

Explore your genealogy with Family Tree Maker for Mac

Software: Family Tree Maker for Mac
Nova Development and Ancestry.Com
\$99.99 from online retailers with 6-month subscription to Ancestry.com; \$69.99 from Ancestry.com with 2-week trial subscription.

Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

One of the fastest growing hobbies in the world is genealogy. Interested in sleuthing through historical records to find long-lost relatives? Interested in finding your roots going back many generations? Take the opportunity to explore genealogy.

If you've stored random scraps of information about your family in a file drawer for years, all jumbled together and unorganized, written tidbits of family stories shared by older relatives, maybe it's time.

With a little effort and energy, **Family Tree Maker for Mac** offers a way to sort out and store your information. Then you can view it in many different ways on charts and reports, add to it through online research, and share your history more easily. The program is flexible enough to store family pictures, occupations, and stories, along with the names and dates routinely recorded on family trees.

First get familiar with the program's complicated interface with its multiple panels, menu bars, and arrows. Then you will be ready to plug data into

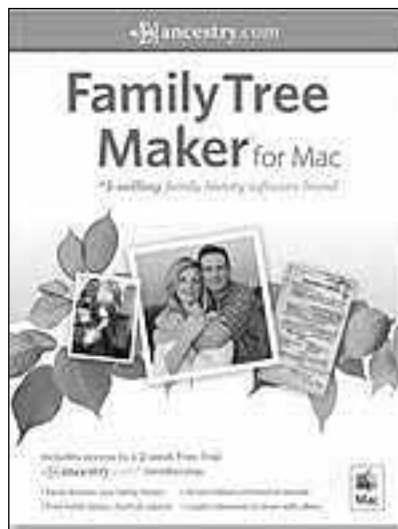
the appropriate spots. Navigating is easy, as is the data entry with this clean design. I started with a basic tree, entering what I know from two hand-drawn family tree charts. (You can also import a tree you started on Ancestry.com or import the standard genealogical data format—GEDCOM—to get you going.)

Spending an hour reading the Companion Guide for Mac (a PDF) included with the installation, was invaluable for teaching this beginner how to navigate, the importance of consistency (don't include the married name of female relatives), how to notate questionable dates, and record alternate information until you resolve the inaccuracies.

It also explains how to handle surnames with multiple words (enclosed in backslashes, e.g. \Rivera Blasini\) for a typical Hispanic carrying double last names of the father and mother—a blessing for genealogists!

Once you enter places in the world where births, deaths, and marriages took place, the program offers a fascinating map view (using Microsoft Bing Maps)

locating any place you select under the Places tab. Zeroing in on a small village in Cuba or Scotland is intriguing; you can also create migration maps that highlight how far one person's life journeys carried him or her.



(Family Tree Maker, cont. on page 6)

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So why buy a program to store all your family history?

- Storing and making your family tree in the cloud on Ancestry.com is expensive. Subscription rates for World Membership run \$299 per year or \$30 per month. With Family Tree Maker for the Mac, it's on your hard drive.
- It offers varied views with chart options. Going to visit your maternal grandmother? Print out a chart of that side of the family and fill in the blanks. Or if your daughter is looking for a baby name to reflect her heritage, print out her direct ancestors in a pedigree chart.
- It's flexible and organized. Add facts and dates as you find them. It even backs up automatically.
- It's Internet savvy. You can search from within the program using Google, Bing, or Yahoo, then highlight information to bring it directly to your tree. But beware: many sites allow free searches, but charge for downloads or views of documents.
- Ancestry.com now owns Family Tree Maker for Mac and has integrated a Search function.

If you've already begun a tree there, you can easily import it. Ancestry.com even prompts you with a little leaf icon to search some relevant links that may pertain to any relative you enter on your tree. You can also search Rootweb.com or Genealogy.com from within the program.

I've read complaints of instability and sluggishness online, but I encountered none. Also, for those with PC versions of Family Tree Maker who created trees, investigate the conversion options before purchasing and assuming you can seamlessly switch to the Mac version; others have reported some problems.

I was impressed with the ease of use and the flexibility of printing options. I also appreciate the spellcheck on place names for consistency. As a beginner, I found this fun and slightly addictive. Just what I need—another hobby!

For info: www.familytreemaker.com

Recommended system requirements: Mac OS X 10.5 or later; Intel processor; 500 MB of hard disk space; 1 GB of RAM; Internet access for some features.

—By Leigh Blair, GGCS

You don't have to back up! Learn why at 6 p.m., Mon., July 25

Do you really need to back up your computer's information? And if you do need to, how often do you need to? And how do you determine the best way to do it?

GGCS' John King will lead a free hour-long class about backing up your computer before

July's General Meeting. Just come to the Sheraton San Rafael at 6 p.m., Monday, July 25, to learn more basics of using your computer.

John leads a rotating set of seven classes before each month's General Meeting. For more information, see www.ggcs.org/intro-class.htm.

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