

KEY TIPS FOR CENSUS SUCCESS

We're going to begin with tips that apply whichever census you're searching, and whichever site you're using.

* Always allow for mistakes - for example, it's rarely advisable to specify an exact year of birth, and we generally recommend allowing a margin of 2 years either side.

* Even if the age is shown correctly on the census, the year of birth can still be incorrect - that's because, by convention, the year of birth is calculated by subtracting the age from the census year. This is a very common cause of misunderstandings!

* Don't complete every box on the Search form - the LESS you enter, the MORE results you'll get. If you fill in lots of boxes then usually only one of them needs to be wrong on the census for you to completely miss the person you're seeking.

* It's often fruitful to search on first names alone, especially when one of the names is unusual for the period. The more unusual a surname is, the more likely it is to be spelled incorrectly. This is a particular problem when searching for people who have migrated from a country where a language other than English is spoken.

At FamilySearch you can specify two members of the household (the head of the household and one other) to cut down the number of results. It's even better at Ancestry, where you can specify the forename of a spouse, or the forenames of the parents. It's usually a good idea to search for one of the younger children as the lower the age the more likely it is to be shown correctly on the census.

But the *ultimate* solution is at findmypast.com, where you can search the England & Wales censuses for any two people in the same household (and they don't even need to be related!). You can also search by address and by occupation.

* Don't assume that every member of the household was at home on census night - many had to travel in connection with their work. Of course, it was the father and head of the family who was most likely to be away, which is why being able to search for any two members of the household at findmypast.com is such a powerful advantage.

SEARCHING THE CENSUS FREE AT FAMILYSEARCH

Most of the 1880/81 censuses we support can be found at the free FamilySearch site (the exception is Scotland, which - whilst not on the website - can be found on the CD ROM set of the 1881 British Census that is available through FamilySearch).

England & Wales 1881 (described as 1881 British Census)

US 1880

Canada 1881

Although you can register at FamilySearch if you wish, it isn't necessary.

A common mistake made by newcomers to the FamilySearch site is to use the 'All Resources' search. This is very unlikely to provide the best results, and our advice is ALWAYS to search each resource separately.

There's a direct link to the census on the FamilySearch home page, so click that, then select '1880 United States census', '1881 Canadian census' or '1881 British census' from the drop-down box on the Search page.

FAMILYSEARCH WHERE GENERATIONS MEET

HOME SEARCH SHARE LIBRARY

Search for Ancestors | Research Guidance | Research Helps | Web Sites

CENSUS RECORDS

You can choose the 1880 United States, 1881 British Isles, or the 1881 Canadian Census. first or last name, and then click *Search*.
[Tips on how to search Census Records](#)

Census All

***First Name** ***Last Name** **Head of Household**

1880 United States Census
 1881 British Census
 1881 Canadian Census

Birthplace Country: All

Birth Year: Birth Year Range

*Use exact spelling

Search Clear

Notice that when you choose a specific census more boxes appear on the form - giving you more ways to find the right person. We do NOT advise searching all 3 censuses simultaneously as this is very unlikely to produce the best results.

A key feature of FamilySearch is the way that common alternative spellings are automatically included in the results - this is usually an enormous advantage. It's rarely wise to check the 'Use exact spelling' box - we never do! For the best results always type in the minimum of information and allow for discrepancies in age.

Census 1881 British Census

***First Name** ***Last Name** **Head of Household**

harry calver

Birthplace Country: All

Birth Year: 1877 Birth Year Range: + or - 2 years

Census Country: All

*Use exact spelling

Search Clear

When you search you can specify either an individual, or an individual plus the head of the household. However the results you get will be for the individual.

Results for: Harry Calver, Birth, 1875 - 1879
Census: 1881 British Census
Exact Spelling: Off

1881 British Census - 2
Select records to download - (50 maximum)

- 1. [Harry G. CALVER](#) - 1881 British Census / Pembroke
Son Gender: Male Birth: <1875> Neyland, Pembroke, Wales
- 2. [Harry CALVER](#) - 1881 British Census / Middlesex
Son Gender: Male Birth: <1877> Acton, Middlesex, England

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One of the confusing features is the option to download records - this isn't something we'd recommend using at all, and we would suggest ignoring it totally! Instead look through the list until you see a record that looks a possibility, then click the name.

Note: throughout the FamilySearch site, and indeed on many websites, including LostCousins, text displayed in blue and underlined is usually 'clickable', and usually clicking on it will provide more detail. At LostCousins almost all text that is displayed in blue can be clicked, even if it is not underlined. For example, clicking the name of a relative listed on your My Ancestors page allows you to edit the information - not just the name, but any of the information you've entered.

Individual Record		1881 British Census
Search results Download		Previous Individual Next Individual
Harry CALVER		Household
Male		
Other Information:		
Birth Year	<1877>	
Birthplace	Acton, Middlesex, England	
Age	4	
Occupation	Scholar	
Marital Status		
Head of Household	John CALVER	
Relation	Son	
Disability		
Source Information:		
Dwelling	High St "Grove House"	
Census Place	Acton, Middlesex, England	
Family History Library Film	1341329	
Public Records Office Reference	RG11	
Piece / Folio	1354 / 34	
Page Number	4	

The Individual Record gives a little more information, but what you really want is the Household Record. Click 'Household' at the top right to see the entire household.

Household Record

1881 British Census

[Search results](#) | [Download](#)[Previous Household](#) | [Next Household](#)

Household:

Name	Relation	Marital Status	Gender	Age	Birthplace	Occupation	Disability
John CALVER	Head	M	Male	37	Barton, Suffolk, England	Gardener	
Emily CALVER	Wife	M	Female	38	Rickinghill, Suffolk, England		
George CALVER	Son	U	Male	15	Thetford, Norfolk, England	Gardeners Son	
Alice CALVER	Daur		Female	13	Ixworth, Suffolk, England	Scholar	
Ernest CALVER	Son		Male	8	Acton, Middlesex, England	Scholar	
Florence CALVER	Daur		Female	6	Acton, Middlesex, England	Scholar	
Harry CALVER	Son		Male	4	Acton, Middlesex, England	Scholar	
Elizabeth CALVER	Daur		Female	2	Acton, Middlesex, England		

Source Information:

Dwelling	High St "Grove House"
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The Household Record page is ideal as the source for your entries at LostCousins. It shows everything you need to enter on your My Ancestors page, including the census references.

Sometimes two census references are displayed on the same line, as in the example above. In that case 1354 is the 'piece' and 34 is the 'folio'.

Whilst you don't need to know what the references mean, you may be interested to know that the National Archives in England use the term 'piece' for a bundle of documents - enumeration books in this case - and a folio is a double-sided page. It's because there are usually several books in each piece, and two pages to each folio that we need all three references - piece, folio, and page - to identify the precise page of the census.

Here are examples of census references from the US 1880 census and from the Canadian 1881 census:

Source Information:

Census Place	Kingdom, Bibb, Alabama
Family History Library Film	1254001
NA Film Number	T9-0001
Page Number	274B

If you were to use Ancestry.com to search the US 1880 census the National Archives film number is referred to simply as 'Roll', and the page suffixes use a different system (at LostCousins we have standardised on the FamilySearch system, but you can enter either).

Source Information:

Census Place	Keithly Creek, Cariboo, British Columbia
Family History Library Film	1375920
NA Film Number	C-13284
District	188
Sub-district	D
Page Number	13
Household Number	126

FREE CENSUS SEARCHES AT ANCESTRY

All of the censuses we support can be found at Ancestry with the exception of Canada, but only the US 1880 and England & Wales 1881 censuses can be searched free of charge. To search the Scotland 1881 census or the England & Wales 1841 census you need to be an Ancestry.co.uk subscriber.

There are numerous search options: for example you can specify the name of a spouse, or the names of a child's parents. Surnames are very frequently spelled incorrectly, so why not try searching by first names alone?

There is an option to use Soundex, but in our experience spelling errors can be so weird that it's usually better to omit the surname altogether, or to use a wildcard character. Try searching just the first three letters of a name, eg GRE* or MAR*.

Note: you can also abbreviate other names, such as birthplaces, and this helps to guard against spelling errors.

When the search results are presented you'll see 'View Record' at the left, and 'View Image' at the right. Only subscribers can view the handwritten census schedules, so if you click 'View Image' you'll be asked to subscribe.

Fortunately all the information you need to enter on your My Ancestors page is in the transcript, which is displayed when you click 'View Record'. The census references are usually found under 'Source Citation', towards the bottom of the page.

Note: Ancestry sometimes omit the folio number in their transcription of the England & Wales 1841 census, in which case you will need to use a different website, such as findmypast.com, or else refer to the image of the census schedule. See the LostCousins FAQs for an explanation of how to interpret the census references on the handwritten census page.

FINDING RELATIVES IN THE US 1880 CENSUS

You can search the 1880 Census completely free of charge at either FamilySearch or Ancestry - and whilst they both have the same information you need to adapt your search strategy to make the most of each site's advantages.

There's a wealth of general guidance about the two sites in the articles above, but there are some extra 'tricks' you can use with the US census. For example, you can specify the birthplace of the parents.

This is another feature which makes it feasible to search using first names alone - for example, in 1880 there were only 14 Williams born in California whose father was born in England and whose mother was born in Scotland.

At Ancestry the National Archives film number is referred to simply as 'Roll'. However it always begins with the prefix T9, so it is easy to spot - remember the census references are found under 'Source Citation'.

The format of the census references is slightly different at the two sites. We've standardised on the simplest version, and your entry will be converted automatically to that format, ie the page number 237.2000 (Ancestry) becomes 237B (as at FamilySearch).

THE CANADA 1881 CENSUS

The 1881 Census of Canada was taken on 4th April, and is currently available online only at the free FamilySearch site. Newfoundland was not part of Canada in 1881, so people living there were not included in the census.

The province of birth is shown for those born in Canada - otherwise only the country is given. Additional information in the census includes an individual's ethnic origin (eg Irish, French, Scottish) and religion or religious denomination (Methodist, Baptist, Church of England etc).

These can help confirm that you've found the right entry, and the religious affiliation may also help you trace church records.

Click 'Household' when viewing an individual record to display the Household Record page, which is ideal as the source for your entries at LostCousins. It shows everything you need to enter on your My Ancestors page, including the census references.

Note: if a child's age is less than one it will typically be shown in months as, for example, 3/12. Currently this format is not supported at LostCousins, so please enter it instead as 3m or 3 months.

THREE WAYS TO SEARCH THE SCOTLAND 1881 CENSUS

There are two online sources for the Scotland 1881 Census: Scotlandspeople and Ancestry.co.uk. It is also included in the CD ROM set of the British 1881 census available from FamilySearch.

Sadly none of these sources is free, nor do any of them offer images of the original census pages.

Scotlandspeople is a government website, and this is reflected in the cost of using the site - you have to pay for each record you view, with no option of an unlimited access subscription.

At Ancestry.co.uk there's an indexed transcription of the Scotland census, but you must be a subscriber to access it (as Ancestry also has transcriptions of all the other Scottish censuses it's an option worth considering - see the trial offer below).

Note that the reference described as 'Volume' at Scotlandspeople is called 'Registration Number' at Ancestry, and the format is slightly different.

There are examples of the correct format on the Add Ancestor form. For example, instead of entering 685/5 you should enter 685-5 (which is how it is shown at the official Scotlandspeople site); similarly 232B is entered as 232-B, and 478A/2 as 478-A2.

A useful feature of the Ancestry site is the ability to search by occupation or street address (or both). This also applies to other Scotland censuses at the same site.

The transcription at Scotlandspeople was provided by FamilySearch, and so there are no differences from the information on the CD ROMs. However the Ancestry transcription was compiled independently and there are occasional differences in the data.

If you discover that the information for one of your relatives has been transcribed differently at the two sites please contact us for advice.

ENGLAND & WALES 1881: ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

You can search the 1881 Census of England & Wales completely free of charge at FamilySearch, Ancestry.co.uk, or findmypast.com

Be warned: a quirk of the Ancestry site is that ages of less than one year are omitted from the transcript - so if you search for someone born in 1881 you won't find them!

The information at all of these sites is based on the transcription compiled by volunteers on behalf of the LDS Church, but you will probably find it easiest to find your relatives using findmypast.com or Ancestry, because of the wider range of search options. In particular these census allow you to search for a specific birthplace, rather than simply by county, and also by occupation.

By contrast, when searching by birthplace at FamilySearch you're limited to specifying a county, and you can run into unexpected problems if the county was omitted in the census record, which often happened.

Birthplaces often vary from one census to another. Sometimes this is because a mistake has been made, but often it merely indicates a different degree of precision - a town rather than a village, a parish rather than a hamlet. When a child leaves home the birthplace on the first census that follows is often incorrect - sometimes the town or village where they grew up is given by mistake.

Another common problem is to find that the birthplace has been entered as the town or village where the person is living - even though they were born somewhere else entirely. Census enumerators can be over-enthusiastic users of ditto marks!

If you prefer to use FamilySearch then the Household Record page is ideal as the source for your entries at LostCousins because it shows everything you need to enter on your My Ancestors page (including the census references).

See the illustrated guide to FamilySearch earlier in this document.

The census references are a little harder to find at Ancestry. First you need to click View Record (rather than View Image, which displays the handwritten schedule if you're a subscriber); then look under Source Citation.

If the age is blank enter it as 0 on your My Ancestors page (or, if you prefer, get the correct age from FamilySearch).