
A template for fitting family trees on A4 or US Letter pages

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While I have built my family tree on Ancestry and, including my wife's family, I now have over 1,300 names on the tree. I have uploaded a GEDcom file of the tree to Gedmatch and to MyHeritage. My preference is to have a hard copy of our family history and so I have written a family history as a Word document, with records and maps and images, including family photos, which I like to print in hard copy so that it will be a durable and archival resource for our descendants after I'm gone. However, in doing this, one is immediately confronted with the problem of getting family trees to fit on to A4 or US letter pages. Even the producers of family tree software admit that space, or lack of it, is a major problem. I offer my solution to you and you may find it useful.

Firstly, I create several versions of aspects of different sections/sides of the tree, including versions with siblings of ancestors, and a frame-able pedigree version (direct ancestors only) for our adult children. I create these documents in Word and the family trees are screenshot images of slides that I produce in PowerPoint. I attach a presentation with three slides which you can use as templates – and you will not need any skills related to PowerPoint. I am presuming here that many members do not use PowerPoint. Here is how to use the templates:

1. All text is already formatted in typeface (Colibri), point size (8.3pt.) and colour (blue or black). The blue text is for direct ancestors and the black text is for siblings and spouses.
2. The name entries, with birth and death dates, and sometimes place of birth, are typed into 'text boxes' which can be moved like objects around the page freely. Click on a name and you will see the outline of the box. You can substitute the text with your family names, substituting one colour at a time (all my dates are in black so substitute the blue name before clicking on the black date). Click at the end of the name and delete it and type the first name you want to enter. Do the same with the date. Click on the outline of the box and drag the box with the mouse to roughly where you want to place it. Then copy (click on the outline of the box to copy all the contents of the box – copy in the same way you would in Word) and substitute the name in with your second name and dates. Repeat for the number of siblings of the same name. and drag each box into a rough line to where, roughly, you want the line to be.
3. Align the names into a line. Click or select a horizontal line with the little dropdown lines and copy and paste a few copies and move them to one side of the page for use later. Don't worry if you drop some little vertical lines. All lines are separate objects and

can be moved independently. Drag the end of a line (the green dot) to change its length. Move the lines and the name boxes as in the templates.

4. To keep things straight use the red line as a ruler – drag it up and place it under the first name you set in place and then move the others so they are aligned. Practice selecting objects and moving them. It all becomes easy with a bit of practice. It's a bit like Lego!

Have a look at the second and third slides to see examples of different aspects of trees. The second slide was made for my siblings and their children and grandchildren, based on the Foley named ancestors, including our aunts and uncles and so on. For the nieces, nephews and grandchildren I have included the exact birth dates, so we all know their birthdays! The third slide is aimed at our own children, and it is a pedigree chart with only direct line ancestors and including both my wife's family and mine. You can see that a rigid commercial tree software would not work, as the spaces vary in my version. This is where I use the grey line at the top of the page where I write in the family names that make up the tree – 21 family names! I also add in the family coats of arms for Foley and O'Mahony (screenshots from Google) and a relevant background image with high transparency sent to the back (click on the image and in the "picture Format" menu select 'send to back' and set transparency in the transparency menu).

When all is done I take a screen shot of the full-size slide of each version of family tree that I made and I insert those images into my Word document.