

## **FAQ #1 What DNA Project Should I Join?**

You would not believe how often DNA Project Administrators receive this question. It seems evident to those of us who work with this information, but it's obviously not clear to everyone. So, this FAQ is for those of you who need to know about DNA Projects, but who are afraid to ask the question (by the way, there are no dumb questions - just ask anyway)

Here, I am referring to the DNA Projects at Family Tree DNA (FTDNA.com). Ancestry.com also has some DNA surname projects, but they tend to be more like study groups, and aren't very helpful.

At Family Tree DNA, there are three kinds of projects; 1) Surname Projects, 2) Haplogroup Projects and 3) Geographic or Regional Projects. Let's look briefly at all three.

First of all you should know that you can order a genetic genealogy test via Family Tree DNA directly from their Web site (<http://www.ftdna.com/>) at retail prices, without joining a project. Joining a project means a couple things. First of all some of the tests, particularly for Y-DNA, are available at a lower cost when you join a project at the time you order the test. Secondly, when you join a project, you are making your order and the test results available to the project's administrator. The FTDNA DNA Project Administrator (strictly a volunteer available at no cost) can help you understand your test results and in many cases assist you with your genealogical research. The P.A. is a genetic genealogist who specializes in the subject of the project; e.g. Wiregrass Georgia, Lumbee Indian Tribe, and specific Wiregrass Georgia Surnames.

In most cases you will want to join at least one Surname Project (perhaps more), one Regional Project (perhaps more) and one Haplogroup Project (and perhaps more). There is no additional cost for joining any of the FTDNA projects.

**Surname Projects** - These projects focus on the Y-DNA and/or atDNA (Family Finder) test results and the respective genealogies for direct male lines for specific surnames (usually world-wide).

**Haplogroup Projects** - Your Y-DNA and mtDNA test results place you on a specific branch of the human tree; i.e., a branch that occurred thousands, sometimes tens of thousands of years ago. These branches identify your origins, such as Native American, Western European, East Asian, Sub Saharan Africa and many, many sub branches within these broad categories. There are separate Haplogroup designations for male and female lines.

**Geographic or Regional Projects** - These projects focus on the Y-DNA, mtDNA and atDNA (Family Finder) test results and genealogies for a region such as Wiregrass Georgia (which includes southeastern Georgia and the northern tier of Florida counties) or for a group of people such as the Lumbee Tribe. These projects cover all of the surnames, and genealogies in the region. This type of project is valuable for common surnames like Smith and Jones and many others when your line was primarily from the specific region of the project. For example, if your Smith line was/is from Wiregrass Georgia, the Wiregrass Georgia Project Administrator is much more likely to know your Smith line than a World Wide

or even a U.S. Smith Project Administrator. The Regional Project is also very important for the cases where the surname for your male line changed sometime in the past due to an adoption, name change, or where the mother's surname was used for her children. The Y-DNA follows the direct male line regardless of the surname used, and the mtDNA follows your direct female line, where the surname typically changes every generation.

If you are still unsure about the best genetic genealogy projects for your situation, contact Rob Noles ([rbnoles@bellsouth.net](mailto:rbnoles@bellsouth.net)).