

Leeds Method DNA Clustering Worksheet

A visual system for sorting your DNA matches into the four sides of your family

What the Leeds Method Does

Developed by genealogist Dana Leeds, the Leeds Method sorts your DNA matches into four color groups, one for each of your grandparents, using only shared-match information you already have from your testing company. It will not tell you exactly how a match connects to you, but it narrows every match down to one side of your family before you start deeper research.

How To Use This Worksheet

1. Sort your match list by shared centimorgans (cM) and find your closest matches that are NOT immediate family — aim for the 3rd–4th cousin range (roughly 90–400 cM). These become your four starting matches.
2. Assign one starting match to each grandparent line below, and give each one a color.
3. For each starting match, open the list of matches you share DNA with (your “shared matches” or “in common with” list) and copy those names onto the matching colored grid on page 2.
4. Repeat for all four starting matches. A name that appears on more than one colored grid usually connects to that ancestral couple, one generation further back.

Step 1 — Choose Your Four Starting Matches

Grandparent Line	Starting Match Name	Shared cM
 Father's Father's Line		
 Father's Mother's Line		
 Mother's Father's Line		
 Mother's Mother's Line		

Tip: pick starting matches you don't already recognize from immediate family — the method works best on matches you can't yet place.

What You'll Need

- A DNA test with at least a few hundred matches (AncestryDNA tends to work best because of its large database and shared-match tool).
- The ability to view “shared matches” or “in common with” for any match.
- About 20–30 minutes for your first pass through four starting matches.

Good To Know

- The Leeds Method assumes your parents are not closely related to each other and works best on matches in the 3rd–4th cousin range.
- Endogamy, recent immigration from a small community, or unknown adoptions can cause extra overlap — that's still useful information, just noisier.

STEP 2

Sort Your Shared Matches

Copy each starting match's shared-match list into the grid below it belongs to

Father's Father's Line	
MATCH NAME	cM

Father's Mother's Line	
MATCH NAME	cM

Mother's Father's Line	
MATCH NAME	cM

Mother's Mother's Line	
MATCH NAME	cM

Reading Your Clusters

What overlapping names mean, and where to go next

Matches That Appear In More Than One Color

A match who shows up on two of your colored grids usually connects through the shared ancestral couple one generation further back — for example, a name on both your Father's Father and Father's Mother grids often descends from a sibling of one of your great-grandparents. List those overlap matches below and note which two colors they appeared on.

MATCH NAME	COLORS IT APPEARED ON				NOTES
	☐	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	☐	

Next Step

Once a match is placed in a color, move it into your DNA Match Organization Tracker to record the testing company, predicted relationship, and any common ancestor you identify — use the same four colors so the two worksheets stay linked.

Notes