

- Use what you know. If you don't know birth year, death year, location, etc., leave this blank in your search. You can always add information in future searches once you've uncovered more about your ancestor.
- Try variant name spellings. Names are often misspelled on census records. Also, some families changed the spelling of their name over time.
- Search by middle name or nickname instead of the first name.
- Search without a first name, OR without a last name. You can then narrow your search further by adding other details, like location, birth, or death year(s).
- Broaden your geographic location. Your ancestor may be in a different city, county, or state.

### Census Search Tips & Tricks

- Ancestry has indexed every name listed in the Census, not just the head of the household. If you are having trouble locating an ancestor, try searching for their spouse, child, or a parent instead.
  - Occasionally, census takers only recorded initials in place of the given name. Using only a first initial will bring up these records.
  - Census takers didn't always have the best penmanship, so if you're having a hard time locating your ancestor, write out the name and try replacing some of the letters with letters that look similar.
  - Keep in mind that census records and census indexes are not perfect and may contain errors. This may be due to poor handwriting, missed persons, misinformation, or numerous other factors.
  - If you're not having luck by searching, try browsing records. Click the Search tab, select U.S. Federal Census Collection under Narrow by Category, click on a census year at the bottom of the page, then browse by state— county—and township/city.
  - Be sure to locate your ancestor's adult siblings in census records. It was common for extended family to live in the same household or near other family members. You may find a parent, grandparent, or other family members living either with them or nearby.
  - Census records can be rich with details about your ancestor--use these to locate more records. For example, the U.S. federal censuses for 1900-1930 include a date of immigration for immigrants. Use that date to narrow your search for your ancestor's passenger arrival record in the Ancestry Immigration & Travel Collection.
  - Pinpoint your ancestor's location from the census on a map, and then look for churches, cemeteries, and other places where your ancestor may have left records.
  - No luck in Ancestry LE? Try searching in other census indexes. Search or browse census records in HeritageQuest, another database available at any B&ECPL library. For more information about the U.S. Federal Census see: <http://www.archives.gov/genealogy/census/>.