



Genealogical Research Overview Guide

LOOKING FOR?	FIRST CHOICE:	ALSO:
Age	Census, Civil Registration, Church Records	Cemeteries, Obituaries, Military Records
Birth Date	Civil Registration, Church Records	Obituaries, Newspapers, Military Records, Occupations
Birth Place	Census, Civil Registration, Church Records	Obituaries, Newspapers, Occupations, Military Records
Place of foreign birth (not England)	Church Records, Census	Emigration and Immigration, Military Records
Boundaries (parish, district, county)	Gazetteers	Maps, Historical References
Death Information	Civil Registration, Church Records, Obituaries, Newspapers, Cemeteries	Probate Records, Court Records, Land and Property, Military Records
Maiden Name	Civil Registration, Church Records	Obituaries, Newspapers, Cemeteries, Periodicals
Marriage Information	Church Records, Civil Registration, Published Genealogies, Periodicals	Newspapers, Biography, Nobility, Cemeteries
Occupation	Church Records, Census, Directories, Civil Registration, Occupations, Probate Records	Court Records, Obituaries, Officials and Employees, Military Records, Taxation
Parents, Children or Other Family	Census, Obituaries, Probate Records	Church Records, Newspapers, Civil Registration, Published Genealogies, Periodicals
Places of Residence	Directories, Census, Probate Records, Civil Registration	Church Records, Taxation

Previous Research	Biography, Published Genealogies, Societies, Periodicals	Nobility, Lineage Societies
Religion	Church Records, Biography, Obituaries, Civil Registration	Cemeteries, Published Genealogies, History, Probate Records, Periodicals
Schooling & Education	School Records, Newspapers, Periodicals	Military Records, Published Genealogies
Social Activities	Periodicals, Newspapers, Directories, Organization Records	Probate Records

Adapted from FamilySearch Wiki: https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/England_Record_Selection_Table

Census Overview, England & Wales

1841	First census to record names of individuals rather than statistical totals.	Ages of adults over 15 were typically rounded down to the nearest 5 years (e.g., 53 → 50).	Limited detail: includes name, age, sex, occupation, and address, but no relationships or precise birthplaces.
1851	Introduces relationships to the head of household, allowing for clear family structure.	Lists precise birthplace (parish and county), improving geographic accuracy.	Records marital status and disabilities, expanding social context.
1861	Builds on 1851 by preserving all prior categories.	Coverage now includes people on vessels and inland waterways.	Offers growing occupational detail as industrialization expanded.
1871	Continues structure of 1861 but with slightly expanded occupational information.	Increasing accuracy due to improved public familiarity with census forms.	Additional detail supports analysis of industrial-era household composition and employment.
1881	Fully standardized nationwide, very consistent transcription and indexing.	Useful snapshot of the mature industrial era and women's occupations.	Provides a stable baseline for comparison between earlier and later censuses.
1891	Asks how many rooms the household occupied, if fewer than five.	Added employee/employer distinctions to expand occupational data.	Increasingly detailed occupational recording supports social-history reconstruction.
1901	Continues the 1891 practice of recording number of rooms (if >5)	More comprehensive occupational data, capturing turn-of-century shifts (e.g. factory work, domestic service).	Forms clearer picture of urban vs rural household density and movement.
1911	First census completed by the householders themselves, not copied by enumerators. Original handwriting survives.	Records length of marriage, children born, children living and children deceased; critical for identifying missing or unrecorded children.	Adds nationality and expands occupational and employment fields.

1921	Records ages in years and months, providing unusually precise age data.	Includes employer name and workplace address, the first UK census to do so.	Captures parental survival (whether mother/father still alive).
1939 Register*	Captures every civilian on 29 September 1939, taken to issue identity cards, manage ration books, conscription, and wartime population movement.	Records exact date of birth (day, month, year), and women’s maiden names.	Functions as the most complete UK population survey between 1921 and 1951.

Parish Records Overview, England & Wales

Baptism	Banns	Marriage	Burial
Pre-1837 births	Impending marriage	Anglican records, but can include other denominations	Pre-1853 Burial Act, nearly all are in local parish churchyard
Name, date, place, parents names.	Look for “by banns” or “by license”	Divorce very uncommon	Public Cemeteries created in 1850
Usually occurred shortly after birth, but not always.	Post-1753 more common; eventually became a legal requirement	Minimum age for marriage was 16 in 1763 – but special license could be obtained	Post-1850, parish churchyards decline, but still an option
Late 16 th Century: mothers names are more common.	Many fewer Banns books survive vs marriage registers	Post-1837, includes same information as on civil registration	Refer to special Acts for other key dates/ understanding