Taking a DNA Test](#)

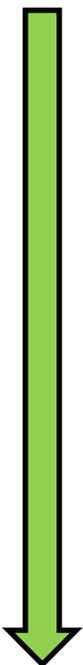
Ancestry also offers a video here: [How to Activate a DNA test](#)

It is important to follow the instructions about not eating/drinking/smoking or you may find that the sample is contaminated and cannot be successfully processed. Denture fixative can also contaminate a sample. Other avoidable reasons for a test failing to be processed can include not providing enough saliva, or not fully releasing/mixing the blue stabilising solution with the sample.

Nothing makes your mouth go dry quite like being asked to spit! Rubbing your cheeks against your teeth/gums can help stimulate saliva production, or sniffing a lemon may help. Not everyone finds it easy to provide enough saliva in one sitting - it is possible to refrigerate the sample and add to it over several hours.

With so many "do"s and "don't"s it can take a bit of planning to find the right time to take the test!

Activation *If you don't activate your test, you won't get your results.*



Without activation, Ancestry has no way of knowing who the sample belongs to, so they have no way of passing on the results to the right person! **Every** sample needs to be activated within its own account - sending back two samples, having only activated one of them, means that someone is going to be disappointed.

The activation code is the vital bit of information that links your sample to your Ancestry account. The code consists of 15 characters, alternating between letters and numbers. It's printed on the tube and on the paperwork in the kit. If you type the code in and it's rejected, take a close look at the characters in the code - it could be that you've misread a letter S as a number 5 or something similar.

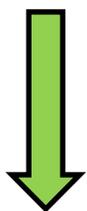
If you are testing several people at the same time, make sure you know which activation code/sample belongs to which person - consider labelling up all the kits/tubes before you start. Once you have more than one tube of saliva in front of you there is no simple way to tell which sample was provided by which person!

This link will take you to Ancestry's guide to activating a test: [Activating your AncestryDNA Test Kit](#)

If you have been patiently waiting for results and have just realised that you didn't activate your sample, all is not lost. Just go to <https://ancestry.co.uk/dna/activate>, make sure you are signed in to your own account and enter the code. If you can't find the code then unfortunately there is no way of processing your sample, but Ancestry are generally very good about supplying replacement kits - ring [Ancestry Support](#) and you can start the process from the beginning again.

Once your test has been successfully activated you will receive an email from Ancestry to confirm that this step is complete.

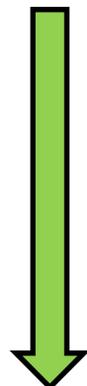
Post it back



Now that the test has been taken and activated, all that is left to do is put the sealed tube in the storage bag, seal the bag, place it in the pre-addressed, postage-paid return box that came with the kit and send it on its way. (Some countries have a system which uses plastic mailing bags to return the test kits.)

There is no need to take it to a Post Office counter or have it sent "signed for", just pop it in the nearest post box. If a test gets lost in the post, Ancestry will replacement it free of charge – Ancestry explains how to obtain a replacement here: [Replacing a DNA Kit](#)

Assign a Manager (optional)



Once a test has been activated, the owner can choose to assign a Manager. So, if Great-Uncle Bernard is not a great user of technology, he can let you take care of everything (but he can always change his mind, sign in to his account and remove your access – he still has ultimate control as the owner of his DNA). Information on how this process works can be found in the Ancestry guides below:

To make someone a Manager of your results:

[Assigning a Manager to your DNA Test](#)

Accepting an invitation to someone's DNA results:

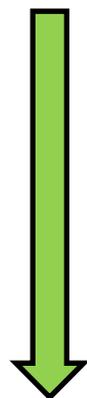
[Accepting a DNA Invitation](#)

Switching from one set of results to another within your account:

[Accessing Multiple DNA Results](#)

Yes, that's a few hoops to jump through, but you only need to do the process once for each kit. If you end up logging in and out of two different accounts on the same computer, it can get a little confusing – if you have any problems, double-check which account you are using at the time.

Arrival



You can track your test's progress at any time by signing in your Ancestry account. Ancestry's guide to locating your DNA results (or progress status) can be found here: [Locating DNA Results](#)

If you share a computer with someone else who also has an Ancestry account, remember to check which account is currently in use (look in the top right-hand corner of the screen and check which username you can see) and, if necessary, sign out of their account and sign in again using your own username/email and password.

Don't be too concerned if you activate and post your sample but don't get an update for a while – your test will only show as having "arrived" once it has reached the lab in America (not when it arrives in Ireland). Ancestry says to allow up to 20 business day before the kit will be considered lost in the post – if this has happened you need to follow the instructions here: [Replacing a lost DNA kit](#)

Also, don't worry too much if you put two tests in the same post box at the same time and one seems to race through and generate rapid results and the other doesn't – they can easily get separated on their journey through the system.

Processing

Ancestry estimates that it should take 6 - 8 weeks after your sample arrives for results to be available. If you sent your sample back just after a major promotion (eg, Black Friday) you could well find that it takes longer than the estimate.

Occasionally, things do go wrong and samples cannot be processed. Reasons for this might include the sample leaking out of the tube, the stabilising fluid not being mixed with the sample, the sample not containing enough saliva or DNA cells or it having been contaminated by food/drink etc.

If this happens you will receive an email to let you know that you need to provide another sample, and it will include instructions on how request a free replacement kit: [Ancestry's guide to Replacing a DNA Kit](#)

Results

You will be notified by email that your results are available (or you may be checking your Ancestry account every five minutes by this stage and find that suddenly the results are there)!

The results are only available online, Ancestry does not send you a printed version – they explain why here: [Why DNA results aren't mailed](#)

The notification email contains a link that says "See My Results" – click it to be taken to your DNA page. For this to work, you need to be signed in to the Ancestry account that was used to activate your kit. If you get a message saying that you are not authorised to view the results, the most likely problem is that you are either not signed in at all, or someone else is signed in to their Ancestry account on the computer you are using. This guide shows you how to deal with this problem: [403 Error](#) - basically, sign them out and sign yourself back in!

You don't need to use the email link every time you want to see your results. Once they have been processed you can sign in to your account to view them at any time: [Locating your DNA Results](#)

What next?

Learning how to get the best from your DNA results can be overwhelming, so go at a pace you are comfortable with, you can't learn everything at once!

Ancestry keeps updating your ethnicity reports as more information becomes available, so it might be worth printing or taking screenshots of your original results just for interest's sake. Your list of matches will also be automatically updated. As well as new matches being added, there is now an option for people to hide their results, so again, if there is a match of special interest to you, it is worth making sure you have a copy of all the information you might want.

If you haven't already linked your results to yourself in one of your trees, now is a good time to do so. More information can be found here: [How to Link Your AncestryDNA results To Your Ancestry Tree.](#)

If you've been learning about DNA by reading blogs, books and posts on online DNA groups, hopefully everything will start to fall into place now you have some results of your own to explore!

Ancestry DNA Test Progress Checker

AncestryDNA test taken by: Name: _____

Ancestry Account: Username: _____ Password: _____



Email address associated with this Ancestry Account: _____
(Double-check that you have access to this email account and know the password)

Activation: 15 digit code: _____

Date kit activated via the above Ancestry Account: _____ Date email confirmation received: _____

Manager (if assigned): Name of DNA Manager: _____ Date invitation sent/accepted: _____

Sample Arrived: Date sample was received by Ancestry: _____

Processing: Date processing started: _____

Results: Date results became available: _____

You can sign into the Ancestry account you used to activate your test **at any time** to check the current status of your test - just go to www.ancestry.co.uk/dna

For further help discovering your DNA family, [visit DNADiscoveries.co.uk](http://www.dnadiscoveries.co.uk)



or



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