



# Best Practices on Family Tree for Nordic Ancestors

By Geoffrey Fröberg Morris AG®

gfrobergmorrise@gmail.com

There are unique challenges in Family Tree for people with Nordic ancestors. Some of these challenges are tied to the system, others have a cultural origin, and some are to be expected with an online collaborative environment. The goal is to establish a clear and strong identity for each ancestor on a person page. This class will discuss both the challenges and solutions with an emphasis on doing the best practices.

## Person Names

1. Spell given names as you see them in the records (not always easy to choose)

Reason: We want the given name to match what other people will see in the records. Use the spelling that people will see the most in the records. Some people like to use the spelling found in the birth and christening, but this doesn't always match how the name appears most of the time. It's not an easy choice because of spelling variations. Some letters are interchangeable such as: i = j, c = k, e = ä or æ, and aa = å. Enter the variant spellings in the "Other Information" box by clicking on "Add", then "Alternate Name" as "Also Known as." The Family Tree search engine searches "Alternate Name" information as part of the search process.

2. Do not include occupations or titles in the given name field.

Reason: This creates problems for the search functionality. Use the "Title" field with the person's name in "Vital Information" when you want to include one. Or, click on "Other information", "Add", and then "Occupation" to enter an occupation.

3. Spell entire patronymic surnames: -sson, -sen for males and -dotter or -datter for females. The spelling -sson is usually for Sweden and -sen is used for Denmark. Either spelling can be used for Norway but they tend to use -sen more.

Reason: It's the name the deceased person used. It matches what people see in the records.

4. In cases of illegitimate birth, use the surname that the person used

Reason: We want the surname to match what other people will see in the records. So if the child is seen in the records with a different surname than their siblings, it just is what it is.

## Place Names

5. Always include smaller places i.e. farm, village, or household number in the place of an event

Reason: The smaller place names can be helpful to distinguish your ancestor from another person with the same name. The smaller place name is helpful for anyone who tries to find the ancestor in a record.

6. Always include parish, county, and country

Reason: If the “place of an event” is missing the parish, county, or country name then it becomes a lot harder to verify the event in an actual record.

7. Don't use regional names in the place of event

Reason: Regional names do not help others to find online records. Online providers do not use regional names to organize records. For example: Jylland (peninsula), Fyn (island), Sjælland (island), Sønder Jylland (lower peninsula.)

8. Spelling of place names

Reason: You will see place names spelled different ways from record to record. Do you enter one of the variants or a modern standard? I suggest that you spell the smaller place names as they appear in the record and the parish, and county by the industry standard. The parish and county names are standard in online record providers. Using an older spelling of a smaller place name is more likely to match what people see in the records.

## Data Entry

9. Use correct letters, å, ä, and ö, æ, ø, å

Reason: The Nordic languages use all the letters of the English alphabet plus 3 additional ones (Sweden and Finland å, ä, and ö) and (Denmark and Norway æ, ø, and å.) The 3 extra letters come after the letter z. These letters effect alphabetical order for online record providers, databases, and indexes. It's in everybody's best interest to use the 3 extra letters correctly.

## 10. No abbreviations

Reason: Genealogy and family history is already difficult for most people. Don't create more confusion by entering an abbreviation that only some people will recognize. For example:

- datter or dotter instead of – dr
- parish names: Ytterenhörna instead of Y. Enh.
- full name of counties: Västernorrland instead of V-nold, Hjørring instead of Hjør.
- full name of countries instead of Den., SW, Nor.

## Duplicates

## 11. Surnames and duplicate pages

Reason: Person pages were created from a variety of older databases such as: Ancestral File, Pedigree Resource File, and the I.G.I. With this said, you'll find that an ancestor might have duplicate pages with different surnames (patronymic and non-patronymic.) The way to look for duplicates is to enter a surname and check for duplicates. Change the surname and check for duplicates again. Leave the surname that you see the most as the name of the page. Add the other name to the "Other Information" box as an "Alternate Name".

## 12. Amount of data in Vital Information

Reason: If you have less information in the "Vital Information" box then the system is less likely to find duplicates. Increased information is more likely to find duplicates. Always add the date and place of event for all the vital information that you find, i.e. birth and christening dates and death and burial dates.

## Prevent Changes to a Person Page

## 13. Enter all "date and place" information for every event

Reason: Every date and place of event is a unique data point. The more points that you have, the less likely that another user or a FamilySearch update will change the data on a person page.

#### 14. Upload and attach documents

Reason: If the only sources attached to a person page came from indexed data (no document image) then people wonder if it's correct, especially if the ancestor has a common name. When people see the original document, they take it more seriously. They are more cautious in their interpretation of the evidence. For complicated person pages such as an emigrant ancestor, increase the number of uploaded / attached documents and other people will leave it alone.

#### 15. Use discussion to clarify complicated situations

Reason: If you have figured out a complicated situation. Share the knowledge by creating a discussion on the person page. Mention how you have been looking for evidence and how you made the conclusions.

### Caution

#### 16. Record Hints and Nordic naming customs

Reason: Be careful attaching record hints to the person page when the ancestor has a really common given name and or surname. This is especially true for Denmark. Too often there is another person with the same name, close in age, living in the same parish or nearby. Use evidence to establish clear identity in records and only attach the records that you know are correct.

#### 17. Changing vital information or relationships

Reason: When you see potential problems on a person page, leave it alone until you know the truth. Discover the truth by searching records and change the person page to match reality.