

DNA Matches

Diahan Southard offers **3 Tips to improve your DNA relationships**

All too often our enthusiasm in finding a new DNA match is met with absolute silence. Nada. Nothing. No response at all from your matches. Through email brokering or direct email, you can conceivably fill your matches' email inboxes with requests hoping that your persistence, if not pleading, will eventually win out and they will write back.

But because most of us don't have time to spam our fellow matches, it really does pay to initiate the relationship in a way that maximizes the possibility of returned affection. Here are three tips to improve your genetic genealogy relationships.

FIRST: Don't talk too much!

Perhaps you have opened up an email to be greeted by paragraphs of text. This is immediately overwhelming and more often than not, that email gets saved for later, which rarely comes. On this first date, just share a few basics about yourself and your family history. For example, "Hi, we are predicted to be 3rd cousins on Ancestry.com. That means we could share one of our great-great-grandparent couples. I would really like to talk to you about that connection."

SECOND: Talk about THEM!

If they have posted family history, mention what you saw. Say "I see you have Polks in North Carolina around the same time my Wilsons were in North



Carolina." Then follow up with a very specific question, "Is Wilson a familiar surname to you?"

If they don't have any genealogy posted, you might say, "I have great-great-grandparents from several southern states, primarily Alabama and Mississippi, and two sets from Ohio with surnames like Wendell, Aarons, Fuller, Gregg, and Boney." Then follow up with "What are the surnames and locations of your great-great-grandparents?"

THIRD: Make the next move obvious

Because you have ended your email with a pointed question, it might seem obvious that their next move would be to answer that question. But it isn't always that easy. Sometimes I read email on my phone while I am waiting in line and while I would want to answer your question, maybe I can't quite remember if I have Wilsons in my family tree, or I can't picture which of my ancestors are my great greats. That

means that even if I want to respond right away, I can't. So you need to provide them with a way out. End your correspondence with, "Please just shoot me back an email so I will know that you are out there, then I promise I will wait patiently for your full response."

If you are on 23andMe, you should probably also recognize the fact that you are "requesting to share genomes" with your matches. This feature opens up some great genetic tools at 23andMe to help you evaluate your matches. So between the second and third steps above, you should insert the line, "I have also requested to share genomes with you as this can often help us determine how we are related to each other."

To recap, when starting these new relationships, you will want to keep it short, keep it interesting, and lob the ball slowly over to their court, making it easy for them to return the gesture. ☒☒



Growing up with the budding genetic genealogy industry lead **DIAHAN** to her current position as Your DNA

Guide, where she provides personalized, interactive experiences to assist individuals and families in interpreting their genetic results in the context of their genealogical information. She is also the author of the Genealogy Gems DNA Quick Guides, available from the *Your Genealogy Today* store.