

# The Federal Census A Beginner's Guide

The Federal Census is one of the most valuable sources of family information as you begin your genealogical research.

## Why the Census?

Beginning in 1790, the U.S. federal census is conducted every 10 years. Mandated by the Constitution, the census provides data used to determine the allocation of federal funding and the number of seats each state holds in the House of Representatives.

For genealogists, these records document the movement and changes of American families each decade. Census records can help piece together a timeline of your family history.

Line No.	LOCATION		HOUSEHOLD DATA			NAME	RELATION	PERSONAL DESCRIPTION				EDUCATION	PLACE OF BIRTH	CITIZENSHIP	RESIDENCE, APRIL 1, 1935					
	Street, avenue, road, etc.	House number (in cities and towns)	Number of household in order of union	House owned (O) or rented (R)	Value of home, if owned, or monthly rental, if rented.			Color or race	Age at last birthday	Married within (M), Widowed (W), Divorced (D)	Attended school or college any time since March 1, 1931 (Yes or No)				Highest grade of school completed	CODE (Leave blank)	City, town, or village having home or usual abode on January 1, 1935	CODE (Leave blank)	County	STATE (or Territory or foreign country)
41	East					Beulah M.	Daughter	F	W	12	S	Yes	6	Missouri	66	R	Maloney	Missouri	Yes	X002
42						Dorel W.	Son	M	W	7	S	Yes	1	Missouri	66	R	Woodbury	Missouri	Yes	X002
43						Thomas A.	Brother	M	W	21	S	No	8	Missouri	66	R	Woodbury	Missouri	Yes	X002
44			96	0	300	Sharr, William M.	Head	M	W	87	M	No	8	Indiana	10	Same Home			Yes	A002

The information collected in the census has increased over time. As more states were added to the Union, they were also added to the census. The 1790 census included 13 states and additional territories and districts. Only the head of household was listed by name, with remaining household members and slaves tallied by age and/or gender categories. By 1850, the census contained names of all household members.

Information you might find on the federal census includes:

- Name
- Age
- Birthplace (state or country)
- Parents' birthplace
- Relationships (may be actual or inferred)
- Year of immigration; naturalization
- Residence
- Marriage status
- Occupation
- Education

Tip: Keep track of the information available on each census: Ancestry provides [a guide](#)<sup>1</sup> for each census year and Rootsweb provides [a comparison chart](#)<sup>2</sup>. [Blank census forms and headings](#)<sup>3</sup> are also available.

