

South Carolina Genealogy Research Starter Checklist

Free lead magnet from southcarolinagenealogy.org · 2026 edition

How to use this checklist: Work top to bottom. Check off each item. When stuck, open the matching free guide on the site rather than jumping randomly between websites.

1. Gather what you already have

- ☐ Full name variants (nicknames, middle names, spelling changes)
- ☐ Approximate birth / marriage / death years and places
- ☐ Parents, spouses, children (even if incomplete)
- ☐ Family Bible notes, obituaries, photos with writing on the back
- ☐ DNA match names that cluster on the SC side of the tree

2. Fix the jurisdiction (the #1 SC brick wall)

- ☐ Identify the *modern* county for the place name
- ☐ Check when that county was formed
- ☐ List parent district/county for events before formation
- ☐ Read: Districts & counties guide
- ☐ Open the county page: /counties

3. Census every decade the family should appear

- ☐ 1790–1950 federal schedules (as available for SC)
- ☐ Note neighbors (FAN club) on each page
- ☐ For 1850–1860 enslaved research: slave schedules + estates
- ☐ Guide: Census research

4. Land & probate (longest paper trails)

- ☐ Deeds / ROD / mesne conveyance for the correct county years
- ☐ Wills, administrations, inventories, equity files
- ☐ Colonial grants/plats at SCDAH when pre-county
- ☐ Guides: Land · Probate

5. Vital events without early state certificates

- ☐ Church / parish registers
- ☐ Newspapers (marriage notices, obituaries)
- ☐ Delayed births; 20th-century DHEC records when applicable
- ☐ Guide: Vital records

6. Place-level research

- ☐ Identify the town/community page on the site
- ☐ Search churches, cemeteries, and newspapers under that place name
- ☐ Browse county town index for neighbors

7. Specialized paths (use when relevant)

- ☐ African American SC research hub on the site
- ☐ Indigenous / Catawba research notes
- ☐ Military (Revolution, Civil War, later wars)
- ☐ DNA clusters — always anchored to documents

8. Authoritative portals (bookmark these)

- ☐ SCDAH — scdah.sc.gov
- ☐ FamilySearch SC Wiki
- ☐ SC State Library / SC Memory digital collections
- ☐ Chronicling America newspapers
- ☐ This site's guides: southcarolinagenealogy.org/guides

Next step: Pick one ancestor + one county + one record type this week. Depth beats random clicking.

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