Finding Your Ancestors in Saxony

Parish Registers, Civil Registry Offices, and Archives

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Edited by Christian Reichel
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Finding Your Ancestors in Saxony – Parish Registers, Civil Registry Offices, and Archives

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Contents

Foreword 1
Preliminary notes and legal information 2

1 What is where? A guide to Saxony's sources 5
1.1 The golden rule: first the time, then the place 7
1.2 From 1876: the civil registry offices 8
1.3 Before 1876: the parish registers 9
1.4 City and county archives 13
1.5 The state archives 14
1.6 The libraries: address books and newspapers 15
1.7 Your guide at a glance 16
Sources for Chapter 1 17

2 Online First – What You Can Find from Home 27
2.1 What you can do online – and what you can't 27
2.2 Church records on screen: Archion 28
2.3 FamilySearch: free, but you need to sign in 29
2.4 Address books, maps, and local history 29
2.5 Newspapers: the Deutsches Zeitungsportal 30
2.6 By researchers, for researchers: the Verein für Computergenealogie . 31
2.7 The Deutsche Digitale Bibliothek as a combined search 32
2.8 Searching the Sächsisches Staatsarchiv online 32
2.9 Step by step: your search strategy 33
2.10 Checklist "Online first" 34
Sources for Chapter 2 35

3 How to Write Proper Inquiries to Archives and Offices 39
3.1 When is a written inquiry worthwhile? 39
3.2 Whom do you write to? 40
3.3 What belongs in an inquiry? 41

3.4 Estimating costs and waiting times realistically 42
3.5 Letter, email, or online form? 43
3.6 One inquiry instead of many 44
3.7 Following up politely 44
3.8 Data protection: be careful with information about living people . . 45
3.9 Checklist "My inquiry" 46
Sources for Chapter 3 47

4 Reading Old Handwriting – With and Without AI 51
4.1 Which Scripts You Will Come Across 51
4.2 Learning to Read – Without AI 52
4.3 Typical Pitfalls 53
4.4 AI as a Reading Aid: What It Can Do – and Where It Goes Wrong . 56
4.5 Your Workflow in Six Steps 57
4.6 Data Protection and Rights When Uploading 57
4.7 Checklist "Reading Old Handwriting" 58
Sources for Chapter 4 59

5 Staying Organized – Sources, Citations, Certainty 65
5.1 Why Stay Organized? 65
5.2 Writing Source Citations Correctly 66
5.3 How Certain Is a Piece of Information? 68
5.4 Filing: Paper, Files, Backup 70
5.5 Genealogy Programs, GEDCOM and Online Family Trees 71
5.6 The Research Log 72
5.7 Checklist "Staying Organized" 73
Sources for Chapter 5 74

6 The Research Trip to Saxony 78
6.1 When is the trip worth it? 78
6.2 Planning: appointments, orders, applications 79
6.3 In the reading room 81
6.4 The places where your ancestors lived 82
6.5 Documenting on the road 83
6.6 Practical matters 84
6.7 Example: three days in Saxony 84
6.8 Checklist "Travel bag" 85
Sources for Chapter 6 86

7 Checklists to Take Along 91
7.1 First steps in 10 points 91
7.2 The chapter checklists 92
7.3 Before every publication of your family tree 95
7.4 Template: research log 96
7.5 Template: person sheet 97
Sources for Chapter 7 97

Foreword

It all started when my grandparents died. Suddenly there was no one left I could ask about the old days. So I started searching on my own.
The first big hurdle came quickly: old handwriting. Nothing took up as much of my time at the beginning as entries I could barely decipher. If that is exactly where you are right now – you are in good company.
I made progress mainly thanks to free resources: libraries that put their holdings online at no cost, and software that is freely available. I benefited a great deal from them. That is why the core text of this guide is freely accessible. It is my way of giving something back to the community.
I owe just as much to the many volunteers: the helpers in parishes (Kirchgemeinden) who search through old books, the associations and societies, and all the volunteers who transcribe parish registers (Kirchenbücher) and casualty lists (Verlustlisten) or compile local family books (Ortsfamilienbücher). Without their work, many finds would not exist. My heartfelt thanks to all of them.
In the past year, artificial intelligence has taken a big leap forward. This is leading to breakthroughs everywhere – including in family history research. Entirely new paths are opening up that lead to finds and insights. AI helps me, for example, to read old handwriting, and it also worked on this guide (see the preliminary notes). One rule applies without exception: every fact is checked against the original. The AI makes suggestions; the responsibility remains with me.
This guide does not tell the story of my family. It shows the paths I have taken. Where I can contribute something from my own experience, you will find a box headed “From experience (Aus der Praxis)”: what worked, where I was on the wrong track, and what I would do differently today.

I hope you get a little further with your family tree. And perhaps you will manage to get others excited about this work – in your family, among your friends, wherever.
My most important advice fits into one sentence: Keep at it, and don't give up.
OpenCRAM

Preliminary notes and legal information

Free and non-commercial. A free, non-commercial offering by a private individual – no advertising, no sales, no paid recommendations.
This guide is meant to make it easier for you to find your Saxon ancestors. So that you know what to expect, here are a few notes up front.
Personal view, not advice. This guide reflects the personal view and experience of a hobby researcher: an account of experience and a source of orientation, not a set of instructions. It does not replace legal, tax, or any other professional advice and does not provide legal services. Where the guide explains laws, closure periods (Schutzfristen), or fees, this is for general orientation only; no individual case is examined. If you have specific questions, for example about an inheritance or a refusal to let you see records, contact the responsible office or a lawyer. What you do with these suggestions is your own decision and your own responsibility.
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How this guide was created. First drafts of the chapters were written by an AI language model (Claude by Anthropic). The factual statements were checked against the cited sources by separate review roles, which were also AI-assisted; some statements are based on secondary sources. The publisher reviewed the texts – the preface in detail and all other texts in outline – and is responsible for the selection and assessments; the foreword and the "From experience (Aus der Praxis)" boxes are based on his own experience in family history research. Christian Reichel bears editorial responsibility. More on this under License (https://opencram.org/en/academy/saxony/license.html#ki).

Who is behind OpenCRAM? A private family historian. He publishes this guide as a non-commercial project and is responsible for its content; his name and address are given in the Impressum (legal notice) (https://opencram.org/en/legal-notice.html). You can reach him with questions and suggestions at ahnen@opencram.org.

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Protect living people. The EU General Data Protection Regulation (Datenschutz-Grundverordnung, GDPR) does not apply to deceased persons; nevertheless, the archives' closure periods and the feelings of relatives

deserve consideration. Information about living people, such as dates of birth, addresses, or photos, is protected, however. Before you publish or share your family tree, leave out living people or ask them for permission.
Feedback. Have you found an error or outdated information? Write to ahnen@opencram.org. Individual advice is not possible this way, however.

Chapter 1

What is where? A guide to Saxony's sources

Anyone searching for their ancestors in Saxony usually faces the same question at the start: Where do I begin? The answer almost always hinges on a single date – January 1, 1876. From that day on, there have been civil registry offices (Standesämter) throughout Germany. Births, marriages, and deaths from the period before that are, as a rule, found only in the parish registers (Kirchenbücher). Everything after that date is recorded first in the registers of the civil registry offices. Other old records – for example about house and farm, inheritances, or taxes – also exist for the period before 1876; these are covered in Section 1.5. (Q2)

> **Note:** Fees, deadlines, addresses, and online holdings change. All information without guarantee; the "as of" date is given in each case.

This chapter shows you which office is responsible for which period. It does not replace an inquiry, but it will save you from writing letters to the wrong address – and thus from weeks of waiting.

> **Which Saxony?**
> Over the centuries, "Saxony" (Sachsen) was not always the same territory. When this guide speaks of Saxony, it means the area of today's Free State of Saxony (Freistaat Sachsen). Your ancestors, however, lived in a state whose borders shifted several times. So if an old document says „Sachsen", it is worth taking a second look:
>
> - **„Provinz Sachsen" (Province of Saxony)** was a Prussian province from 1816 to 1944/45, with the administrative districts (Regierungs-

bezirke) of Magdeburg, Merseburg, and Erfurt. Its government records are usually held by the Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt (State Archives of Saxony-Anhalt) – even for places that today belong to the Free State of Saxony again. The records of the county (Kreis) of Torgau, for example, are found at the Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt in Merseburg.

- **„Sachsen-Weimar", „Sachsen-Gotha", „Sachsen-Altenburg", „Sachsen-Coburg"** and similar names refer to separate small duchies. They go back to the Leipzig Partition (Leipziger Teilung) of 1485; most of them became the state of Thuringia in 1920. In that case, the responsible archive is the Landesarchiv Thüringen (Thuringian State Archives) (Hauptstaatsarchiv Weimar as well as the Staatsarchive [state archives] in Altenburg, Gotha, Greiz, Meiningen, and Rudolstadt). Coburg became part of Bavaria in 1920; here the Staatsarchiv Coburg (Coburg State Archives) can help.
- **Lusatia (Lausitz):** Upper Lusatia (Oberlausitz) and Lower Lusatia (Niederlausitz) came to Saxony in 1635. In 1815, Lower Lusatia and the eastern part of Upper Lusatia, including Görlitz and Hoyerswerda, went to Prussia (more on this in Section 1.3).

Tip: For every place, first find out where it belonged at the time. For places in today's Free State, the Historisches Ortsverzeichnis von Sachsen (Historical Gazetteer of Saxony) shows which Amt (local administrative unit) or Kreis (county) a place belonged to over time. If a place is in a different German state (Bundesland) today, contact the archives there.

Year	What happened
1423	The Margrave of Meißen from the House of Wettin receives the Kurfürstentum Sachsen-Wittenberg (Electorate of Saxe-Wittenberg) – the name "Saxony" moves to Meißen.
1485	Leipzig Partition: The brothers Ernst and Albrecht divide the territory. The Ernestine part lies mostly in today's Thuringia.
1635	Upper and Lower Lusatia come to Electoral Saxony (Kursachsen).
1806	Saxony becomes a kingdom.

1815	Congress of Vienna: Saxony loses more than half of its territory to Prussia.
1918/19	The king abdicates; Saxony becomes a republic. In February 1919, the Volkskammer (People's Chamber) declares Saxony a Free State (Freistaat).
1952	The GDR (East Germany, DDR) dissolves the state; the districts (Bezirke) of Dresden, Leipzig, and Chemnitz (from 1953 Karl-Marx-Stadt) are created.
1990	On October 3, the state of Saxony is re-established – from the districts of Dresden, Leipzig, and Karl-Marx-Stadt plus the counties (Kreise) of Hoyerswerda and Weißwasser. The counties of Altenburg and Schmölln (district of Leipzig), on the other hand, go to Thuringia.

(Q120–Q132, Q82, Q160–Q163, Q500)

1.1 The golden rule: first the time, then the place

Before you write anywhere, note down two things for each person you are looking for:

- **When** did the event happen (birth, marriage, death)? An approximate year is enough.
- **Where** did it happen? This means the place where the family lived at the time – not where the descendants live today.

Without a place, you will hardly get anywhere in Saxony. To our knowledge, there is no statewide name index for all parish registers. Even the Landeskirchenarchiv Dresden (archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony; more on this in Section 1.3) answers inquiries only if you can at least name the place. (Q3)

Practical tip: If the place is unknown, look for it first in more recent records: in family papers, in the marriage certificate of the person's parents, in an old address book (Adressbuch, city directory), or in a death notice. The path

almost always leads from the present back into the past – generation by generation. Once you know the place, the freely accessible online Historisches Ortsverzeichnis von Sachsen (Historical Gazetteer of Saxony) will help you further: it lists almost all places in today's Free State of Saxony and states, among other things, which parish (Pfarrei) and which administrative district a place used to belong to. (Q58)

1.2 From 1876: the civil registry offices

Since 1876, births, marriages, and deaths have been recorded at the civil registry office (Standesamt). The responsible office is the civil registry office of the place where the event occurred. (Q2)
There are two things you should know:

1. **Municipalities have changed.** Many small places are now part of a larger municipality (Gemeinde). The civil registry office of that time often no longer exists; its registers are held by the civil registry office of today's municipality. So first check which municipality the place belongs to today.
2. **Older registers move to the archive.** The registers do not stay at the civil registry office forever. The law sets time limits; it calls them „Fortführungsfristen" (retention periods). As long as such a period is running, only certain persons are given access. In this guide, we therefore simply say **closure period (Sperrfrist)** – meaning the time during which only authorized persons can obtain information. The closure period is 110 years for births, 80 years for marriages, and 30 years for deaths (as of November 2026). After that, the civil registry office offers the registers to the responsible public archive – usually the city or county archives (see Section 1.4). So a birth entry from 1910 may already be in the archive, and so may a death entry from 1990. (Q11, Q12, Q13)

What you can get from the civil registry office: As long as the closure period is running, certificates and information are issued only to certain persons. These are the person themselves, their spouse or registered part-

ner (Lebenspartner), their ancestors, and their descendants. These are also called relatives "in the direct line" (in gerader Linie): parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, children, and grandchildren. As a granddaughter, for example, you can get your grandfather's birth certificate. Siblings receive birth and death certificates if they credibly demonstrate a legitimate interest (berechtigtes Interesse). Everyone else needs a legal interest (rechtliches Interesse), and pure family history research usually does not count as one. There is one relief: if everyone involved in an entry has been dead for at least 30 years, a legitimate interest is sufficient. (Q14)

Right away, enclose with your inquiry copies of the certificates that show the relationship from you to the person you are looking for. Ask in advance which fees will apply, and allow some time.

What "archive law" (Archivrecht) means for you: Once a register is in the archive, the rules of the civil registry office no longer apply, but those of the archives act (Archivgesetz). For family historians, this usually makes things easier: in principle, anyone may use archival records, and documentation of the relationship is no longer required. For records about individual people, there is also a closure period (Schutzfrist) in the archive. In Saxony, it generally ends ten years after the person's death (as of November 2026) – for registers this old, it has usually long since expired. In individual cases, the archive decides. (Q13, Q59, Q81)

1.3 Before 1876: the parish registers

For the period before civil registry offices existed, parish registers (Kirchenbücher) are the most important source. They record baptisms, marriages, and burials. In what was then the Kingdom of Saxony, the vast majority of the population was Lutheran (evangelisch-lutherisch) – in the census of 1871, it was just under 98 out of 100 inhabitants. This chapter therefore concentrates on the books of the Lutheran regional church (evangelische Landeskirche). You will find a separate note on Catholic parishes and on Upper Lusatia at the end of this section. (Q57)

Where the books are kept today

In most cases, the books are still kept where they were once written: in the parish (Kirchgemeinde) – or in the parish into which the old parish was later merged. Leipzig and some dissolved parishes in the surrounding area are a special case: some of the books are held centrally in the Kirchliches Archiv des Kirchgemeindeverbands Leipzig (Church Archives of the Leipzig Association of Parishes). (Q1)

The first point of contact is therefore usually **the local parish office (Pfarramt)**, that is, the office of the parish. Ask in writing, give the name, place, and approximate year – and ask about the fees right away. Be prepared to be patient: many parish offices are staffed only on a few days a week.

The Landeskirchenarchiv in Dresden

The Landeskirchenarchiv Dresden is the central archive of the Evangelisch-Lutherische Landeskirche Sachsens (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony). It can help you in three ways:

- **Information requests:** If you know the place, the archive will search for you. This costs €15 per half hour or part thereof, up to a maximum of €60 (as of November 2026). The archive does not take on larger research assignments. On request, however, it will give you the names of professional genealogists who will search for you for a fee. (Q3, Q51, Q52)
- **Reading room:** For many parishes, the books up to 1875 have been filmed and are available as digitized images (Digitalisate) – these are photos of the pages that you view on a screen. In the reading room in Dresden, you can go through these images yourself. Advance registration is requested, preferably by phone or email. For private research, a day in the reading room costs €5 (as of November 2026). There is one requirement you should know about: you must be able to read the old German handwriting (Kurrent or Sütterlin script) yourself; the staff helps only in exceptional cases. A list on the archive's website shows which parishes are included. (Q3, Q51, Q52, Q450)

- **Original books:** You can see the originals only on written application. The application may be refused – for example, if a book is in poor condition or if you cannot read the old German script. (Q3, Q51)

Caution: At the Landeskirchenarchiv, you are generally not allowed to take photos yourself. Exceptions are possible only with the archive's permission; according to the fee schedule (Gebührenordnung), this costs €10 per day (as of November 2026). You order copies there by application; these also cost fees. (Q51, Q52, Q80)
Closure periods also apply to parish registers. Baptisms become freely accessible after 110 years, marriages after 80 years, and burials after 30 years (as of November 2026). (Q3, Q51)
Continued after 1876, too. The parish registers did not end when the civil registry offices began: the parishes continued to record baptisms, marriages, burials, and confirmations (Konfirmationen). For the period after 1876, parish registers are therefore a valuable supplement – for example, if you are looking for godparents (Paten) or if a civil registry entry is missing. The closure periods above apply to these more recent entries. (Q501, Q502, Q503)

When a parish register is missing

Not every parish register has survived. Many older books burned in town fires and parsonage fires or in wars; in Radeberg, for example, the entire parish archive was lost in a fire in 1741. (Q504) A list compiled between 1947 and 1953 also records numerous books that were lost due to World War II or for other reasons, including in Dresden, Chemnitz, and Plauen. (Q502) So if you are told „nicht vorhanden" (not available), that does not mean the entry never existed. In that case, look for substitutes:

- **Transcripts, copies, and card indexes (Verkartungen):** Some books were transcribed, copied, or transferred to index cards before they were lost. Such records are collected by, among others, the Staatsarchiv Leipzig (Leipzig State Archives) (see Section 1.5). (Q505, Q506)
- **Neighboring congregations:** Older entries are sometimes found in the books of the neighboring congregation or of the mother congregation (Muttergemeinde) to which a place used to belong. (Q504)

- **Duplicate registers (Zweitschriften):** In Prussia, parish registers were kept in duplicate for certain periods. In Brandenburg, for example, such parish register duplicates (Kirchenbuchduplikate) have survived for 1794 to 1874 and are often a substitute for lost originals. For places that were once Prussian (see the box "Which Saxony?"), it is therefore worth asking about duplicate registers. (Q507)
- **Civil registry office and local family books:** From 1876 on, the registers of the civil registry offices can help (Section 1.2). For some places, researchers have compiled local family books (Ortsfamilienbücher) that list all the families of a parish (Kirchspiel). (Q505, Q508)

Online: Archion

The parish register portal Archion shows digitized images of Protestant parish registers for a fee. For the Saxon regional church, only part of the records are online so far. There, the books are organized by church districts (Kirchenbezirke) – the name for the administrative districts of the regional church, each comprising several parishes. Currently, books from individual church districts are online – which ones is stated in Section 2.2; not always for every place and every year, and more districts are to follow (as of November 2026). The place search shows whether your place is included, and you can use it before you buy access. (Q15, Q60)
Practical tip: If your place is missing from Archion, that is no reason to give up. In that case, the way forward is through the parish office or the reading room at the Landeskirchenarchiv.

Catholic parishes and Upper Lusatia

If you have ancestors in Upper Lusatia (Oberlausitz), you should know about two special features. First, there were Catholic parishes there – around Bautzen, Kamenz, and Ostritz and in many Sorbian villages. For many parishes, the Diözesanarchiv (Diocesan Archives) of the Diocese of Dresden-Meißen (Bistum Dresden-Meißen) has digitized their books up to 1875. You can view them free of charge on the online portal Matricula (as

of November 2026). The diocese provides a list of the digitized places on its website. (Q54, Q55)
Second, the eastern part of Upper Lusatia around Görlitz belonged to Prussia from 1815 to 1945. There, civil registry offices already existed from October 1874. The Protestant congregations in this area today do not belong to the Saxon regional church but to the Evangelische Kirche Berlin-Brandenburg-schlesische Oberlausitz (Protestant Church of Berlin-Brandenburg-Silesian Upper Lusatia). The contacts there are the local parish or this church's Landeskirchliches Archiv (church archives) in Berlin. (Q10, Q56, Q82, Q83, Q84)

> **From experience (Aus der Praxis): Father or son?**
> Once I was sure I had found the right ancestor – and I was wrong. Father and son had the same name. This happens often, and the entries do not always say which one is meant. Sometimes an addition helps: „sen." (senior, the elder) or „jun." (junior, the younger). If it is missing, check:
>
> - **Age:** Does the year of birth fit the event? Ages given in the marriage or death entry help with the math.
> - **Wife:** Who is named as the wife? That usually distinguishes father and son reliably.
> - **Occupation:** Does one say „Meister" (master craftsman) and the other still „Geselle" (journeyman)?
>
> Only when several details match does the entry belong to your person.

1.4 City and county archives

City and county archives (Stadt- und Kreisarchive) are the underrated treasure troves of family history research. In addition to the older civil registry records (Standesamtsregister), they often hold residence registration and resident records (Melde- und Einwohnerunterlagen), burgher rolls (Bürgerbücher – lists of residents who were granted burgher rights (Bürgerrecht) in the town), trade and business records (Gewerbeakten), and building records (Bauakten). If you want to know exactly where your ancestors lived, the

city archives (Stadtarchiv) are often the best place to go. Which records an archive actually holds varies from place to place.
Practical tip: You can usually find the address of the responsible archive on the website of today's municipality or of the county (Landkreis). Before a visit, ask whether you need an appointment and whether you are allowed to take photos yourself.

1.5 The state archives

The Sächsisches Staatsarchiv (Saxon State Archives) holds the records of the state administration. It has several locations (as of November 2026): (Q16)

Location	Institution
Dresden	Hauptstaatsarchiv (Main State Archives)
Leipzig	Staatsarchiv Leipzig (Leipzig State Archives)
Chemnitz	Staatsarchiv Chemnitz (Chemnitz State Archives)
Freiberg	Bergarchiv Freiberg (Freiberg Mining Archives)
Wermsdorf	Archivzentrum Hubertusburg (Hubertusburg Archive Center)

For Upper Lusatia, there is also a Staatsfilialarchiv (branch state archives) in Bautzen. Together with the city archives, it forms the Archivverbund Bautzen (Bautzen Archive Association). (Q17, Q18)
For family history research, the most interesting records there are those that reveal something about property, occupation, and legal transactions. These include court books (Gerichtsbücher) – in them, the courts recorded, for example, purchase and inheritance contracts. They also include the records of the Amtshauptmannschaften; these were the administrative districts in what was then the Kingdom and later the Free State of Saxony, similar to today's counties (Landkreise). In the Bergarchiv (Mining Archives), you will find records about miners. Unlike parish registers, these record groups (Bestände) are rarely arranged by person. Expect to do some searching – or ask in writing beforehand which record group might be relevant to your question. For places that went to Prussia in 1815 and then belonged to the

Prussian Province of Saxony – such as Torgau – the government records from the Prussian period are usually not held here but at the Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt (see the box "Which Saxony?"). (Q127)

Good to know: In the reading room of the Staatsarchiv, you may take photos with your own devices without paying any fees – but without flash. This does not apply everywhere: at the Landeskirchenarchiv, taking your own photos is generally not permitted (see Section 1.3). For each file, also photograph its call number (Signatur), that is, the reference number under which the archive keeps it. Otherwise you will later no longer know for sure where an image came from – and you will be able neither to cite the file nor to order it again. (Q5, Q51)

Especially important for family historians: The Staatsarchiv Leipzig holds the holdings of the former Deutsche Zentralstelle für Genealogie (German Central Office for Genealogy). These include the Ahnenstammkartei des deutschen Volkes (Ancestral Card Index of the German People), a large collection of ancestor lists (Ahnenlisten), parish register copies and card indexes, and a collection of local family books. Direct use in the reading room is free of charge. (Q142, Q505, Q506)

Advice from other researchers: You can also get free help from genealogical societies. For Saxony and the neighboring states, one example is the Arbeitsgemeinschaft für mitteldeutsche Familienforschung (AMF) (Association for Central German Family Research), with its own working groups, research aids, and local family books. (Q508)

1.6 The libraries: address books and newspapers

Two types of sources answer questions that remain open in parish registers and civil registers: **address books** (Adressbücher) and **newspapers** (Zeitungen).

- **Address books** (comparable to U.S. city directories) reveal residence, occupation, and sometimes property ownership – year after year. Many Saxon address books and resident directories (Adress- und Einwohnerbücher) have been digitized by the Sächsische Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden (SLUB)

(Saxon State and University Library Dresden); you can find them in the SLUB portal SAXORUM (saxorum.de). (Q19)

- **Newspapers** contain family announcements, reports on associations and public offices, and court notices. Some of them are indexed with full-text search in the Deutsches Zeitungsportal (German Newspaper Portal). Many small local newspapers, on the other hand, are available only on microfilm at the SLUB – in that case, the only option is a visit in person. (Q8, Q20)

Practical tip: When searching newspapers, search not only for the family name but also for the occupation and place. A „Seilermeister in Oederan" (master ropemaker in Oederan) is easier to find than a common name alone.

1.7 Your guide at a glance

You are looking for …	Period	First point of contact
Birth, marriage, death	from 1876	Civil registry office (Standesamt) of today's municipality; for older entries, city or county archives
Baptism, marriage, burial (Lutheran)	before 1876	Local parish office (Pfarramt); Archion (if online); Landeskirchenarchiv Dresden
Baptism, confirmation, godparents (supplementary)	also after 1876	Local parish office; observe closure periods (Section 1.3)
Baptism, marriage, burial (Catholic)	before 1876	Matricula (if online); Catholic parish office; Diocese of Dresden-Meißen
Residence registration, building records, burgher rights	all periods	City or county archives
Property, inheritance, occupation, legal transactions	all periods	Sächsisches Staatsarchiv (location by region)

You are looking for …	Period	First point of contact
Residence, occupation, neighbors	from approx. 1800	Address books (SLUB, SAXORUM)
Announcements, events, public offices	from approx. 1800	Deutsches Zeitungsportal; SLUB (microfilm)

The next chapter is about how to find as much as possible **from home** before you write your first letter.

Sources for Chapter 1

The abbreviations Q1, Q2 … in the text refer to this list. Online sources accessed on November 1, 2026 unless otherwise stated. Dates in the source lists are given as day.month.year (German format).

- Q1 https://en.evlks.de/contacts-resources/archive-/-genealogy
  Supports: Parish registers are generally held by the parishes; parts of Leipzig's held centrally in the Kirchliches Archiv des Kirchgemeindeverbands Leipzig
- Q2 https://en.evlks.de/contacts-resources/archive-/-genealogy
  Supports: Civil status registers after January 1, 1876 only at the civil registry office (Standesamt) or city archives (except where parish registers were destroyed)
- Q3 https://en.evlks.de/contacts-resources/archive-/-genealogy
  Supports: LKA (Landeskirchenarchiv Dresden): information only if the place is known; €15 per half hour or part thereof, maximum €60; microfilms of many congregations in the reading room; originals only on written application; closure periods incl. 110 years for baptisms, 30 years for burials
- Q5 https://archiv.sachsen.de/download/Eigenreproduktion_Handout_gueltig_ab_2020-02-01_2020-01-03.pdf
  Supports: Own photographs with own devices at the Staatsarchiv free of charge; photograph the call number (Signatur) too
- Q8 eigene Recherche, Rechercheprotokoll (nicht veröffentlicht) [own research, research log (not published)] (26.–30.10.2026)
  Supports: SLUB: address books and newspapers via sachsen.digital; many local newspapers only on microfilm
- Q10 LWL-Archivamt: Standesamtsregister und Sammelakten – gesetzliche Grundlagen, https://www.lwl.org/waa-download/pdf/Standesamtsregister%20und%20Sammelakten_gesetzliche%20Grundlagen.pdf (accessed November 1, 2026)

Supports: Reichsgesetz über die Beurkundung des Personenstandes [Reich Act on the Registration of Civil Status] of February 6, 1875, in force January 1, 1876

- Q11 § 5 Abs. 5 PStG, https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/pstg/__5.html (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Retention periods (Fortführungsfristen): marriage/registered partnership 80 years, birth 110 years, death 30 years
- Q12 § 7 Abs. 3 PStG, https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/pstg/__7.html (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: After the period expires, registers are offered to the responsible public archives for transfer
- Q13 § 61 Abs. 2 PStG, https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/pstg/__61.html (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: After the period expires, archive law applies to use
- Q14 § 62 PStG, https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/pstg/__62.html (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Persons entitled to certificates/information/inspection (persons concerned, spouses, registered partners, ancestors, descendants; otherwise legal or legitimate interest)
- Q15 https://www.archion.de/de/alle-archive/sachsen/landeskirchliches-archiv-der-evangelisch-lutherischen-landeskirche-sachsens (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Archion: LKA Sachsen with the church districts (Kirchenbezirke) Auerbach, Dippoldiswalde, Dresden, Freiberg, Meißen
- Q16 https://www.staatsarchiv.sachsen.de/download/StA-Organigramm.pdf (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Organizational chart of the Sächsisches Staatsarchiv (as of October 19, 2026): departments Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden, Staatsarchiv Leipzig, Staatsarchiv Chemnitz, Bergarchiv Freiberg; location Archivzentrum Hubertusburg in Wermsdorf
- Q17 https://www.archiv.sachsen.de/ (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Home page of the Sächsisches Staatsarchiv: no relocations/closures reported; Archivzentrum Hubertusburg new phone number from October 19, 2026; Bautzen named as a location with holdings
- Q18 https://www.archivverbund-bautzen.de/ (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Archivverbund Bautzen = Stadtarchiv (city archives) + Staatsfilialarchiv Bautzen (agreements between the Free State and the city, 1998, 2000)
- Q19 https://www.saxorum.de/adressbuecher (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: SLUB address book platform integrated into the regional portal SAXORUM in 2023/24; old address adressbuecher.sachsendigital.de redirects
- Q20 https://deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/content/newspaper/hilfe?lang=en (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Deutsches Zeitungsportal: full-text search across newspapers with full-text indexing (supplements Q9)

- Q51 https://www.evlks.de/service/landeskirchliches-archiv/benutzung (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: LKA Dresden, use (Benutzung): digitized images of the registers of official acts (Amtshandlungsregister) created up to 1875 viewable in the reading room; appointment by phone/email; ability to read the old German handwriting required, staff helps only in exceptional cases; own reproductions generally not possible, reproductions on application; elaborate genealogical inquiries are not processed, referral to professional genealogists; use may be refused because of the state of preservation; closure periods: baptisms 110 years, confirmation/marriage 80 years, burial 30 years; list of filmed parishes on the archive's pages
- Q52 https://www.evlks.de/fileadmin/userfiles/EVLKS_interessiert/F._Service/Landeskirchenarchiv/Benutzung/Gebuehrenordnung.pdf (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Gebührenordnung [fee schedule] for the use of the LKA Dresden of March 27, 2025, in force April 1, 2025: No. 1.1 private use €5.00 per user day; No. 2.1 written inquiries €15.00 per half hour or part thereof, maximum €60.00
- Q54 https://www.bistum-dresden-meissen.de/aktuelles/dioezesanarchiv-dresden-meissen-stellt-historische-kirchenbuecher-online (accessed November 1, 2026); additionally CompGen 15.01.2021 https://www.compgen.de/?p=28864 (oldest entries Ostritz 1621, Crostwitz 1651, Bautzen 1660; free of charge)
  Supports: Diocese of Dresden-Meißen, announcement of January 13, 2021 (Bautzen): Diözesanarchiv puts Catholic parish registers (mainly baptisms, marriages, deaths up to 1875) of 26 parishes and the Stiftskapelle Strahwalde online on Matricula free of charge
- Q55 https://www.bistum-dresden-meissen.de/download/1877/464/17 (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Diocese of Dresden-Meißen, list „Kirchenbücher im Diözesanarchiv – digitalisiert" [Parish registers in the Diocesan Archives – digitized] (no "as of" date): 27 places, focus on Upper Lusatia (incl. Bautzen, Crostwitz, Nebelschütz, Ostritz, Ostro, Radibor, Ralbitz, Schirgiswalde, Kamenz, Zittau)
- Q56 https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evangelische_Kirche_Berlin-Brandenburg-schlesische_Oberlausitz (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Eastern Upper Lusatia Prussian after the Congress of Vienna (1815) (Province of Silesia); congregations there today in the Evangelische Kirche Berlin-Brandenburg-schlesische Oberlausitz (merger January 1, 2004); Evangelisches Landeskirchliches Archiv in Berlin. Secondary source (Wikipedia)
- Q57 German History in Documents and Images (GHI), „Tabelle II. Prozentsatz der Bevölkerung nach preußischen Provinzen und Bundesstaaten" [Table II. Percentage of the population by Prussian provinces and federal states], https://germanhistorydocs.org/de/reichsgruendung-bismarcks-deutschland-1866-1890/ghdi:document-5069 (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Census of December 1, 1871, religious denomination by federal state: Kingdom of Saxony 97.55 % Protestant (evangelisch), 2.09 % Roman Catholic

- Q58 https://hov.isgv.de/ (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Historisches Ortsverzeichnis von Sachsen (ISGV): covers almost all settlements in today's Free State; categories incl. administrative affiliation and church organization; freely accessible (no paywall)
- Q59 https://www.recht.sachsen.de/vorschrift_gesamt/2628/44410.pdf (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: SächsArchivG (version of May 25, 2018 according to the document): § 9 Abs. 1 anyone may use archival records (restrictions Abs. 2); § 10 Abs. 1 Nr. 3 archival records relating to persons: closure period 10 years after death, failing that, 100 years after birth or 60 years after creation; § 13 Abs. 4: §§ 6–11 apply accordingly to municipal archives.
- Q60 https://www.archion.de/de/alle-archive/sachsen/landeskirchliches-archiv-der-evangelisch-lutherischen-landeskirche-sachsens/kirchenbezirk-auerbach; .../kirchenbezirk-auerbach/auerbach-vogtl; .../kirchenbezirk-freiberg; .../kirchenbezirk-freiberg/zethau (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Archion, place search LKA Sachsen: folders Kirchenbezirk Auerbach, Dippoldiswalde, Dresden, Freiberg, Meißen. Kirchenbezirk Auerbach with 14 places (incl. Auerbach/Vogtl., Falkenstein, Klingenthal, Rodewisch, Treuen); Auerbach (Vogtl.) with numerous books (incl. baptismal books from 1757, marriage books, burial books, registers up to 1929/1949). Kirchenbezirk Freiberg with places from Berthelsdorf to Zethau (not only A–F; Zethau with confession registers (Beichtregister) from 1813).
- Q80 https://www.evlks.de/fileadmin/userfiles/EVLKS_interessiert/F._Service/Landeskirchenarchiv/Benutzung/Gebuehrenordnung.pdf (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Gebührenordnung LKA Dresden (27.03.2025, in force April 1, 2025), fee table No. 4.5: „Genehmigung zur Anfertigung von Reproduktionen mit einem Gerät des Benutzers je Tag 10,00 €" [Permission to make reproductions with a device of the user, per day €10.00]; Nos. 4.1–4.3 copies/scans by the archive (supplements Q52; clarifies Q51 „grundsätzlich nicht möglich" [generally not possible])
- Q81 https://revosax.sachsen.de/vorschrift/2628 (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Archivgesetz für den Freistaat Sachsen [Archives Act for the Free State of Saxony], current version valid from January 1, 2023 (last amended by Art. 2 Abs. 3 G v. 19.08.2022, SächsGVBl. S. 486): § 9 Abs. 1 anyone; § 10 Abs. 1 Nr. 3 relating to persons 10 years after death / 100 years after birth / 60 years after creation; § 13 Abs. 4 §§ 6–11 apply accordingly to municipal archives – same content as Q59. Q59 is a historical version (valid May 25, 2018–December 31, 2022), superseded by Q81
- Q82 https://www.justiz.sachsen.de/download/Gerichtsbauten.pdf (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Sächsisches Staatsministerium der Justiz [Saxon State Ministry of Justice], brochure „Gerichtsbauten" [Court Buildings], S. 3: after the Congress of Vienna, Saxony lost almost two-thirds of its territory to Prussia; Görlitz among others released from the Saxon state

- Q83 https://www.evangelisch.de/inhalte/91370/09-01-2014 (epd, 09.01.2014, accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: EKBO formed on January 1, 2004 from the Ev. Kirche in Berlin-Brandenburg and the Ev. Kirche der schlesischen Oberlausitz
- Q84 https://www.archion.de/de/alle-archive/berlin-/-brandenburg/landeskirchliches-archiv-der-evangelischen-kirche-berlin-brandenburg-schlesische-oberlausitz (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Landeskirchliches Archiv der EKBO (ELAB), Bethaniendamm 29, 10997 Berlin, Germany; microfiches of more than 20,000 parish registers; most originals are kept in the congregations
- Q120 https://medienservice.sachsen.de/medien/news/1070332/download_pdf (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Press release SMWK/Staatliche Schlösser, Burgen und Gärten Sachsen, 19.10.2023, exhibition „Königsmacher. 1423 – Ein Wettiner wird Sachse“ [Kingmaker. 1423 – A Wettin becomes a Saxon] (Albrechtsburg Meißen, 21.10.2023–20.10.2024): in 1423 Margrave Friedrich der Streitbare (Frederick the Belligerent) received the Saxon electoral dignity; his lands were given a new name
- Q121 https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/sfz53021.html (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Gottfried Opitz, „Friedrich I. der Streitbare“, in: NDB 5 (1961), S. 567: enfeoffment by Sigismund on January 6, 1423 with the electorate after the death of Albrecht III.; additionally Heinrich Theodor Flathe, ADB 7 (1878), S. 776–778: extinction of the Sachsen-Wittenberg line, letter of enfeoffment (Lehnbrief) 06.01.1423
- Q122 https://adw-goe.de/fileadmin/forschungsprojekte/resikom/dokumente/pdfs/HBI/A_Ernestiner.pdf (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Brigitte Streich, Art. „Ernestiner“, in: Höfe und Residenzen im spätmittelalterlichen Reich (Residenzenforschung 15.I), Ostfildern 2003, S. 61–70: Leipzig Partition 1485 (Ernst: Kurkreis Wittenberg with the electoral dignity and most of the Landgraviate of Thuringia; Albrecht: the part around Meißen); Capitulation of Wittenberg 19.05.1547 (electoral dignity to the Albertines); Treaty of Erfurt 1572 (Sachsen-Weimar, Sachsen-Coburg), later lines Altenburg, Gotha
- Q123 https://www.bpb.de/kurz-knapp/lexika/handwoerterbuch-politisches-system/202062/land-freistaat-sachsen/ (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Wolfgang Ismayr, „Land Freistaat Sachsen“, in: Andersen/Woyke, Handwörterbuch des politischen Systems der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 8. Aufl. 2021 (bpb, as of August 3, 2022): electors 1423, partition of the territory 1485, acquisition of Lower and Upper Lusatia 1635, kings 1806, annexation of a large part by Prussia 1815, end of the monarchy 1918, constitution 01.11.1920, dissolution of the state structure 1952 → districts (Bezirke) Leipzig, Dresden, Karl-Marx-Stadt
- Q124 https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/119165198.html (accessed November 1, 2026)

Supports: Heinrich Theodor Flathe, „Friedrich August I." (King of Saxony), ADB 7 (1878), S. 786–789: Peace of Posen 11.12.1806, accession to the Confederation of the Rhine, royal title; 1815 peace treaty with Prussia (18./21. May), loss of about three-fifths of the country

- Q125 https://saebi.isgv.de/files/saebi/pdf/1533_Friedrich_August_III._Koenig_von_Sachsen_%281865-1932%29.pdf (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Reiner Pommerin, „Friedrich August III.", in: Sächsische Biografie (ISGV), as of May 29, 2007: 10.11.1918 republic proclaimed in Dresden; 13.11.1918 the king renounces the throne. The term „Freistaat" (Free State) is not mentioned there
- Q126 https://www.statistik.sachsen.de/download/sonderhefte/broschur_statistik-sachsen_sonderhefte_ereignisse-zaehlen.pdf (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Statistisches Landesamt des Freistaates Sachsen [State Statistical Office of the Free State of Saxony], „Ereignisse zählen. Eine statistische Zeitreise durch den Freistaat Sachsen 1990–2015" [Counting events. A statistical journey through time in the Free State of Saxony 1990–2015] (n.d., presumably 2016), S. 4: state of Saxony newly formed on October 3, 1990 from the districts of Dresden, Karl-Marx-Stadt, Leipzig plus the counties of Hoyerswerda and Weißwasser (district of Cottbus); counties of Altenburg and Schmölln to Thuringia
- Q127 https://recherche.landesarchiv.sachsen-anhalt.de/Query/detail.aspx?ID=252747; https://recherche.lha.sachsen-anhalt.de/Query/detail.aspx?ID=60364; https://archiv fuehrer-kolonialzeit.de/landratsamt-und-kreiskommunalverwaltung-torgau-bestand (accessed November 1, 2026, record group description accessed again at this main address on November 2, 2026, county history identical; the former address on ts.archivfuehrer-kolonialzeit.de returned server error 502 on November 2, 2026; second URL seen only as a search result title)
  Supports: Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt, archival plan (Archivplan) „02. Preußische Provinz Sachsen": Regierung Merseburg C 48 Ia (1813–1949), e.g. Nr. 11 „Die Organisation des Regierungsbezirkes Merseburg, Bd. I" (1814–1815); structure „Regierungen Magdeburg, Merseburg und Erfurt, 1816–1928" (C 20 I); record group C 50 Torgau (Landratsamt/Kreiskommunalverwaltung [county administration]), place of use Merseburg: Kreis Torgau formed in 1816 mostly from territory ceded to Prussia in 1815, Province of Saxony 1816–1944/45, essentially unchanged until 1952 (record group description via Archivführer Kolonialzeit)
- Q128 https://archive-in-thueringen.de/en/archivartgruppe/view/id/1 (accessed November 1, 2026; landesarchiv.thueringen.de blocked by captcha)
  Supports: Archive in Thüringen, category state archives: Landesarchiv Thüringen – Hauptstaatsarchiv Weimar as well as Staatsarchive Altenburg, Gotha, Greiz, Meiningen, Rudolstadt (with addresses; responsibilities not stated there)
- Q129 https://www.gda.bayern.de/en/archives/state-archive-coburg (accessed November 1, 2026)

Supports: Generaldirektion der Staatlichen Archive Bayerns [General Directorate of the State Archives of Bavaria], Staatsarchiv Coburg: responsible for the former Duchy of Sachsen-Coburg and the Free State of Coburg; union with Bavaria 01.07.1920

- Q130 https://www.bpb.de/kurz-knapp/lexika/handwoerterbuch-politisches-system/202065/land-freistaat-thueringen/ (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Michael Edinger, „Land Freistaat Thüringen", Handwörterbuch des politischen Systems, 8. Aufl. 2021 (bpb, as of August 3, 2022): state of Thuringia formed on May 1, 1920 from seven free states; Coburg and the Prussian territories around Erfurt not included
- Q131 https://hov.isgv.de/Torgau (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Historisches Ortsverzeichnis von Sachsen (ISGV), place Torgau, administrative affiliation: 1551/1747 Amt Torgau, 1816/1880 Kreis Torgau, 1952 Landkreis Torgau, 1994 Lkr. Torgau-Oschatz, 2008 Lkr. Nordsachsen
- Q132 https://blha-recherche.brandenburg.de/de/#/hierarchy (accessed November 1, 2026; old address archivplansuche.aspx?ID=538157 redirects)
  Supports: Brandenburgisches Landeshauptarchiv [Brandenburg Main State Archives], archival plan: structure „Kurmark, Neumark, Niederlausitz bis 1806/16" and „Provinz Brandenburg 1806/16–1945" (administrative districts Potsdam, Frankfurt/Oder) – Lower Lusatia records in the BLHA. Transfer of Lower Lusatia to Prussia in 1815 not explicitly explained there
- Q142 https://fimportal.de/leistung-stammtexte/L100009/6000479-99077015109000/primary (accessed November 2, 2026; former PDF address .../api/v0/xzufi-services/.../de/pdf no longer reachable since November 2, 2026, content unchanged)
  Supports: FIM service description Saxony „Suchanfrage zur Familienforschung (Ahnenforschung) an kommunale und staatliche Archive stellen" [Submitting a search inquiry for family history research (genealogy) to municipal and state archives] (99077015109000): informal, meaningful search inquiry by letter or email, full postal address even with email; responsibility according to place of birth/death/residence and subject area (HStA Dresden highest authorities/military, StA Leipzig Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Bergarchiv Freiberg mining); personal inspection at the Staatsarchiv free of charge; costs of municipal archives according to the rules of the city/county; for data requiring protection, the staff does the research; fields processing time/deadline empty
- Q160 https://publikationen.sachsen.de/bdb/artikel/49259/documents/75710 (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Freistaat Sachsen, Sächsische Staatskanzlei [Saxon State Chancellery] (ed.), information brochure, 3rd revised ed. 06/2024, double page „Warum ist Sachsen ein Freistaat?" [Why is Saxony a Free State?] (no page number): „1919 Am 25. Februar treten die sächsischen Abgeordneten als ‚Volkskammer' zusammen und proklamieren Sachsen als Freistaat." [1919: On February 25, the Saxon deputies convene as the 'Volkskammer' and proclaim Saxony a Free State.] → the term „Freistaat" only from 1919, not as early as Nov. 1918

- Q161 https://www.l-iz.de/melder/wortmelder/2018/11/hauptstaatsarchiv-stellt-akten-der-jahreswende-191819-online-243039 (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Report on the online exhibition of the Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden (Leipziger Internet Zeitung, Wortmelder, 11/2018): handwritten original of the „Vorläufiges Grundgesetz" [Provisional Basic Law] of February 28, 1919 = „Gründungsdokument des Freistaats Sachsen" [founding document of the Free State of Saxony]; period from the revolution of Nov. 1918 to the Basic Law of Feb. 1919 (secondary rendering of an archive announcement; primary text SächsGVBl. 1919 not consulted)
- Q162 https://www.bundesarchiv.de/das-bundesarchiv/standorte/chemnitz/bestaende-und-teilbestaende-der-bezirksverwaltung-karl-marx-stadt/; https://www.bundesarchiv.de/geschichten/volksaufstand/aufstand-in-den-bezirken/karl-marx-stadt/ (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Bundesarchiv [German Federal Archives], Chemnitz location, holdings of the district administration of Karl-Marx-Stadt: districts formed in 1952, „zu denen auch Chemnitz (seit 1953 Karl-Marx-Stadt) gehörte" [which also included Chemnitz (Karl-Marx-Stadt since 1953)]; additionally Bundesarchiv, „Volksaufstand – Karl-Marx-Stadt": city of Chemnitz renamed Karl-Marx-Stadt on May 10, 1953 → district in 1952 = Bezirk Chemnitz
- Q163 https://adw-goe.de/fileadmin/forschungsprojekte/residenzstaedte/dokumente/pdfs/HB1/HB1-BD1/RESIST-HB1-BD1-ART095.pdf; https://www.wissen.de/lexikon/lausitz (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Klaus Neitmann, Art. „Lübben (Lubin [Blota])", in: Residenzstädte im Alten Reich (1300–1800). Ein Handbuch, Abt. I, Bd. 1 (Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Projekt Residenzstädte), S. 340–344, here S. 341: „...nach dem Übergang der Niederlausitz an Preußen 1815..." [...after the transfer of Lower Lusatia to Prussia in 1815...]; additionally the encyclopedia wissen.de, „Lausitz": Upper Lusatia hereditarily to Saxony in 1635 in the Peace of Prague; Lower Lusatia to Prussia in 1815; Upper Lusatia divided in 1815, north/east with Görlitz to Prussia.
- Q450 https://www.evlks.de/service/landeskirchliches-archiv/benutzung (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Ev.-Luth. Landeskirche Sachsens, Landeskirchliches Archiv, „Benutzung" [Use] (undated, © 2026, list of filmed parish registers January 2026): Mon 9 a.m.–6 p.m., Tue–Thu 9 a.m.–4 p.m., Fri closed; retrieval times (Aushebezeiten) Mon–Thu 10 a.m. and 1 p.m.; „Eine Voranmeldung ist erwünscht" [Advance registration is requested] (phone/email); application for use (Benutzungsantrag) on site shortly before use; own reproductions generally not possible; closing periods 2026/2027 on the page
- Q500 https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/leinfg/__1.html (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Ländereinführungsgesetz [States Introduction Act] of the GDR of July 22, 1990, § 1 Abs. 1: state of Saxony from the districts of Dresden, Karl-Marx-Stadt/Chemnitz and Leipzig without the counties of Altenburg and Schmölln, plus

the counties of Hoyerswerda and Weißwasser; state of Thuringia from the districts of Erfurt, Gera, Suhl plus the counties of Altenburg, Artern and Schmölln; effective October 3, 1990

- Q501 https://www.archion.de/en/alle-archive/sachsen/landeskirchliches-archiv-der-evangelisch-lutherischen-landeskirche-sachsens/kirchenbezirk-dippoldiswalde/hartmannsdorf-b-frauenstein/294387 (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Archion, Landeskirchliches Archiv der Ev.-Luth. Landeskirche Sachsens, Kirchenbezirk Dippoldiswalde, Hartmannsdorf (b. Frauenstein): „Trau- und Bestattungsbuch 1872-1928" [marriage and burial book 1872–1928] (marriages 1876–1908, burials 1872–1928) – example of a Saxon parish register kept beyond 1876
- Q502 Website Familienarchiv Papsdorf, page „koehl.htm" on familienarchiv-papsdorf.de (accessed November 1, 2026; not reachable on November 2, 2026 because of a certificate error on the server, including the home page – therefore without a link)
  Supports: „Die Archivgutverluste sächsischer Pfarrämter" [The losses of archival records of Saxon parish offices]: rendering of a manuscript from 1947–1953 in the Staatsarchiv Leipzig (holdings of the former Deutsche Zentralstelle für Genealogie), author presumably Walter Hunger, title „Verluste an Kirchenbüchern und an sonstigem kirchlichen Schriftgut bei den Pfarrämtern der Ev.-Luth. Landeskirche Sachsens, veranlasst durch den Krieg von 1939–1945 oder durch andere Ursachen" [Losses of parish registers and other church records at the parish offices of the Ev.-Luth. Church of Saxony, caused by the war of 1939–1945 or by other causes]; entries incl. Chemnitz-St. Nikolai baptisms 1878–1945, Dresden-Johannes baptisms/marriages/deaths/confirmands 1878–1944, Plauen-Paulus 1893–1947; cause not stated for each entry. Private website (Familienarchiv Papsdorf), secondary source
- Q503 https://en.evlks.de/contacts-resources/archive-/-genealogy (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Ev.-Luth. Landeskirche Sachsens, Archive/Genealogy: closure periods baptisms 110 years, confirmations, marriages and name indexes 80 years, burials 30 years from the date of entry – presupposes entries after 1876
- Q504 https://wiki.genealogy.net/Die_Kirchenb%C3%BCcher_im_K%C3%B6nigreich_Sachsen_(1901)/170 (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Franz Blanckmeister, Die Kirchenbücher im Königreich Sachsen [The Parish Registers in the Kingdom of Saxony], Leipzig 1901 (offprint from Beiträge zur sächsischen Kirchengeschichte, 15. Heft), S. 170, digitized copy/transcription GenWiki: Radeberg „Das gesamte Pfarrarchiv 1741 durch Brand vernichtet" [The entire parish archive destroyed by fire in 1741]; Rabenau older books destroyed in the town fire of 1639; Purschwitz older books burned in 1813 in the Battle of Bautzen; Radebeul older church records in the books of Kaditz
- Q505 https://wiki.genealogy.net/Deutsche_Zentralstelle_f%C3%BCr_Genealogie (accessed November 1, 2026)

Supports: GenWiki, „Deutsche Zentralstelle für Genealogie“: incorporated into the Staatsarchiv Leipzig as a department in 1995, today the unit (Referat) „Deutsche Zentralstelle für Genealogie und Sonderbestände“; tasks incl. local family books, parish register card indexes and parish register copies; record groups incl. 21936 Ahnenlistensammlung [collection of ancestor lists], 21941 Ahnenstammkartei des deutschen Volkes (ASTAKA), 21962 Kirchenbücher/Kirchenbuchfilme des Reichssippenamtes [parish registers/parish register films of the Reich Kinship Office], Sammlung Ortsfamilienbücher [collection of local family books]; direct use free of charge

- Q506 https://www.compgen.de/?p=22755 (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Verein für Computergenealogie (CompGen, German genealogy society), „Sächsisches Staatsarchiv, Staatsarchiv Leipzig: Nutzung einfach erklärt“ [Use explained simply], 05.05.2020: history of the DZfG as an independent institution, its holdings (incl. ASTAKA) in the Staatsarchiv Leipzig (Referat 33)
- Q507 https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/51616 (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Brandenburgische Kirchenbuchduplikate 1794–1874. Ein Verzeichnis der Überlieferung im Brandenburgischen Landeshauptarchiv [Brandenburg parish register duplicates 1794–1874. An inventory of the records in the Brandenburg Main State Archives], Peter Lang 2008 (Open Access): duplicates as a substitute for lost originals „in vielen Fällen“ [in many cases]
- Q508 https://www.amf-verein.de/ (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Arbeitsgemeinschaft für mitteldeutsche Familienforschung e. V. (AMF), home page: research area incl. Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, Thuringia; working groups, research help, local family books, ancestor list circulation (Ahnenlistenumlauf); founded 1962

Chapter 2

Online First – What You Can Find from Home

You don't have to head to the archive right away. Today, much of the early detective work can be done at your kitchen table – with a computer or tablet, a little patience, and a notepad. This chapter introduces the most important online resources, shows what they cost, and ends by giving you a fixed step-by-step routine.

> **Note:** Prices, holdings, and terms of the portals change constantly. All information without guarantee; the "as of" date is given in each case.

2.1 What you can do online – and what you can't

For family history research, the internet is an excellent signpost, but rarely the destination. Online you will mainly find three things: **directories** (Verzeichnisse) that tell you where something is kept; **transcripts and indexes** (Abschriften und Register) created by other researchers; and **digitized images** (Digitalisate), that is, photographed originals. Only images of the originals themselves are truly reliable. A transcript may contain reading errors, and an index may be incomplete – even if you see it as a photo online.
So keep this in mind from the very beginning: something you find online is a lead. It only counts as documentation once you have seen the entry in the original or in an image of the original.

2.2 Church records on screen: Archion

Archion is the shared parish register portal of several Protestant regional churches (evangelische Landeskirchen). There you can view images of entire parish registers (Kirchenbücher), page by page – just as if you were sitting in the reading room.

What is available for Saxony: So far, only part of the records of the Saxon regional church (sächsische Landeskirche) is online. In Archion's place search (Ortssuche) you will find parish registers from five church districts (Kirchenbezirke): Auerbach, Dippoldiswalde, Dresden, Freiberg, and Meißen – but not for every place in these districts. More districts are to follow (as of November 2026). (Q22, Q60) The place search itself is what counts: the accompanying text on the archive's page does not name all the districts whose registers can already be found there. (Q60)

What it costs: You can check which registers are available in the holdings overview (Bestandsübersicht) without buying anything. (Q22) To view the registers, you need a time pass (Zeitpass) (as of November 2026; Q21):

Pass	Price	Duration	Pages to download
1 month	€19.90	30 days	up to 50
3 months	€52.20	90 days	up to 150
1 year	€178.80	365 days	up to 600

A pass ends when its duration runs out; it does not sign you up for a subscription. You can log in on several devices, but you can only read on one of them at a time. (Q21)

Practical tip: Don't buy until you have seen in the place search that your parish (Kirchspiel – the district that belonged to a parish church) and the time period you are looking for are available. Prepare the names and years in advance – then a single month is often enough.

2.3 FamilySearch: free, but you need to sign in

FamilySearch is a nonprofit service supported by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Using it costs nothing. (Q24) But free does not mean anonymous: if you want to search the historical records and view the images, you need your own free user account. (Q23)
Of interest for Saxony is a collection titled "Germany, Saxony, Church Book Indexes, 1500–1900". It does not contain parish registers, but images of **index cards** (Karteikarten) and indexes with baptisms, marriages, and burials from just under 30 Saxon places, including Dresden, Chemnitz, and Pirna (as of November 2026). (Q25) Such cards help you find things – afterwards you should check the entry itself in the parish register.
Good to know: Some images can only be accessed at a FamilySearch center or an affiliate library, not at home. (Q23) If a film shows such a notice, a visit in person helps: in Saxony there are FamilySearch centers in Dresden, Leipzig, and Chemnitz (as of November 2026). Fixed opening hours are not given everywhere, so contact them ahead of time to arrange your visit. (Q61)

2.4 Address books, maps, and local history

Address books in the SAXORUM portal

The Sächsische Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden (SLUB; Saxon State and University Library Dresden) provides historical address books (Adressbücher – city directories) for many Saxon towns and districts free of charge in the regional portal SAXORUM. (Q19, Q26) The Dresden volumes begin in 1702; from 1831 to 1943/44, hardly a year is missing. You can search by personal names and street names; the pages can be viewed and downloaded (as of November 2026). (Q26)
Practical tip: Only the first entry on each page is indexed for searching. So the results list shows you roughly where your name ought to appear. From there, page one or two pages forward and back. (Q26)

Old maps

The SLUB has digitized around 32,000 maps from its collection, with a focus on Saxony. You can find them in the **Kartenforum** (Map Forum). More than 9,000 of these maps are georeferenced so that you can overlay them on a present-day map in the **Virtuelles Kartenforum** (Virtual Map Forum). Both are freely accessible online (as of November 2026). (Q62) This way you can see where a farmstead that has since disappeared (Vorwerk – an outlying manorial farm) was located, or which path led to church in the neighboring village.

Which place belonged where?

Before you look for a parish register, you need to know **which church** a village used to belong to – in German one says where it was „eingepfarrt" (assigned to a parish). Small places often had no church of their own. Here the **Historisches Ortsverzeichnis von Sachsen** (Historical Gazetteer of Saxony) of the Institut für Sächsische Geschichte und Volkskunde (Institute of Saxon History and Cultural Anthropology, ISGV) helps; you already know it from Section 1.1. For almost every place in today's Free State (Freistaat) of Saxony, it tells you which parish it belonged to, which Amt (local administrative unit) or district (Bezirk) it was under, how many people lived there, and how its name used to be spelled. (Q28)

2.5 Newspapers: the Deutsches Zeitungsportal

The Deutsches Zeitungsportal (German Newspaper Portal) is part of the Deutsche Digitale Bibliothek (German Digital Library). It covers more than 3,200 newspapers with more than 37 million pages from the years 1609 to 1994. You can use it free of charge and without signing in; you only need an account if you want to create favorites lists. You can make selections by title, place of publication, and year, and narrow issues down to a date range (as of November 2026). (Q29) For newspapers with recognized text (OCR), you can also search for words. (Q20)

Practical tip: The computer does not read old Fraktur type (the German blackletter typeface) without errors. So also search for spelling variants of the name and combine it – as already recommended in Section 1.6 – with a place or occupation, for example „Böttchermeister“ (master cooper) and „Großenhain“. If the search finds nothing and you know the date of death, page through the issues of the following days.

2.6 By researchers, for researchers: the Verein für Computergenealogie

The Verein für Computergenealogie (CompGen, German genealogy society) runs several services that are free for your own family history research. However, the data collected there may not be reused for commercial purposes. This affects you, for example, if you later want to sell your results in a book – in that case, clear it with the association beforehand. (Q63)

- **GenWiki:** a reference work on family history research. Where available, place articles give the administrative affiliation, the parish registers and where they are kept, address books, cemeteries, casualty lists, and other sources. (Q35) The pages are written by volunteers and vary in completeness.
- **Online local family books (Online-Ortsfamilienbücher):** A local family book (Ortsfamilienbuch) brings together the families of a place or parish – usually with baptism, marriage, and death, arranged by surname and linked to one another. (Q33) At the end of 2024 there were more than 1,200 such books online with a total of almost 21 million person entries. (Q34) The GenWiki also lists printed local family books. (Q33)
- **World War I casualty lists (Verlustlisten des Ersten Weltkriegs):** The official lists comprise more than 31,000 pages. In a joint project completed in 2014, volunteers transcribed more than 8.5 million entries with names and places of origin from them. (Q31) You can search by surname, first name, and place. (Q32) A hit shows that a soldier was reported wounded, missing, captured, or killed, and usually gives his place of origin.

Important: Local family books and transcripts are secondary sources. Check every important date in the parish register.

2.7 The Deutsche Digitale Bibliothek as a combined search

The Deutsche Digitale Bibliothek (German Digital Library) brings together the offerings of many archives, libraries, and museums in one search. (Q65) Besides the newspaper portal, it includes the **Archivportal-D** (German archives portal), where archives show descriptions of their holdings and in some cases also digitized images. (Q30, Q64) Altogether, just under 270 archives are represented there with holdings; in the archive directory you will find, among others, the Sächsisches Staatsarchiv (Saxon State Archives), the Landeskirchenarchiv Dresden (archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony), and several Saxon city archives (Stadtarchive) (as of November 2026). (Q64) A search there is worthwhile if you don't know which archive has something on a place or topic.

2.8 Searching the Sächsisches Staatsarchiv online

On its website you can search the Sächsisches Staatsarchiv by keyword or through the holdings overview (Beständeübersicht). However, only about half of the archival material is listed there – the part that anyone may view without restriction. For the rest, you will need to go to the reading room. (Q39) You can order files you have found in advance so that they are ready for your visit; you can ask questions through an inquiry form. (Q37, Q39)
Part of it is already online as digitized images: in mid-October 2026 there were around 28.7 million pages from 153 record groups (Bestände). These include court books (Gerichtsbücher), muster and rank lists (Musterungs- und Ranglisten), and records of military parishes (Militärkirchgemeinden). Whether images exist for a file, you will see when you open the file via the keyword search. The pages can be downloaded individually; downloading the whole file at once is currently not possible. (Q38)

Practical tip: For each page, write down the complete call number (Signatur), even if it is stored in the image file. Without the call number, you will later be unable either to document the source or to find it again. (Q38)

2.9 Step by step: your search strategy

Using an invented example: you know that an ancestor named Gottlob Wendler lived in Großenhain around 1890 as a master cooper (Böttchermeister).

1. **Gather what is certain.** Write down what you know from family papers: name, occupation, place, approximate years. Mark what is supported by documents and what is only family lore. The four degrees of certainty – proven, probable, possible, and open – are explained in Section 5.3.
2. **Clarify the place.** Look up the place in the Historisches Ortsverzeichnis: which church did it belong to, which Amt, what was it called in the past? (Q28)
3. **Check the address book.** Search for the name in the address books on SAXORUM. If Wendler is listed there with occupation and street, you have a firm anchor point – and often clues to relatives with the same name. (Q26)
4. **Look at transcripts.** Is there an online local family book for the parish? Are there index cards on FamilySearch? Note every hit with its source citation. (Q25, Q33)
5. **Look for the original.** Check in Archion's place search whether the parish register is online. Only now is a time pass worth it. (Q21, Q22)
6. **Fill in the picture.** Search newspapers for family announcements, the casualty lists for sons of the right age, and the Sächsisches Staatsarchiv for court books concerning house or land ownership. (Q29, Q31, Q38)
7. **Record the gaps.** Write down on a separate list whatever you cannot find online. This becomes your first written inquiry – which is the subject of the next chapter.

From experience (Aus der Praxis): rephrase the search slightly
My best search trick is nothing spectacular: don't give up, and often rephrase the search query just slightly. Small changes often have a big effect.

- **Spelling variants:** Names were written the way they sounded. Wendler becomes Wendeler or Wentler; „ei" becomes „ey", „K" becomes „C".
- **Place instead of name:** If the search doesn't find the name, search for place and year and browse through the hits.
- **Occupation:** Search for occupation and place. Watch for old or regional terms – a Böttcher (cooper) may also appear as a Faßbinder (another word for cooper).

Write down which variants you have already tried. That way you can see what is still missing.

2.10 Checklist "Online first"

For every person I am looking for, I have noted name, place, and approximate year.
I know which church the place used to belong to.
I have searched the address books on SAXORUM.
I have looked for a local family book for the parish.
I have searched FamilySearch (with an account) for index cards and images.
Before buying an Archion pass, I checked whether my place is online.
I have searched the newspaper portal for name, place, and occupation.
I have checked the casualty lists 1914–1918.
I have used the Staatsarchiv's online search to look for holdings on my place.
For every find, I have noted the portal, the source citation or call number, and the date accessed.
Every important find from a transcript is marked "still to be checked against the original".
The open questions are on my list for the first written inquiry.

Sources for Chapter 2

The abbreviations Q1, Q2 … in the text refer to this list. Online sources accessed on November 1, 2026 unless otherwise stated.

- Q19 https://www.saxorum.de/adressbuecher (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: SLUB address-book platform integrated into the regional portal SAXORUM in 2023/24; the old address adressbuecher.sachsendigital.de redirects
- Q20 https://deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/content/newspaper/hilfe?lang=en (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Deutsches Zeitungsportal: full-text search across newspapers with full-text indexing (supplements Q9)
- Q21 https://www.archion.de/de/zugang-kaufen (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Archion time passes: 1 month €19.90 (30 days), 3 months €52.20 (90 days), 1 year €178.80 (365 days); no automatic renewal; limited downloads per pass; several devices, but only one at a time
- Q22 https://www.archion.de/de/alle-archive/sachsen/landeskirchliches-archiv-der-evangelisch-lutherischen-landeskirche-sachsens (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Archion, LKA Sachsen: church districts online Dresden, Meißen, Dippoldiswalde, Freiberg (only parishes A–F); „weitere Kirchenbezirke werden folgen“ (further church districts will follow); Auerbach not listed as online on November 1, 2026; holdings overview viewable without purchase
- Q23 https://www.familysearch.org/de/locations/affiliates/faq/ (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: FamilySearch: services free of charge; searching/viewing historical records requires signing in with your own account; some images only at FamilySearch centers or partner libraries (Affiliate Libraries)
- Q24 https://www.familysearch.org/en/united-states/whyfamilysearchfree/ (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: FamilySearch nonprofit, funded by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
- Q25 https://familysearch.org/search/collection/2399108 (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Collection “Germany, Saxony, Church Book Indexes, 1500-1900”: 278,753 records, 154,087 images of index cards (baptisms, marriages, burials) from individual places
- Q26 https://www.saxorum.de/adressbuecher (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: SAXORUM address books: many Saxon places; Dresden from 1702, 1831–1943/44 nearly complete; search by person/street, the first entry on each page is indexed; pages downloadable
- Q28 https://hov.isgv.de/ (accessed November 1, 2026)

Supports: Historisches Ortsverzeichnis von Sachsen (ISGV): nearly all settlements since the Middle Ages; including church organization, administrative affiliation, population figures, historical name forms

- Q29 https://www.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/newspaper (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Deutsches Zeitungsportal: 3,238 newspapers, 37,038,414 pages, 1609–1994, 29 data partners; free of charge, without access restrictions (account only for bookmark lists); selection by title, place, year, date range
- Q30 https://www.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/ (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Deutsche Digitale Bibliothek: central cultural portal; further portals Archivportal-D and Deutsches Zeitungsportal
- Q31 https://compgen.de/?p=2687 (14.08.2014, accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: World War I casualty lists: transcription 2012–2014 completed, more than 31,000 pages, more than 8.5 million entries (name, place of origin)
- Q32 https://des.genealogy.net/eingabe-verlustlisten/search/index (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: DES search of casualty lists: search fields include surname, first name, place, status, rank, date
- Q33 https://www.compgen.de/?p=38866 (04.09.2021, accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Local family book (Ortsfamilienbuch): families of a place/parish with vital data, alphabetical, linked; online local family books at online-ofb.de; GenWiki category also lists printed local family books
- Q34 https://compgen.de/?p=68217 (06.01.2025, accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Online local family books: 1,233 books, 20.85 million person records (as of end of Dec. 2024)
- Q35 https://compgen.de/2022/05/wie-entsteht-ein-ortsartikel-im-genealogischen-wiki (02.05.2022, accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: GenWiki place articles: political divisions, history, parish registers/where kept, address books, cemeteries, casualty lists, maps, etc.; linked with GOV
- Q37 https://www.archiv.sachsen.de/ (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Sächsisches Staatsarchiv: archival search („Suchen und bestellen“ – search and order), advance ordering for the reading room, inquiry form
- Q38 https://www.archiv.sachsen.de/archivgut-online-8409.html (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Staatsarchiv „Archivgut online“ [archival material online]: 28,758,845 digitized pages from 153 record groups (as of October 13, 2026); camera icon in search hits; download page by page; note the call number yourself; including court books, muster/rank lists, military parishes
- Q39 https://www.archiv.sachsen.de/suchen-und-bestellen-4000.html (accessed November 1, 2026)

Supports: Staatsarchiv: keyword search and holdings overview; online only archival material viewable without restriction, about half of the holdings

- Q60 https://www.archion.de/de/alle-archive/sachsen/landeskirchliches-archiv-der-evangelisch-lutherischen-landeskirche-sachsens/kirchenbezirk-auerbach; .../kirchenbezirk-auerbach/auerbach-vogtl; .../kirchenbezirk-freiberg; .../kirchenbezirk-freiberg/zethau (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Archion, place search LKA Sachsen: folders Kirchenbezirk (church district) Auerbach, Dippoldiswalde, Dresden, Freiberg, Meißen. Church district Auerbach with 14 places (including Auerbach/Vogtl., Falkenstein, Klingenthal, Rodewisch, Treuen); Auerbach (Vogtl.) with numerous registers (including baptism registers from 1757, marriage registers, burial registers, registers up to 1929/1949). Church district Freiberg with places from Berthelsdorf to Zethau (not only A–F; Zethau with confession registers [Beichtregister] from 1813).
- Q61 https://locations.familysearch.org/en/de/dresden; https://locations.familysearch.org/en/de/leipzig/%C3%B6serstra%C3%9Fe-39; https://locations.familysearch.org/en/de/chemnitz/stelzendorfer-stra%C3%9Fe-25 (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: FamilySearch centers in Saxony: Dresden (Tiergartenstraße 42), Leipzig (Öserstraße 39), Chemnitz (Stelzendorfer Straße 25; visits by appointment arranged by email); no opening hours given for Leipzig
- Q62 https://www.slub-dresden.de/entdecken/karten (accessed November 1, 2026; kartenforum.slub-dresden.de itself gives no total number)
  Supports: SLUB, page „Karten“ [maps]: Kartenforum with about 32,000 cartographic sources digitized in high resolution (mainly history/regional studies of Saxony); Virtuelles Kartenforum with more than 9,000 georeferenced maps, overlay with a current map; „weltweit abrufbar“ (accessible worldwide); collection in total around 185,000 maps and views
- Q63 https://www.compgen.de/?p=49324 (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Verein für Computergenealogie: information and data on the websites freely usable at no cost, for private research; commercial reuse of the data excluded (post of June 2, 2022)
- Q64 https://www.archivportal-d.de/; https://www.archivportal-d.de/struktur; https://www.archivportal-d.de/organization/UG6LMRBTZUJVW6YRDFGWG6CS2TMNUOK7 (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Archivportal-D: subportal of the DDB; research in the holdings and archival records of partner archives; home page: just under 270 archives, over 170,000 record groups, over 36 million objects; archive directory includes the Sächsisches Staatsarchiv (with archive structure [Archivtektonik] and archival records), Landeskirchliches Archiv Dresden, city archives of Dresden, Leipzig, Chemnitz, Plauen, Zwickau, Freiberg, Meißen, county archives (Kreisarchive)
- Q65 https://www.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/content/ueber-uns (accessed November 1, 2026)

Supports: Deutsche Digitale Bibliothek „Über uns“ [About us]: networks the digital offerings of German museums, archives, and libraries; goal of free access

Chapter 3

How to Write Proper Inquiries to Archives and Offices

At some point, portals and digitized images won't get you any further. Then it's time for a letter. A well-prepared inquiry saves you money and waiting time – and it makes the work easier for the people at the archive. This chapter shows when an inquiry is worthwhile, whom to write to, what belongs in it, and what to expect in terms of cost and time.

> **Note:** Fees, deadlines, and responsibilities change. All information without guarantee; the date of each figure is given.

3.1 When is a written inquiry worthwhile?

Don't write until you have done your homework. Check beforehand whether the entry you are looking for can already be found online (see Chapter 2). An inquiry is worthwhile above all in four cases:

- You need a **certificate or information from a civil status register** (Personenstandsregister) from 1876 onward that is not online.
- The **parish register** (Kirchenbuch) of your place is accessible neither on Archion nor as a digitized image in the reading room.
- You don't know **which record group** (Bestand) in an archive fits your question.
- A **visit in person** is too far or too difficult for you.

If you can travel to a reading room yourself, it often costs less: at the Sächsisches Staatsarchiv (Saxon State Archives), viewing records yourself is free of

charge, whereas research by the staff is charged for (as of November 2026). (Q143)

3.2 Whom do you write to?

You already know about responsibilities from Chapter 1. Here is just the essential information for your letter:

You are looking for …	Write to …
Birth, marriage, death from 1876 onward, still within the closure period (Sperrfrist)	Standesamt (civil registry office) of the present-day municipality
Older civil registry entries (closure period expired)	Stadtarchiv or Kreisarchiv (city or county archives); if unclear, ask the civil registry office first
Baptism, marriage, burial before 1876 (Lutheran, evangelisch)	Pfarramt (parish office) of the Kirchgemeinde (parish); for filmed registers, the Landeskirchenarchiv Dresden (archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony)
Baptism, marriage, burial before 1876 (Catholic)	Catholic parish office or the Bistum Dresden-Meißen (Diocese of Dresden-Meißen); check Matricula first (see Section 1.3)
Court books, administrative records, mining	Sächsisches Staatsarchiv, the division (Abteilung) responsible for the place and topic

Two notes on this. If a parish register was never filmed, your only option is to contact the parish itself. The online address directory of the Saxon regional church (sächsische Landeskirche) tells you what it is called today and where its parish office is located. (Q146) Which division of the state archives can help you depends on the area where your family lived and on the topic – mining records, for example, are kept in Freiberg. (Q142)

Practical tip: If you are unsure who is responsible, first send a short question – without commissioning a search right away. A two-line note such as „Wo liegen die Geburtsregister von … aus den Jahren …?“ (Where are the birth registers of … from the years … kept?) is quickly answered.

3.3 What belongs in an inquiry?

A good inquiry fits on one page and answers six questions:

1. **Who?** First name and surname of the person you are looking for; for women, if possible, also the maiden name (Geburtsname). Mention spelling variants right away as well.
2. **When?** Date or approximate year. Give a narrow time span („1885 bis 1888“ – 1885 to 1888) rather than „um 1900“ (around 1900).
3. **Where?** The place of the event, not where you live. Without a place, the Landeskirchenarchiv, for example, will not even begin to search (see Section 1.1). (Q146)
4. **Your connection.** For civil registry entries within the closure period, it matters how you are related to the person. As a direct-line descendant, you are entitled (see Section 1.2). Show the connection with copies of your own certificates and those of your parents and grandparents. For this group of people the law only mentions the application; even so, the office must be able to see that you belong to it. (Q140) For written applications, the civil registry offices also require a copy of your Personalausweis (German national ID card) or passport. The service description (Leistungsbeschreibung) of the Free State of Saxony calls for a certified copy; some offices are satisfied with a simple copy of the front and back. If in doubt, ask briefly beforehand (as of November 2026). (Q141, Q170, Q171)
5. **What for?** One sentence is enough: „für meine private Familienforschung“ (for my private family history research). This helps the office classify your inquiry correctly.
6. **How much are you willing to spend?** State up to what amount you agree to the costs – for example: „Bitte informieren Sie mich vorher, falls die Kosten 30 € übersteigen.“ (Please let me know in advance if the costs exceed €30.) This way you avoid unpleasant surprises.

In addition, include your **complete postal address** – even if you write by email – as well as your telephone number and the date. The Saxon administration explicitly asks for the postal address. (Q142)

What doesn't belong in it: long family stories, unverified assumptions presented as facts, several pages of family tree. Instead, enclose a short overview if it makes the search easier.

3.4 Estimating costs and waiting times realistically

Expect fees for almost every inquiry. Some examples (as of November 2026, without guarantee):

Office	What	Fee
Standesamt (civil registry office) in Saxony	Birth certificate or certified register printout (beglaubigter Registerausdruck)	€15 (each additional copy ordered at the same time €7) (Q141, Q170, Q171, Q174)
Sächsisches Staatsarchiv	Research by the staff (anything beyond simple information)	€20 per quarter hour or part thereof, even if nothing is found (Q143)
Sächsisches Staatsarchiv	Simple information on the type and accessibility of archival material	free of charge (Q143)
Landeskirchenarchiv Dresden	Written inquiry	€15 per half hour or part thereof, at most €60, even without a result (Q52, Q173)
Stadtarchiv (city archives) (example: Zwickau, fee statute as amended in 2022)	Written research	€15 per half hour or part thereof, even without a result (Q147)

The rates of the state archives apply to the locations Dresden, Leipzig, Chemnitz, and Freiberg; for the Staatsfilialarchiv Bautzen (Bautzen branch state archives), the fee statute of the Archivverbund Bautzen (Bautzen archives association) applies. (Q172) Each town and each county (Landkreis) sets the fees of its own archives. (Q142) The Zwickau example therefore only shows an order of magnitude. Parishes may also charge fees; ask about them.

Important: At archives, you usually pay for the **working time**, not for the result. So an imprecise inquiry can become expensive without producing anything. The more narrowly you define person, place, and time span, the cheaper it gets.
Waiting times: According to the Sächsisches Staatsarchiv itself, you should expect up to four weeks (as of November 2026). (Q144) For civil registry offices, there is no generally fixed processing period. (Q141) Parish offices are often staffed only a few hours at a time; it can take longer there. Better to plan generously.

> **From experience (Aus der Praxis): My first inquiry**
> My first inquiries went by email to a small rural civil registry office. After about three to four days the answer came, along with the fees: €14 for archival information, €15 per birth certificate (as of October 2026, without guarantee). To document the relationship, I was asked to send in my own birth certificate afterwards. The fee notice (Gebührenbescheid) also came by email. The contact was very friendly and fast.
> One parish even replied the very next day. There, a volunteer helper does the searching, €15 per half hour or part thereof. I commissioned „zunächst maximal 3 Stunden" (initially a maximum of 3 hours) and asked to be told if more was needed. That way I knew in advance: it would not cost more than €90 without my consent.

3.5 Letter, email, or online form?

All three ways are possible – depending on the office:

- **Online form:** At the Sächsisches Staatsarchiv, the contact form on its website is the intended route. (Q144) Some towns also offer an online application for certificates; whether it exists depends on the municipality. (Q141)
- **Email:** For many archives, an informal email is enough. You can also reach parishes and the Landeskirchenarchiv this way. (Q142, Q146) Write a clear subject line, for example „Anfrage Geburtseintrag Kunze, Sebnitz, 1891" (Inquiry birth entry Kunze, Sebnitz, 1891 – an invented example).

- **Letter:** For civil registry offices, a letter is often the safest route, because you have to enclose copies of certificates and your ID. A letter is also suitable if you prefer to work without a computer.

Whichever way you choose: keep a copy of your inquiry and note the date and recipient.

3.6 One inquiry instead of many

Archives and parish offices have few staff. At the state archives, there is usually only enough capacity for brief information on which records exist and whether they may be viewed. If you need a lengthy search, the Landeskirchenarchiv refers you to professional genealogists (Berufsgenealogen) (see Section 1.3). (Q144, Q146) This leads to a simple rule:

- **Bundle your questions.** Collect all questions for the same office and send **one** inquiry, neatly numbered. Three separate emails about siblings from the same place cost the archive more time than one combined email.
- **Don't ask twice.** Don't write to the parish office, the Landeskirchenarchiv, and the state archives at the same time about the same matter. First ask the office most likely to be responsible.
- **One thing at a time.** Wait for the answer before asking the next question. Often it will open up a new lead anyway.

3.7 Following up politely

If you have heard nothing after about four to six weeks, you may send a friendly follow-up. (This time frame is a recommendation of this guide, not a requirement of the archives.) Mention the date of your first inquiry, repeat the core question in one sentence, and ask whether any information is missing. Reproaches don't help – there are people at the other end too, and they are happiest to help those who make their work easy.

If you receive a fee notice (Gebührenbescheid), pay it on time. And if someone has been especially helpful: a short thank-you is not forgotten in archives.

> **From experience (Aus der Praxis): Volunteers help – how to treat them**
> I owe many finds to volunteers. In one parish, a volunteer helper searched the old registers for me. Others transcribe parish registers and casualty lists in their spare time. Here is how you can make their work easier:
>
> - **Patience:** Even if an answer does come quickly once – don't count on it.
> - **Precise inquiries:** Name, place, and a narrow time span save hours.
> - **Cost limit:** State a maximum amount and ask to be told if more is needed.
> - **Thanks:** A short thank-you after the answer is part of it.

3.8 Data protection: be careful with information about living people

Family history research almost always also involves living people – you yourself, your parents, siblings, or cousins. Data protection applies to them. The Datenschutz-Grundverordnung (DSGVO; EU General Data Protection Regulation, GDPR) protects the data of living people; according to its own explanatory recitals, it does not apply to deceased persons. (Q148)
For your inquiry, this means:

- About living people, mention only what is **necessary** for the search. Telephone numbers, addresses, or health information of relatives do not belong in a letter to an archive.
- Only enclose certificates of living relatives if they are needed to document the relationship, and ask the people concerned beforehand.
- Archives protect living people too: under the Saxon Archives Act (sächsisches Archivgesetz), records about an individual person may only be used ten years after his or her death; if the year of death cannot be determined, a period of 100 years from birth applies. (Q81) In such

cases, the staff search themselves and release only what is permitted. (Q142)

- If you later pass on or publish results, leave out living people or obtain their consent. In a publication, it is best to name deceased persons only once their death is demonstrably at least 33 years ago or their birth more than 120 years ago. This is a cautious rule of thumb of this guide, not a legal deadline. The archive period above only governs when you may view records – not what you publish.

> **From experience (Aus der Praxis): What I would do differently today**
> If I were starting over today, I would put more time into preparation. Good preparation is important – and checklists help with it. Before an inquiry goes out, it should be clear: What do I know for certain? What have I already found online? Which office is responsible? Up to what amount do I agree to the costs? And do I have the certificates at hand that show my relationship? If you clarify this beforehand, you save yourself follow-up questions, time, and money. The checklist below does the thinking for you.

3.9 Checklist "My inquiry"

I searched online beforehand (Chapter 2) and know what is missing there.
I know which office is responsible for the time and place.
The inquiry gives the name (for women, also the maiden name), place, and a narrow time span.
For civil registry entries: I have enclosed copies that show my relationship and checked whether a copy of my ID is needed.
I have stated the purpose („private Familienforschung" – private family history research).
I have written up to what amount I agree to the costs.
My complete postal address is in the inquiry – in the email, too.
All questions for this office are in **one** inquiry.
I have given only the most necessary information about living relatives.
Date, recipient, and a copy of the inquiry are in my records.

I have noted the earliest date on which I will send a friendly follow-up.

You will find templates for typical inquiries on the page Musterbriefe (https://opencram.org/en/academy/saxony/sample-letters.html) (sample letters).

Sources for Chapter 3

The abbreviations Q1, Q2 … in the text refer to this list. Online sources accessed on November 1, 2026 unless otherwise stated.

- Q52 https://www.evlks.de/fileadmin/userfiles/EVLKS_interessiert/F._Service/Landeskirchenarchiv/Benutzung/Gebuehrenordnung.pdf (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Gebührenordnung (fee schedule) for use of the LKA Dresden of March 27, 2025, in force April 1, 2025: No. 1.1 private use €5.00 per day of use; No. 2.1 written inquiries €15.00 per half hour or part thereof, at most €60.00
- Q81 https://revosax.sachsen.de/vorschrift/2628 (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Archivgesetz für den Freistaat Sachsen (Archives Act of the Free State of Saxony), current version valid from January 1, 2023 (last amended by Art. 2 para. 3 of the Act of August 19, 2022, SächsGVBl. p. 486): § 9 para. 1 anyone; § 10 para. 1 no. 3 personal data 10 years after death / 100 years after birth / 60 years after creation; § 13 para. 4 §§ 6–11 apply accordingly to municipal archives – same content as Q59. Q59 is a historical version (valid May 25, 2018–December 31, 2022), replaced by Q81
- Q140 https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/pstg/__62.html (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: § 62 PStG (Personenstandsgesetz – Civil Status Act) para. 1: certificates issued on application to the persons concerned, spouses, civil partners, ancestors, descendants (for these the text names no requirement of credible showing [Glaubhaftmachung], only the application); others: must credibly show a legal interest (rechtliches Interesse); siblings (birth/death registers): legitimate interest (berechtigtes Interesse); entitled to apply from age 16. Para. 3: legitimate interest suffices if 30 years have passed since the death of the last deceased person involved (persons involved in the birth register: parents and child)
- Q141 https://fimportal.de/leistung-stammtexte/L100009/6000898-9902700 2012000/primary (accessed November 2, 2026; former PDF address …/api/vo/xzufi-services/…/de/pdf no longer reachable since November 2, 2026, content unchanged)
  Supports: FIM service description (Leistungsbeschreibung) Saxony „Geburtsurkunde anfordern“ [Request a birth certificate] (service key 99027002012000): first copy €15.00, each additional copy at the same time €7.00, free of charge for the pension insurance (Rentenversicherung); no processing period given; online application depending on the municipality; ID, for written applications a certified copy; from age 16. No date stated in the document

- Q142 https://fimportal.de/leistung-stammtexte/L100009/6000479-9907701 5109000/primary (accessed November 2, 2026; former PDF address .../api/vo/xzufi-services/.../de/pdf no longer reachable since November 2, 2026, content unchanged)
  Supports: FIM service description Saxony „Suchanfrage zur Familienforschung (Ahnenforschung) an kommunale und staatliche Archive stellen" [Submit a search inquiry for family history research (genealogy) to municipal and state archives] (99077015109000): informal, meaningful search inquiry by letter or email, complete postal address even with email; responsibility according to place of birth/death/residence and subject area (HStA Dresden [Hauptstaatsarchiv – Main State Archives] highest authorities/military, StA Leipzig Zentralstelle für Genealogie [Central Office for Genealogy], Bergarchiv Freiberg [Mining Archives] mining); personal viewing at the state archives free of charge; costs of municipal archives according to the rules of the town/county; for data requiring protection, the staff do the research; fields processing time/deadline empty
- Q143 https://www.revosax.sachsen.de/vorschrift/19728 (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Sächsische Archivbenutzungsverordnung (SächsArchivBenVO; Saxon Archives Use Ordinance) of September 8, 2022 (SächsGVBl. p. 526), version valid from October 13, 2022: Annex No. 1 – oral/written information beyond simple information, including investigation, €20.00 per quarter hour or part thereof, even if the investigation is unsuccessful; § 8 para. 3 personal viewing free of charge; § 8 para. 4 simple information on the type and accessibility free of charge; § 10 para. 5 waiver on grounds of equity in individual cases. For the state archives, replaces the older SächsArchivGebVO (€12/quarter hour, version until October 12, 2022)
- Q144 https://www.archiv.sachsen.de/anfrage-stellen-9215.html (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Sächsisches Staatsarchiv, „Anfrage stellen" [Submit an inquiry]: inquiries via contact form („Allgemeine Anfrage" – general inquiry, also in English); response can take up to four weeks; for capacity reasons, as a rule only simple information on type and accessibility; fees for greater effort
- Q146 https://www.evlks.de/service/landeskirchliches-archiv/benutzung (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: LKA Dresden, Benutzung (Use) (accessed again): inquiries about parish registers in writing or by email; information only if at least the place is known; extensive written research is not handled, referral to professional genealogists; unfilmed parish registers mostly in the parish offices, addresses via the regional church's address database; no information on processing time; civil status data from 1876 at civil registry offices/municipal archives (supplements Q51)
- Q147 https://www.zwickau.de/media/downloads/image/01_buerger/ortsrecht/4_9_Gebuehrensatzung-Stadtarchiv-idF-04_02_22.pdf (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: City of Zwickau, Archivgebührensatzung (archives fee statute) of July 12, 2021 as amended by the 1st amendment of February 4, 2022 (in force February 10, 2022): written information/research €15.00 per half working hour or part thereof, re-

gardless of the result; use in the reading room free of charge. Example of a municipal regulation

- Q148 https://dsgvo-gesetz.de/erwaegungsgruende/nr-27/ (accessed November 1, 2026; official text: OJ EU [ABl. EU] L 119 of May 4, 2016)
  Supports: GDPR (DSGVO) Recital 27: the Regulation does not apply to personal data of deceased persons; Member States may provide for rules
- Q170 https://fimportal.de/leistung-stammtexte/L100009/6000234-99027005250000/primary (accessed November 2, 2026; former PDF address .../api/v0/xzufi-services/.../de/pdf no longer reachable since November 2, 2026, content unchanged)
  Supports: FIM service description Saxony „Geburtenregister, beglaubigten Ausdruck anfordern“ [Birth register, request a certified printout] (99027005250000): first copy €15.00, each additional copy at the same time €7.00, free of charge for the pension insurance; ID, for written orders a certified copy; documentation of relationship if applicable; processing time empty; legal basis §§ 54, 55, 62 PStG, SächsKVZ Annex 1 item No. 75; document „heruntergeladen am 07.07.2025“ (downloaded on July 7, 2025)
- Q171 https://www.bischofswerda.de/fileadmin/Stadt_Bischofswerda/Formulare/Standesamt/Infoblatt_zur_Anforderung_von_Urkunden_und_Ausk%C3%BCnften.pdf (accessed November 2, 2026: fees €15.00/€7.00, copy of national ID card front and back with signature, advance payment, documentation of relationship if applicable – identical wording; former address .../biw_upload/pdf/Formulare/Infoblatt_Anforderung_-Urkunden_Auskünfte.pdf no longer available since November 2, 2026, accessed there November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Town of Bischofswerda, civil registry office: „Infoblatt zur Anforderung von Urkunden & Auskünften vom Standesamt Bischofswerda“ [Information sheet on requesting certificates & information from the Bischofswerda civil registry office] (5 pp., undated): birth, marriage, death certificates or certified printouts, first copy €15.00, each additional copy at the same time €7.00; in writing: signed application, copy of the Personalausweis (front and back), advance payment; documentation of relationship if applicable. No certification of the ID copy required (example of differing practice)
- Q172 https://www.archiv.sachsen.de/gebuehren-und-kosten-9169.html (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Sächsisches Staatsarchiv, „Gebühren und Kosten“ [Fees and costs] (last changed 27.10.2026): personal viewing in the reading room and simple information free of charge; fees depend on effort; Annex to § 8 SächsArchivBenVO applies to the divisions Chemnitz, Dresden, Freiberg, Leipzig; for the Staatsfilialarchiv Bautzen, the fee statute of the Archivverbund Bautzen applies
- Q173 https://www.evlks.de/fileadmin/userfiles/EVLKS_interessiert/F._Service/Landeskirchenarchiv/Benutzung/Gebuehrenordnung.pdf (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Gebührenordnung LKA Dresden of March 27, 2025 (in force April 1, 2025), § 2 para. 4: fees regardless of the result of the investigations; No. 4.5 permission for your own reproductions €10/day (supplements Q52)

- Q174 https://www.revosax.sachsen.de/vorschrift/19330; https://www.revosax.sachsen.de/vorschrift/19330.6; https://revosax.sachsen.de/law_versions/49589/impacts; https://revosax.sachsen.de/vorschrift_gesamt/20331/46131.html (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Zehntes Sächsisches Kostenverzeichnis (10. SächsKVZ; Tenth Saxon Schedule of Costs) of August 16, 2021, last amended 26.03.2025, version of April 9, 2025 valid until December 31, 2026; revosax lists a new version from January 1, 2027. Annex 1 item No. 75 „Personenstandsrecht, öffentliches Namensrecht" [civil status law, public law of names] = legal basis of the civil registry office fees. → Amounts supported via Q141/Q170/Q171. The version from January 1, 2027 is based on Art. 4 of the Gesetz zur Anpassung stiftungsrechtlicher Vorschriften [Act on the Adaptation of Foundation Law Provisions] of November 28, 2023 (SächsGVBl. p. 870, entry into force under Art. 6 para. 3 on January 1, 2027): only tariff items 15 to 17 of item No. 97 (register of foundations) are deleted; item No. 75 (civil status law) remains unchanged

Chapter 4

Reading Old Handwriting – With and Without AI

You have found the entry – and you can't read it. That happens to almost everyone at the start. But the old handwriting is not a secret code: with a letter chart and a little practice, you will soon be reading your first entries on your own. This chapter shows which scripts you will come across, where you can learn to read them, where the pitfalls are – and how programs using artificial intelligence (AI) can help you without leading you astray.

> **Note:** Prices and terms of online services change frequently. All information is provided without guarantee; the date of each piece of information is stated.

4.1 Which Scripts You Will Come Across

Kurrent script (Kurrentschrift, also called „deutsche Schreibschrift" [German handwriting]) is the handwriting of most older parish registers (Kirchenbücher), court books (Gerichtsbücher) and letters. It took shape in the 16th century, and people still wrote this way in everyday life until well into the 20th century. Its appearance changed a great deal over that time: if you can read a hand from 1850, you will often still struggle with one from 1650. (Q201, Q202)

Sütterlin script (Sütterlinschrift) is a simplified form of Kurrent for beginning writers, designed by Ludwig Sütterlin and promoted by the Prussian Ministry of Culture and Education (preußisches Kultusministerium). After school trials beginning around 1915, all children in the first grade of elementary school (Volksschule) in Prussia learned this script from 1924 on. A decree of September 1934 then standardized the school script for the entire

Reich starting with the 1935/36 school year – which, at the latest, included Saxony. No earlier Saxon regulation could be documented. (Q200, Q240, Q242) You will come across Sütterlin mainly in letters, diaries and postcards from the 20th century.
In early 1941, the Nazi leadership had printed matter and official correspondence switched to the Latin-letter „Normalschrift" [standard script]; a decree of September 1, 1941, stipulated that schools would teach only this script. (Q203, Q240) Many people, however, continued for decades to write privately the way they had learned.
Latin script – the one we use today – also appears in old parish registers, right in the middle of the German text: scribes often set off names, foreign words and Latin terms this way, while writing the rest of the text in Kurrent. (Q201, Q202) This helps you: such names jump out when you skim a page.
Good to know: In the reading room of the Landeskirchenarchiv Dresden (archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony), you are expected to read the old handwriting yourself (Section 1.3).

4.2 Learning to Read – Without AI

The starting point is a **letter chart** (Buchstabentafel): all the letters of the old script next to today's letters. Print one out, place it next to every document, and use it to read real words from the very beginning.
Free practice resources online (as of November 2026):

- The **University of Zurich** (Universität Zürich) offers „Ad fontes", a publicly accessible learning resource for working with archival sources, including an exercise on Kurrent script and sample alphabets. You can create an account with a username of your choice; the site does not mention any costs. (Q205, Q241)
- **Brigham Young University** (USA) provides a learning resource on German handwriting: letter charts, variants of the Kurrent letters, numerals, and exercises ranging from single letters to full texts. No registration was required when the site was accessed; in addition to the English version, there is a German version. (Q206, Q243)

- The **Verein für Computergenealogie** (CompGen, German genealogy society) has made freely available a talk by Martin Munke (Sächsische Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden, SLUB [Saxon State and University Library Dresden]) on deciphering Kurrent and Sütterlin, with slides (2022). (Q207)

Learning with others: Look in the program of your local Volkshochschule (adult education center) for „Sütterlin“ or „alte Schrift“ [old handwriting]; the offerings change from semester to semester. Some libraries and Heimatvereine (local history societies) host open reading sessions to which you can bring your own letters – for example, the Schleswig-Holsteinische Landesbibliothek (Schleswig-Holstein State Library) with its „Transkriptionscafé“ [transcription café]. (Q209) In Hamburg, the „Sütterlinstube“, a nonprofit association, transcribes old documents on a volunteer basis in return for a voluntary donation; you can also submit documents online (as of October 2025). (Q208, Q244) Genealogical societies in your region can also help.
Practical tip: Practice first on short texts with a fixed layout, such as filled-in printed forms or lists – long letters come later. (Q201) Entries whose content you already know also work well – for example, the baptism of an ancestor whose date of birth you know from a certificate. That way you can check your reading.

4.3 Typical Pitfalls

Letters that look alike. Some Kurrent letters closely resemble one another:

- **e and n:** Pay attention to where the two downstrokes are joined – for e, more in the upper half; for n, at the bottom. When someone writes in a hurry, often only the meaning of the word helps. (Q223)
- **u and n:** Without an extra mark, the two would be identical. You recognize the u by the curved mark above it – it is easy to overlook, or the scribe forgot it. (Q223)
- **A stroke over m or n** usually doubles the letter: „kom̄en“ means „kommen“ [to come]. (Q223)

- **h, f and long s** have long loops above and below the line and therefore look very similar. Compare words by the same hand that you can read with certainty. (Q223)
- **The forms of s:** At the end of a syllable or a word you find the round final s; otherwise usually the long ſ. The ß was originally a combination of ſ and z. (Q201, Q202)
- **Capital letters** are often ornate. You will recognize names more easily if you know which families lived in the village.

Abbreviations. Scribes abbreviated common words and indicated omitted endings with strokes or loops. (Q202) Keep your own list – the same pastor usually abbreviates the same way.
Latin terms. Lutheran (evangelisch) parish registers are generally kept in German, Catholic ones more often in Latin. (Q245) Individual Latin words and abbreviations also appear in Lutheran registers, however, especially in older volumes and in dates. This short word list, arranged by occasion, will help you get started (Q219, Q220, Q246):

Occasion	In the parish register	Meaning
Baptism	natus / nata	born (he / she)
Baptism	baptizatus / baptizata	baptized (he / she)
Baptism	susceptores	the godparents
Marriage	copulati (sunt)	(were) married
Burial	sepultus / sepulta	buried (he / she)
Family	pater / mater · filius / filia	father / mother · son / daughter
Family	viduus / vidua	widower / widow
Family	illegitimus / illegitima	born out of wedlock

The endings change depending on the sentence and gender; the beginning of the word usually already reveals the meaning.
Dates based on the church year. Often there is no calendar date, but the name of a feast day or Sunday – for example „Dom. Rogate“ (the fifth Sunday after Easter), „Dom. 3 p. Trin.“ (the third Sunday after Trinity Sunday

[Trinitatisfest]) or a saint's day such as „Michaelis" (September 29, Michaelmas). Movable feasts depend on the date of Easter. (Q206) Convert such dates with a calendar tool. The standard reference for this is by Hermann Grotefend („Zeitrechnung des deutschen Mittelalters und der Neuzeit" [Chronology of the German Middle Ages and Modern Era], in short form as „Taschenbuch der Zeitrechnung" [Pocket Book of Chronology]); an online version with a calculator for movable feasts is freely available. (Q221, Q247) Also note: the Protestant imperial estates (evangelische Reichsstände) of the Holy Roman Empire – including the Electorate of Saxony (Kursachsen) – changed their calendar in 1700. February 18 was followed immediately by March 1; a parish register therefore counts only up to the 18th in February 1700. (Q222, Q248)

Practice box (Übungsbox): Deciphering a marriage entry
This entry is **entirely made up** and has already been transcribed into modern letters here. This is roughly how it would appear in a parish register around 1790 – with abbreviations and a date based on the church year:
„Dom. Rogate copul. Mstr. Gottlob Friedr. Zschoche, Tuchmacher allh., Mstr. Joh. Gottfr. Zschoches ehel. 2. Sohn, u. Jgfr. Christiane Dorothea, Hans Georg Weidlichs, Häuslers in hiesig. Gemeinde, ehel. ält. Tochter. 1789."
Your tasks: Expand the abbreviations. Who is getting married, who are the fathers, and on what day did the wedding take place?
Solution: „Am Sonntag Rogate wurden getraut Meister Gottlob Friedrich Zschoche, Tuchmacher allhier, Meister Johann Gottfried Zschoches ehelicher zweiter Sohn, und Jungfrau Christiane Dorothea, Hans Georg Weidlichs, Häuslers in hiesiger Gemeinde, eheliche älteste Tochter." (On Rogate Sunday were married Master Gottlob Friedrich Zschoche, cloth maker of this place, legitimate second son of Master Johann Gottfried Zschoche, and the maiden Christiane Dorothea, legitimate eldest daughter of Hans Georg Weidlich, cottager [Häusler] in this parish.) In 1789, Easter fell on April 12; Rogate is the fifth Sunday after it – so **May 17, 1789**. Check this with a calendar calculator (Q221).

4.4 AI as a Reading Aid: What It Can Do – and Where It Goes Wrong

Specialized handwriting programs. The best known is Transkribus, operated by the European cooperative READ-COOP. You upload the image of a page, and the program suggests a transcription. Ready-made reading models are available for Kurrent and Sütterlin. A general model for German handwriting from the user community reports an error rate of just over 8 percent of characters on its test pages. (Q212, Q213) So in a line of 60 letters, an average of five are wrong – a problem when it comes to names and numbers. For its best parish register models, the provider states under 5 percent for well-preserved registers, without disclosing how this was measured. (Q212) Costs (as of November 2026): On the free plan you receive 50 credits per month; one handwritten page uses one credit. Unused credits on the free plan expire at the end of the month. The smallest paid plan costs €99 per year. (Q210, Q211)

General AI assistants are chat programs to which you can show a photo and ask questions. They suggest readings, interpret abbreviations and translate Latin. Their weakness is dangerous: where they are unsure, they fill in what sounds plausible. A scholarly article from 2023 describes how such a program, while smoothing machine-read letters, can insert names that do not appear in the original at all. (Q215) An invented first name looks just as convincing as a real one.

The basic rule of this guide: Every fact you adopt is checked against the original. The AI provides a suggestion – you must do the reading yourself.

> **From experience (Aus der Praxis): My reading aid**
> Kurrent was the biggest hurdle for me. Today, AI helps me with it. I show it the entry and get a suggested reading, often with an explanation of abbreviations as well. That saves a lot of time – and sometimes it puts me on a track I would not have found on my own.
> Nevertheless, the basic rule applies without exception: every fact is checked against the original. I compare names, numbers and places letter by letter myself. Only then does anything go into my family tree.

4.5 Your Workflow in Six Steps

1. **Record the source citation (Fundstelle).** Archive or portal, parish (Kirchgemeinde), register, year, page or image number – before you start reading.
2. **Read it yourself first.** Use your letter chart to read as much as possible on your own. Mark uncertain passages with square brackets, for example „Joh[ann?]“.
3. **Get an AI suggestion.** Have a program read the page or the excerpt – but only if you are allowed to use the image for that purpose (see Section 4.6).
4. **Compare, letter by letter.** Place your reading, the AI suggestion and the original side by side. Where they contradict each other, only the original decides.
5. **Check the context.** Do age, parents and place fit what you already know? A detail that doesn't fit often points to a reading error.
6. **Mark and file.** Adopt only what you have confirmed against the original; anything uncertain stays marked. Chapter 5 shows how to organize your documentation and assign a degree of certainty to information.

Practical tip: Don't just ask the AI "What does it say?" – also ask: "Which words are uncertain?"

4.6 Data Protection and Rights When Uploading

Am I allowed to share the image? When you upload an image to an online program, you pass it on to the provider of that program. So check the terms of the institution the image comes from beforehand (as of November 2026):

- **FamilySearch** permits use of the images only for your own noncommercial research. Its terms of use also prohibit transmitting content to other websites or posting it there. (Q217, Q249) An upload to an online service would likely fall under this – if in doubt, ask FamilySearch first or don't do it.

- **Archion:** According to its terms and conditions (Geschäftsbedingungen), Archion does not restrict individual officially downloaded pages; reproducing content beyond that or making it public is prohibited without permission. According to the forum moderators, individual downloads may be added to your own online family tree with a source citation, but not entire registers; screenshots do not count as an official download. (Q218, Q250) These texts do not explicitly address uploading to AI programs.
- **Your own photos and scans from archives** are subject to the terms of the respective archive (for the Landeskirchenarchiv, see Section 1.3).

If in doubt, ask – and never publish other people's images without written permission. This information does not replace legal advice.

What happens to my data? Transkribus states that it processes all data on its own servers in Austria; the help page does not say clearly whether uploaded pages are also used to improve general reading models. (Q214) With general AI assistants, depending on the provider, your input is used to train future programs unless you opt out; with one major provider, this can be switched off in the settings. (Q216) Do not upload documents containing data about living people – no certificates of your parents, no ID documents.

4.7 Checklist "Reading Old Handwriting"

I have a letter chart for Kurrent (and, for more recent letters, for Sütterlin) at hand.
I practice first on entries whose content I already know.
I keep my own list of abbreviations and Latin terms.
I convert feast-day and Sunday dates with a calendar tool.
Before every upload, I have checked whether I am allowed to share the image and whether it contains data about living persons.
Every fact from an AI suggestion has been checked against the original.
Uncertain readings are marked as uncertain.

Sources for Chapter 4

The abbreviations Q1, Q2 ... in the text refer to this list. Online sources accessed on November 1, 2026 unless otherwise stated.

- Q200 https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/gnd124061168.html (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Zilch, Reinhold: Art. „Sütterlin, Ludwig“, in: Neue Deutsche Biographie 25 (2013), pp. 688–689: drafts submitted to the Prussian Ministry of Culture in 1910, school trials → 1914 two „Normalalphabete“ [standard alphabets]; established in Prussian elementary schools since the mid-1920s, also introduced in other German states, taught until 1941
- Q201 https://archivfuehrer-kolonialzeit.de/schrift (accessed November 1, 2026, undated)
  Supports: Archivführer Deutsche Kolonialgeschichte [Archive Guide to German Colonial History] (FH Potsdam, operator not explicitly named), page „Schrift“ [Script]: Kurrent the general handwriting until the mid-20th century; Sütterlin introduced in Prussia in 1915; names/foreign words often in Latin handwriting; tip: start with tables/forms; forms of s
- Q202 https://lav.rlp.de/fileadmin/lav/Bilder/Geschichte_entdecken/Archivpaedagogik/Lesekurs_Broschuere.pdf (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Landesarchivverwaltung Rheinland-Pfalz [State Archives Administration of Rhineland-Palatinate], brochure „Lesekurs“ [Reading Course] (undated): Kurrent the main script in the 16th century, many variants in the 17th/18th centuries; Sütterlin introduced in elementary schools (Volksschulen) in 1917; 3.1.1941 switch to Antiqua „Normalschrift“, schools to teach only this; long/round s, ß from ſ+z; abbreviations/abbreviation marks
- Q203 https://www.uni-heidelberg.de/unimut/themen/fraktur-verbot.html (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Universität Heidelberg, UNiMUT, „Verbot der Frakturschriften durch die Nationalsozialisten“ [The Nazi Ban on Fraktur Typefaces]: circular of January 3, 1941 (Bormann, Reich Chancellery), Antiqua henceforth the „Normal-Schrift“, authorities to stop using Fraktur
- Q205 https://www.adfontes.uzh.ch/; https://www.adfontes.uzh.ch/en/ad-fontes/informationen-zum-projekt (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Universität Zürich, „Ad fontes“ (learning resource for archival work): navigation lists „Übung zur deutschen Kurrentschrift“ [Exercise on German Kurrent script] and „Musteralphabete“ [sample alphabets]
- Q206 https://script.byu.edu/german-handwriting/tools/genealogical-vocabulary/feast-days (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Brigham Young University, Script Tutorial, German Handwriting, page “Feast Days”: alphabet charts, Kurrent variants, numerals, tests (Letter/Word/Passage); mov-

able feasts depend on the date of Easter. Tutorial home page not accessible on November 1, 2026 (client error)

- Q207 https://www.compgen.de/?p=45263 (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Verein für Computergenealogie (CompGen), „Handschriftliche Quellen für die Familienforschung entziffern – Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe“ [Deciphering Handwritten Sources for Family History – Help for Self-Help] (04.03.2022): talk by Martin Munke (SLUB Dresden, Saxonica department) of February 10, 2022, recording (YouTube) and slides freely available
- Q208 https://www.compgen.de/?p=65845 (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: CompGen, „Wer übersetzt Sütterlin- bzw. Kurrent-Schriften?“ [Who Translates Sütterlin or Kurrent Scripts?] (29.06.2024, modified 15.08.2024): Sütterlinstube Hamburg (nonprofit, founded 2009, transcription in return for a donation); Transkribus „bis zu 100 Seiten pro Monat“ [up to 100 pages per month] free (as of 2024)
- Q209 https://www.schleswig-holstein.de/DE/landesregierung/ministerien-behoerden/LBSH/Veranstaltungen/_Aktuell/20261028_Transkriptionscafe (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: State of Schleswig-Holstein / State Library, event „Transkriptionscafé“ (with the Schleswig-Holsteinischer Heimatbund), next date 21.04.2027, 5–7 p.m.; bring your own documents (Kurrent/Sütterlin); costs not stated
- Q210 https://www.transkribus.org/plans (accessed November 1, 2026; page “© 2026”)
  Supports: Transkribus (READ-COOP SCE), “Plans”: Free €0, 50 credits/month, approx. 50 pages, no credit card; Scholar €99/year (€8.25/month billed annually; €19.99 monthly according to the FAQ), 900 credits/year; Team €399 or €449/year (contradiction on the page); prices incl. 20 % Austrian VAT; top-up 250 credits €59.50
- Q211 https://www.transkribus.org/de/credits (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Transkribus, „Transkribus-Guthaben verstehen“ [Understanding Transkribus Credits]: handwriting + line recognition 1 credit/page; Free Plan credits expire monthly
- Q212 https://www.transkribus.org/de/kirchenbuecher-transkribieren (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Transkribus, „Kirchenbücher transkribieren“ [Transcribing Parish Registers] (provider’s own page): models for Kurrent/Sütterlin parish registers 1550–1940; best models over 95 % character accuracy for well-preserved Kurrent parish registers (no method stated); confidence values per line; 50 credits/month free
- Q213 https://www.transkribus.org/models/the-german-giant-i (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Transkribus model “The German Giant I” (Transkribus Community, PyLaia, published 20.03.2023): German in Kurrent and Latin script, 16th–21st centuries, CER 8.3 % on its own validation set
- Q214 https://help.transkribus.org/is-my-data-safe (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Transkribus Help “Is my data safe?”: “All data is processed and stored on our own servers in Austria”; use permits processing “to provide the service and improve it”

- Q215 https://arxiv.org/pdf/2308.02044 (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Spina, Salvatore: Artificial Intelligence in archival and historical scholarship workflow: HTS and ChatGPT, arXiv:2308.02044 (2023): while normalizing Transkribus transcriptions, ChatGPT introduced, among other things, names that do not appear in the original
- Q216 https://openai.com/policies/how-your-data-is-used-to-improve-model-performance/ (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: OpenAI, "How your data is used to improve model performance" (updated March 13, 2026): content from ChatGPT for individuals may be used for training unless the user opts out (data controls/privacy portal; temporary chat) – as an example of a major provider, not named in the text
- Q217 https://www.familysearch.org/en/help/helpcenter/article/do-i-have-a-legal-right-to-use-images-i-find-on-familysearch (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: FamilySearch Help, "Do I have a legal right to use images I find on FamilySearch?": use for "incidental, personal, noncommercial genealogical research purposes"; "Contracts prohibit the publication or distribution of the actual record images"; written permission of the record custodian required (undated)
- Q218 https://www.archion.de/en/forum/goto/post?id=108841; https://www.archion.de/en/forum/threads/gefundenes-dokument-in-online-familienstammbaum-stellen.21291/latest (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Archion forum, thread "Can I upload to FamilySearch and Ancestry?", moderator (vnagel2004) May 24, 2025 and September 3, 2025: official downloads (not screenshots) with source citation permitted in your own tree on Ancestry/MyHeritage/FamilySearch, not entire registers; cites terms and conditions (AGB) no. 9.3.5; additionally thread „Gefundenes Dokument in Online-Familienstammbaum stellen" [Posting a Found Document in an Online Family Tree] (02.02.2025)
- Q219 https://script.byu.edu/latin-handwriting/tools/common-phrases (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Brigham Young University, Script Tutorial, Latin, "Common Phrases used in Parish Records": baptisatus/-a, sepultus/-a, copulati sunt in matrimonio, natus/-a est, vidua, viduus, illegitimus, susceptores
- Q220 https://www.freereg.org.uk/information-for-transcribers/latin-words-to-recognise (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: FreeREG, "Latin words to recognise": filius, filia, natus, nata (pater/mater: basic vocabulary, not listed there)
- Q221 https://mdr-maa.org/resource/zeitrechnung-des-deutschen-mittelalters-und-der-neuzeit/; https://www.archion.de/en/forum/threads/der-grotefend-online-kalenderrechner-osterrechner-und-vieles-mehr.26864/post-132138 (accessed November 1, 2026; direct links to manuscripta-mediaevalia.de and handschriftenzentren.de not reachable on November 1, 2026 and therefore removed)

Supports: Grotefend, Hermann: Zeitrechnung des deutschen Mittelalters und der Neuzeit, 2 vols., Hannover 1891–1898, HTML version on manuscripta-mediaevalia.de (catalog entry Medieval Digital Resources, "No Fee", with calculator for movable feasts); additionally Archion forum, moderator 25.03.2026: calculator „GROTEFEND online" of the Deutsches Handschriftenzentrum [German Manuscript Center] (handschriftenzentren.de). Both target pages blocked for WebFetch on November 1, 2026 (robots)

- Q222 https://www.archion.de/en/forum/goto/post?id=17658 (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Archion forum, thread „Gregorianischer Kalender" [Gregorian Calendar], moderator 26.06.2022: Protestant imperial estates 18/19 Feb. (Julian) → March 1, 1700 (Gregorian); parish register of Groß Mühlingen: February 1700 only 18 days
- Q223 https://www.staff.uni-mainz.de/hschmahl/PalaeographieKirchenbuecher27.10.2022.pdf (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Schmahl, Helmut (JGU Mainz, Department of History [Historisches Seminar]): „Kirchenbücher als historische Quellen" [Parish Registers as Historical Sources], paleography exercise winter semester 2022/23, session 27.10.2022 (slide PDF): e/n (hook joined at top or bottom), u-arc, stroke over m/n = doubling, h/f/long s with ascenders/descenders easily confused
- Q240 https://bbf.dipf.de/de/forschen-publizieren/pdfs-forschen-publizieren/reimers-bettina-irina-2016-ludwig-konzept-einer-schrift-methode-und-praxis-des-schreibenlernens (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Reimers, Bettina Irina: „Ludwig Sütterlins Konzept einer Schrift – Methode und Praxis des Schreibenlernens" [Ludwig Sütterlin's Concept of a Script – Method and Practice of Learning to Write], in: Reh, Sabine/Wilde, Denise (eds.): Die Materialität des Schreiben- und Lesenlernens, Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt 2016: Feb. 1915 trial classes in at least three Prussian schools (pp. 244f.); from the start of the 1924 school year, all children in the 1st grade of elementary school in Prussia learned the Sütterlin initial script (p. 250); decree of September 7, 1934, effective with the 1935/36 school year, ends the lack of uniformity throughout the Reich (p. 251); Bormann circular of January 3, 1941 concerns printed matter, circular decree of September 1, 1941: schools to teach only the Normalschrift (pp. 251f.). Saxony not mentioned
- Q241 https://www.adfontes.uzh.ch/ (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Universität Zürich, Ad fontes, home page (German): „Ad fontes ist öffentlich zugänglich" [Ad fontes is publicly accessible]; registration possible with a freely chosen username and password or AAI; latest news item 07.03.2023; no information on costs
- Q242 https://www.dresden.de/media/pdf/stadtarchiv/Tafeln_34-38_Schulwesen.pdf (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Stadtarchiv Dresden [Dresden City Archives], „Schätze des Stadtarchivs" [Treasures of the City Archives], panels 34–38 school system (undated): Sütterlin designed the script 1912–1914 on behalf of the Prussian ministry; „Sie wurde 1935 an den

Schulen als Normalschrift eingeführt." [It was introduced in schools as the standard script in 1935.] No earlier Saxony-specific date

- Q243 https://script.byu.edu/; https://script.byu.edu/german-handwriting/alphabet/kurrent-letter-variations (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: BYU Script Tutorial, home page and subpage "Kurrent Letter Variations": German Tutorial "English / Deutsch"; no information on registration or costs, pages accessible without registration
- Q244 https://www.leinetal24.de/welt/botschaften-so-entschluesseln-sie-alte-briefe-und-vergessene-zr-93966862.html (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Hirschbeck, Anita (KNA): „So entschlüsseln Sie alte Briefe und vergessene Botschaften" [How to Decipher Old Letters and Forgotten Messages], as of October 3, 2025 (among others on leinetal24.de): Sütterlinstube Hamburg, volunteers transcribe old documents, online submission, voluntary donation. The association's own website not accessible (robots)
- Q245 https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Germany_Church_Records (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: FamilySearch Research Wiki, "Germany Church Records" (last edited 07.10.2026): "Catholic records are usually written in Latin or German, while other records will be written in the local language."
- Q246 https://www.ag.ch/media/kanton-aargau/bks/kultur/staatsarchiv/bksstar-latein-fuer-familienforscher.pdf (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Staatsarchiv Aargau [Aargau State Archives] (BKS, Culture Division), information sheet „Häufige lateinische Wendungen in Kirchenbüchern" [Common Latin Phrases in Parish Registers] (17.08.2016): among others illegitimus/illegitima, viduus/vidua, sepultus, compatres/patrini (godparents)
- Q247 https://www.compgen.de/?p=33986; https://uni-tuebingen.de/de/109038 (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: CompGen, „Hermann Grotefend – digital: Taschenbuch der Zeitrechnung" (18.05.2021, modified 30.03.2022): HTML version with calculation of movable feasts and calendar conversion by Horst Ruth (manuscripta-mediaevalia.de); additionally „Grotefend digital" (University of Graz, GAMS). Additionally, University of Tübingen, Medieval History, links to the same version. Target pages themselves blocked
- Q248 https://edoc.bbaw.de/files/2630/13_Jahresthema2015_16_Wielen_edoc.pdf (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Wielen, Roland: „Das Kalender-Edikt des Brandenburgischen Kurfürsten Friedrich III. vom 10. Mai 1700" [The Calendar Edict of Elector Friedrich III of Brandenburg of May 10, 1700], in: Grötschel et al. (eds.): Vision als Aufgabe, Berlin 2016, pp. 185–195, here pp. 188f.: resolution of the Protestant imperial estates in Regensburg 23.9.1699 (Julian) on the „Verbesserter Kalender" [Improved Calendar] from 1700; February 19–29, 1700 omitted; Easter calculated astronomically (deviations 1724, 1744). Saxony not specifically mentioned

- Q249 https://www.familysearch.org/en/legal/terms (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: FamilySearch, Terms of Use (Updated 2023-09-01): materials only "for your personal, noncommercial use"; "You may not transmit or distribute content from this site to other sites."; no posting on other websites/networks without permission; AI not explicitly mentioned
- Q250 https://www.archion.de/de/agb (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Archion, terms and conditions (AGB) (page states „Stand: 20. März 2015" [as of March 20, 2015]): no. 9.3.5 individual downloaded content „unterliegen keiner Nutzungsbeschränkung seitens des Anbieters" [is not subject to any usage restriction on the part of the provider]; no. 5.1 c) no reproducing/editing/making publicly available beyond the functions without granted rights; no. 7.4 b) data on living persons may be published only with consent; upload to other services/AI not addressed

Chapter 5

Staying Organized – Sources, Citations, Certainty

> **Note:** Programs, file formats and online services change. All information is provided without guarantee; the date of each piece of information is stated.

After your first finds, the pile grows quickly: certificates, copies, notes, files, bookmarks. If you get organized now, you will save yourself a lot of searching – and a few mistakes – later on. This chapter shows how to record where you found something, evaluate information and store your documents safely.

5.1 Why Stay Organized?

Being organized serves three purposes:

- **Finding things again.** A year from now, you will no longer remember on which page of which parish register (Kirchenbuch) the baptism was recorded. Your note will.
- **Documenting.** Every piece of information in your family tree needs a source citation (Fundstelle) – a principle also emphasized by professional organizations such as the National Genealogical Society (USA). (Q309) Without a source, a date remains a claim.
- **Passing it on.** Your children, grandchildren or other researchers should be able to continue your work without having to ask you.

Practical tip: Record the source citation right away, even before you copy out the entry (see Section 4.5, step 1). Searching for it afterward takes much more time.

5.2 Writing Source Citations Correctly

A good source citation answers a single question: can a stranger find the passage again without having to ask? For that you always need three things: **who** holds the document, **which** document it is (with call number [Signatur], volume, year) and **exactly where** in it (page, folio, number, image number). The Bundesarchiv (German Federal Archives), for example, asks for this order: abbreviation of the archive, record group (Bestand) and file number, plus folio or page; for digitized images, the image number is sufficient. (Q310) No specific guideline from the Saxon archives was found during the research for this guide (as of November 2026); the models below follow the same structure.
Feel free to use these models. **All examples are entirely made up.**

Type of source	What to include	Example (made up)
Parish register (original or digitized)	Parish (Kirchgemeinde), type of register, year, page, entry number; repository (Verwahrer); how it was viewed	Ev.-luth. Kirchgemeinde Oederan, Taufregister 1842, S. 57, Nr. 113 (Taufe Karl August Wünschmann). Eingesehen als Digitalisat im Lesesaal des Landeskirchlichen Archivs Dresden, 14.03.2026. [Lutheran parish of Oederan, baptismal register 1842, p. 57, no. 113 (baptism of Karl August Wünschmann). Viewed as a digitized image in the reading room of the Landeskirchenarchiv Dresden (archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony), March 14, 2026.]

Type of source	What to include	Example (made up)
Civil registry record (Standesamtsregister)	Standesamt (civil registry office), type of register, year, number; repository (civil registry office or city archives); certificate or register copy	Standesamt Penig, Sterberegister 1911, Nr. 48 (Henriette Ernestine Löbel). Beglaubigte Registerabschrift, verwahrt im Stadtarchiv, erhalten am 02.05.2026. [Civil registry office Penig, death register 1911, no. 48 (Henriette Ernestine Löbel). Certified copy of the register entry, held in the city archives (Stadtarchiv), received May 2, 2026.]
Archival file	Archive, record group (number and name), call number, folio; title and date range of the file	Sächsisches Staatsarchiv, Staatsarchiv Chemnitz, Bestand 12345 Amtsgericht Musterstadt, Nr. 678: Nachlasssache Ernst Moritz Rudert, 1898–1900, Bl. 12. Eigenes Foto im Lesesaal, 20.06.2026. [Sächsisches Staatsarchiv (Saxon State Archives), Staatsarchiv Chemnitz, record group 12345 Amtsgericht (local court) Musterstadt, no. 678: probate matter Ernst Moritz Rudert, 1898–1900, fol. 12. Own photo in the reading room, June 20, 2026.]
Online portal	Portal, archive and register as above, image number, complete web address, date accessed	Online-Kirchenbuchportal, Kirchgemeinde Mittweida, Trauungen 1801–1830, Bild 214 von 380, Eintrag 1819 Nr. 9 (Pönitz/Mehnert). https://www.example.org/buch/0000 , abgerufen 05.01.2026. [Online parish register portal, parish of Mittweida, marriages 1801–1830, image 214 of 380, entry 1819 no. 9 (Pönitz/Mehnert). https://www.example.org/buch/0000 , accessed January 5, 2026.]

Type of source	What to include	Example (made up)
Newspaper	Newspaper title, place, date, issue, page, section; portal and address if applicable	Musterstädter Wochenblatt, 12.10.1923, S. 4, Familienanzeigen (Verlobung Lippold/Rößler). Digitalisat im Zeitungsportal, https://www.example.com/0000 , abgerufen 18.07.2026. [Musterstädter Wochenblatt, October 12, 1923, p. 4, family announcements (engagement Lippold/Rößler). Digitized image in the newspaper portal, https://www.example.com/0000 , accessed July 18, 2026.]
Oral information	Who, when, where, to whom; about what; your own note of the conversation	Information from my aunt (full name only in my family file) on December 24, 2025, in Frohburg, told to me orally: grandfather was supposedly born „um 1910“ [around 1910] in Penig. Conversation note in folder „Gespräche“ [Conversations].

Why the date accessed? Web addresses change; the date shows when the page looked like that. In addition, save a copy of the image for your own research – as far as the portal's terms allow (Section 4.6). (Q249, Q250)
Good to know: Oral information is also a source – often imprecise, but valuable. Record it with the date; names of living relatives stay in your own records (Section 5.4).

5.3 How Certain Is a Piece of Information?

Not every source is equally reliable. Three questions will help you evaluate it. (Q308)

1. Original or derivative (transcript)? An original is the first record, such as the entry in the baptismal register (Taufregister). A good photo or digitized image of it also counts as an original. Transcripts, extracts, name in-

dexes and databases are derivative: errors can creep in every time something is copied. A finished family tree – even a printed one – is a compilation; it leads you to sources but does not replace them. (Q308, Q309)

2. Firsthand or secondhand? You ask this question for each individual piece of information, not for the document as a whole. A death entry is usually firsthand for the date of death: the pastor or civil registrar (Standesbeamter) wrote it down close to the event. The date of birth in the same entry, on the other hand, often comes from relatives who knew it only from hearsay – so it is secondhand. (Q308)

3. Does the information answer my question directly? A baptismal entry names the parents directly; an age note in a death entry gives the year of birth only indirectly; even not finding something can tell you something (Section 5.6).

Degrees of Certainty: Simple Marking

Give every piece of information in your family tree one of four degrees (German: bewiesen, wahrscheinlich, möglich, offen):

Degree	Meaning	Example (made up)
proven	Supported by a firsthand original source; other obvious sources checked, no unresolved contradiction	Baptism in 1842 read in the Oederan baptismal register
probable	Several clues fit together, no direct documentation	Year of birth calculated from age stated at marriage and death
possible	A single clue or a family tradition	„Um 1910 in Penig geboren“ [born in Penig around 1910] according to my aunt
open	Nothing found yet; gap deliberately marked	Parents of the bride unknown

Mark the degree where you work: in a genealogy program in a notes field, on paper with a letter in the margin (the German original uses B, W, M, O), or with colors – the main thing is to do it the same way every time. By the

way, an identical name alone is never enough for "proven": only when other characteristics such as place, occupation or parents match do you know that it is the same person.

Record Contradictions Instead of Smoothing Them Over

The baptismal register and the death entry give different birth dates? That is common. Don't silently decide in favor of one piece of information; instead, record both with their sources. Add which one you trust more and why – for example: "Baptismal register recorded at the time; death entry provided 70 years later by the daughter-in-law." If nothing can be decided, the contradiction remains open – so that someone with new finds can continue the work later.

5.4 Filing: Paper, Files, Backup

One scheme for all file names. Name every file using the same pattern, for example:
`JJJJ-MM-TT_Ort_Art_Name` – for example `1842-07-17_Oederan_Taufe_-Wuenschmann-Karl-August.jpg`
(JJJJ-MM-TT = YYYY-MM-DD; Ort = place; Art = type of event, here Taufe = baptism; Name = name.)
The date is that of the event, not of the download; because the year comes first, the computer sorts the files chronologically. Avoid umlauts, ß and spaces – they sometimes cause trouble when copying. Create folders by family branch, and below those by person or place.
Paper and digital. Your family's originals – certificates, Ahnenpässe (Nazi-era ancestry passports), letters, photos – are best stored protected from light, cool and dry – not in the attic, not in damp basement rooms. Carefully remove metal clips, and remove old adhesive tape only if the paper will not be damaged in the process. Folders and sleeves made of acid-free material are suitable as covers. (Q311) Scan the items, work with the scan, and note in a list where the paper is kept.

The 3-2-1 rule for backups. Hard drives fail, laptops get stolen. This rule has proven itself: **3** copies of your data, on **2** different types of storage (such as a computer and an external hard drive), **1** of them at a different location – with relatives or in online storage. (Q300, Q301, Q311) The Bundesamt für Sicherheit in der Informationstechnik (BSI, German Federal Office for Information Security) also advises: keep the backup separate from the computer, back up on a fixed schedule – for example on the first Sunday of the month – and test from time to time whether it can be opened. (Q400, Q401) Store copies in online storage encrypted. (Q311, Q401) If a program or file format becomes outdated, transfer the data to a current format in good time. (Q401)
Data protection for living persons. The Datenschutz-Grundverordnung (DSGVO, EU General Data Protection Regulation, GDPR) expressly excludes purely personal and household activities; it therefore does not apply to your private family research. (Q306) But anyone who publishes – on the internet, in a society journal, in a book – leaves this framework. Rule of thumb: information about living persons stays in your private records. What applies to deceased persons and when archives release records about a person is covered in Section 3.8. (Q81, Q148) This information does not replace legal advice.

5.5 Genealogy Programs, GEDCOM and Online Family Trees

Genealogy programs manage persons, families, events and sources in a database. They present the data as pedigree charts (Ahnentafeln), lists and reports; some also check whether pieces of information are consistent with one another. (Q405) There are free and paid programs for computers, tablets and browsers. If you work only on paper, you can skip this section. When choosing one, pay attention to three things: Can I record sources for every piece of information? Can I output my data completely (export)? And: Does my data stay on my device, or is it stored with the provider?
GEDCOM is the common exchange format between programs; the files usually end in `.ged`. (Q303) It is published by FamilySearch (see Section 2.3). (Q302, Q404) Two versions are important today:

- **GEDCOM 5.5.1:** released as a draft in 1999, re-released as a standard in 2019; still the most widely used today: according to the publisher, the vast majority of GEDCOM files in 2021 were in 5.5.1, and according to the Verein für Computergenealogie (CompGen, German genealogy society), almost all programs support this version (as of December 2025). (Q303, Q402, Q404)
- **GEDCOM 7.0:** published in 2021 as the first major revision in about 20 years; the current version is 7.0.18 of February 17, 2026 (as of November 2026). (Q303, Q304, Q403) A program for 7.0 can read older files; older programs, however, cannot understand 7.0 files. (Q403) Conversion tools are available for switching from 5.5.1 to 7.0. (Q305)

Before switching programs, find out which version both programs support, and spot-check after every import: Have source citations and notes come through completely? (Q404)

Online family trees – on large portals or in society databases – have advantages: you find relatives researching the same families, and your work is preserved. Disadvantages: errors spread when others copy a tree without checking it; what has been published can hardly be taken back; and what the provider is allowed to do with your data is governed by its terms – read them before uploading. So use other people's trees only as signposts to the sources. (Q309)

Never publish living persons. Some programs offer to leave out living persons when exporting – check whether yours can do this. The Verein für Computergenealogie advises not to include data on living persons when transferring to its database. (Q307) Archion also requires the consent of living persons before their data is published. (Q250)

5.6 The Research Log

In the research log (Forschungsprotokoll) you record every search – **including the unsuccessful ones**. A "nothing found" is a result: it saves you from searching the same register twice. Write down exactly what range you searched. "Baptisms 1840–1845 page by page, no entry" is useful information; "child not baptized" would be a hasty conclusion.

Date	Question	Where searched (source, call number)	Range	Result	Next step
March 14, 2026	Baptism of Karl August Wünschmann?	Ev.-luth. Kgm. Oederan, Taufregister (digitized, LKA)	1840–1845, all pages	found: 1842, p. 57, no. 113	Search for parents' marriage
March 20, 2026	Parents' marriage?	Ev.-luth. Kgm. Oederan, Trauregister (digitized, LKA)	1835–1842, all pages	**nothing found**	Check neighboring villages, mother's home village

(Kgm. = Kirchgemeinde [parish], LKA = Landeskirchenarchiv Dresden; Ev.-luth. = Evangelisch-lutherisch [Lutheran]; Taufregister = baptismal register, Trauregister = marriage register.) A notebook is enough; on the computer, a spreadsheet works well. Keep the layout the same, and you will see at a glance where you have already looked. You will find a blank template in Chapter 7.

5.7 Checklist "Staying Organized"

- [ ] For every piece of information, I have recorded the source citation: repository, document, exact location.
- [ ] For online finds, image number, web address and date accessed are noted.
- [ ] I distinguish between original and derivative (transcript), and between firsthand and secondhand.
- [ ] Every piece of information has a degree of certainty: proven, probable, possible or open.
- [ ] Contradictions are in my notes with both sources.
- [ ] My files follow a fixed naming scheme.
- [ ] I back up according to the 3-2-1 rule, online copies encrypted, and I have tested the backup.
- [ ] I do not publish information about living persons.

My program can export GEDCOM; I know the version.
My research log also contains the searches without results.

Sources for Chapter 5

The abbreviations Q1, Q2 … in the text refer to this list. Online sources accessed on November 1, 2026 unless otherwise stated.

- Q81 https://revosax.sachsen.de/vorschrift/2628 (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Archivgesetz für den Freistaat Sachsen [Archives Act of the Free State of Saxony], current version valid from January 1, 2023 (last amended by Art. 2 para. 3 of the Act of August 19, 2022, SächsGVBl. p. 486): § 9 para. 1 everyone; § 10 para. 1 no. 3 personal data 10 years after death / 100 years after birth / 60 years after creation; § 13 para. 4 §§ 6–11 apply accordingly to municipal archives – in substance the same as Q59. Q59 is a historical version (valid May 25, 2018–December 31, 2022), replaced by Q81
- Q148 https://dsgvo-gesetz.de/erwaegungsgruende/nr-27/ (accessed November 1, 2026; official text: OJ EU L 119 of May 4, 2016)
  Supports: GDPR (DSGVO) Recital 27: the Regulation does not apply to personal data of deceased persons; Member States may provide for rules
- Q249 https://www.familysearch.org/en/legal/terms (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: FamilySearch, Terms of Use (Updated 2023-09-01): materials only "for your personal, noncommercial use"; "You may not transmit or distribute content from this site to other sites."; no posting on other websites/networks without permission; AI not explicitly mentioned
- Q250 https://www.archion.de/de/agb (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Archion, terms and conditions (AGB) (page states „Stand: 20. März 2015" [as of March 20, 2015]): no. 9.3.5 individual downloaded content „unterliegen keiner Nutzungsbeschränkung seitens des Anbieters" [is not subject to any usage restriction on the part of the provider]; no. 5.1 c) no reproducing/editing/making publicly available beyond the functions without granted rights; no. 7.4 b) data on living persons may be published only with consent; upload to other services/AI not addressed
- Q300 https://www.computerweekly.com/de/definition/3-2-1-Backup-Strategie (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: ComputerWeekly.de, definition „3-2-1-Backup-Strategie" [3-2-1 backup strategy] (last updated 09/2020): three copies (original + at least two backups), two different storage media, one copy off-site; originator of the rule not named
- Q301 https://casrai.org/dictionary/term/3-2-1-backup-strategy (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: CASRAI Dictionary, "3-2-1 Backup Strategy" (v2026.1, status Proposed, updated September 5, 2026): at least three copies, at least two types of storage, one copy separate from the working data; all three conditions at the same time

- Q302 https://gedcom.io/specs/ (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: gedcom.io, "Specifications": current version 7.0; earlier versions 5.6 (XML), 5.5.1 (with errata), 5.5, 5.4, 5.3, 5.0, 4.0, 3.0; publisher FamilySearch (Intellectual Reserve, Inc.)
- Q303 https://gedcom.io/specifications/FamilySearchGEDCOMv7.html (accessed November 1, 2026); changelog https://gedcom.io/changelog/ (7.0.0 "first update to the specification in 20 years", latest 7.0.18)
  Supports: FamilySearch GEDCOM 7.0 Specification, version 7.0.18 of February 17, 2026: 5.5.1 "released in draft status in November 1999 and re-released as a standard in October 2019"; file extension ".ged" recommended
- Q304 https://www.geneamusings.com/2021/06/the-long-awaited-gedcom-70-is-here.html (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Seaver, Randy: "The Long-Awaited GEDCOM 7.0 Is Here!", Genea-Musings, 07.06.2021, reproduces the FamilySearch announcement ("pleased to announce the release of FamilySearch GEDCOM 7.0"; work since RootsTech 2020, completed 15.05.2021). Secondary source (blog) – primary announcement not accessed
- Q305 https://gedcom.io/tools/ (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: gedcom.io, "Tools": third-party tools including conversion 5.5.1 → 7.0 (command line and web), note on differing license/quality; undated
- Q306 https://dsgvo-gesetz.de/art-2-dsgvo/; https://dsgvo-gesetz.de/erwaegungsgruende/nr-18/ (accessed November 1, 2026; official text OJ EU L 119 of May 4, 2016)
  Supports: GDPR (DSGVO) Art. 2(2)(c): does not apply to processing „durch natürliche Personen zur Ausübung ausschließlich persönlicher oder familiärer Tätigkeiten" [by a natural person in the course of a purely personal or household activity]; Recital 18 (without connection to a professional or commercial activity; does apply, however, to providers of the tools)
- Q307 https://compgen.de/?p=71106 (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Verein für Computergenealogie (CompGen), „Transfer genealogischer Daten nach GEDBAS" [Transferring Genealogical Data to GEDBAS] (26.04.2025): GEDCOM upload via web service; export settings advisable „die keine Daten zu lebenden Personen (Datenschutz) transferieren" [that do not transfer any data on living persons (data protection)]; webtrees filter also for GEDCOM 7
- Q308 https://www.evidenceexplained.com/content/quicklesson-17-evidence-analysis-process-map (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Mills, Elizabeth Shown: "QuickLesson 17: The Evidence Analysis Process Map", Evidence Explained (undated, approx. 2018): sources original/derivative/authored (authored narrative); information primary/secondary/undetermined; evidence direct/indirect/negative
- Q309 https://cms-z-assets.familysearch.org/40/9d/f604986241e0a09d9bc61c74e767/guidelines-for-sound-genealogical-research.pdf (accessed November 1, 2026)

Supports: National Genealogical Society, "Guidelines for Sound Genealogical Research" (© 1997, 2002, 2016; PDF at FamilySearch): researchers "record the source for each item of information they collect"; compilations/published works mainly as signposts to original sources

- Q310 https://www.bundesarchiv.de/im-archiv-recherchieren/archivgut-einsehen-und-nutzen/archivbesuch-vor-ort/generelle-nutzungshinweise/zitierweisen/ (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Bundesarchiv, „Zitierweisen" [Citation Styles]: archive abbreviation, record group call number/archive number, folio or page (example „BArch, RW 19/234, Bl. 4") – as evidence for the general scheme archive–record group–call number–folio; no Saxon citation rule was found (1 search)
- Q311 https://www.verbraucherzentrale.de/wissen/digitale-welt/datenschutz/wie-sichere-ich-analoge-und-digitale-daten-moeglichst-gut-und-lange-84297 (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Verbraucherzentrale [German consumer advice center], „Wie sichere ich analoge und digitale Daten möglichst gut und lange?" [How Do I Preserve Analog and Digital Data as Well and as Long as Possible?] (as of June 1, 2023): paper cool, dark, dry (approx. 18 °C, at most 50 % relative humidity), avoid attics and damp basements, acid-free folders/sleeves, remove clips/adhesive tape; digital data on at least two media, stored separately (e.g. with relatives or in the cloud), encryption recommended
- Q400 https://www.bsi.bund.de/DE/Themen/Verbraucherinnen-und-Verbraucher/Informationen-und-Empfehlungen/Cyber-Sicherheitsempfehlungen/Daten-sichern-verschluesseln-und-loeschen/Datensicherung-und-Datenverlust/Datensicherung-wie-geht-das/datensicherung-wie-geht-das_node.html (accessed November 1, 2026; WebFetch: URL too long)
  Supports: BSI, „Datensicherung – wie geht das?" [Data Backup – How Does It Work?] (consumer page, undated): keep backup „räumlich getrennt vom PC" [physically separate from the PC]; external hard drive at another safe location; transfer data to current formats in good time. The 3-2-1 rule is not mentioned
- Q401 https://www.bsi.bund.de/dok/10655274 (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: BSI, „Back-up: Doppelt gesichert hält besser" [Backup: Better Safe Twice] (undated, occasion World Backup Day): set a regular schedule; outdated file types/programs → transfer to a newer format
- Q402 https://gedcom.io/faqs/02-gedcom551 (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: gedcom.io, FAQ "Should I use GEDCOM 5.5.1?" (undated, page partly unfinished): "the vast majority of files created as of 2021 are in GEDCOM 5.5.1 format"; expects growing support for 7.0
- Q403 https://www.familysearch.org/help/helpcenter/article/what-is-the-familysearch-gedcom-7-0-standard (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: FamilySearch Help, "What is the FamilySearch GEDCOM 7.0 standard?": initiative from RootsTech 2020, "concluded May 15, 2021"; 5.5.1 released 15.11.2019

(discrepancy with Q303: October 2019 – the book says only „2019“); 7.0 can import older versions, older versions cannot import 7.0 files

- Q404 https://wiki.genealogy.net/GEDCOM (accessed November 1, 2026; WebFetch blocked by bot protection)
  Supports: GenWiki (Verein für Computergenealogie), article „GEDCOM“ (last edited 08.12.2025): standard „bis zur heute aktuellen Version 7.0 von FamilySearch definiert“ [defined by FamilySearch up to today's current version 7.0]; 5.5.1 „wird derzeit von den allermeisten Genealogieprogrammen unterstützt“ [is currently supported by the vast majority of genealogy programs]; on import, source citations and notes are sometimes merged into collective notes
- Q405 https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genealogieprogramm (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Wikipedia, „Genealogieprogramm“ [Genealogy program]: presentation as reports, lists, diagrams, charts; „Die meisten Genealogieprogramme ermöglichen den Im- und Export von Daten im GEDCOM-Format“ [Most genealogy programs allow import and export of data in GEDCOM format]; plausibility checks in utility programs. Tertiary source

Chapter 6

The Research Trip to Saxony

Some files can only be seen in the reading room, some parish registers only in the original – and perhaps you would like to see the church where your great-great-grandparents were married. Then a trip is worth it. This chapter helps you plan it so that you come home with results.

> **Note:** Opening hours, prices, and rules change. All information is provided without guarantee; the date of each piece of information is given. Check the institutions' websites before you leave.

6.1 When is the trip worth it?

A trip is worth it above all when three things come together:

- **You know what you are looking for.** You know names, place, and approximate time period and have a specific question, for example: „Wann hat mein Vorfahr den Hof gekauft?" (When did my ancestor buy the farm?)
- **You know where it is.** You have worked out which archive is responsible (Chapter 1) and what is already online (Chapter 2).
- **The answer can only be found on site.** Ideally, the archive has confirmed to you in writing that the records exist and can be viewed – but are too extensive for a search by the staff (Chapter 3).

If one of these points is missing, it is better to write one more letter first – otherwise you may only find out in the reading room that the file is held in a different archive.
Practical tip: Combine your research with a visit to the places where your ancestors lived. The reading room delivers the data; the place gives it a face.

6.2 Planning: appointments, orders, applications

Opening hours and appointments

Reading room opening hours differ by location (as of November 2026): (Q350)

Location	Open
Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden (Main State Archives Dresden)	Mon and Wed 9 a.m.–6 p.m., Tue and Thu 9 a.m.–4 p.m.
Staatsarchiv Leipzig (State Archives Leipzig)	Mon 9 a.m.–4 p.m., Tue and Wed 9 a.m.–6 p.m.; Thu and Fri for groups only, by arrangement
Staatsarchiv Chemnitz (State Archives Chemnitz)	Tue and Thu 9 a.m.–4 p.m., Wed 9 a.m.–6 p.m.
Bergarchiv Freiberg (Mining Archives Freiberg)	Tue and Thu 9 a.m.–4 p.m., Wed 9 a.m.–6 p.m.
Staatsfilialarchiv Bautzen (Bautzen branch state archives)	Mon 10 a.m.–2 p.m., Tue 9 a.m.–6 p.m., Wed 9 a.m.–4 p.m.
Landeskirchenarchiv Dresden (archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony)	Mon 9 a.m.–6 p.m., Tue to Thu 9 a.m.–4 p.m.

On Fridays, all of these reading rooms are closed to individual visitors – a good day for visiting places. (Q350, Q450)

The **Landeskirchenarchiv Dresden** asks you to register in advance by phone or email. A day in the reading room there costs €5 for private research (as of November 2026, see Section 1.3). There you must be able to read the old script yourself (Sections 1.3 and 4.1). Staff retrieve ordered records from the stacks there Monday to Thursday at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m.; you fill out the application for use (Benutzungsantrag) on site (as of November 2026). (Q450)

In **Stadtarchive and Kreisarchive (city and county archives)**, hours are often shorter. For Bautzen, the Archivverbund (archives association) explicitly requires a seat reservation. If in doubt, have your seat confirmed by phone. (Q355)

Ordering files in advance

At the Staatsarchiv (Saxon State Archives), you can order files in advance using an online form. For this you need the **Signatur (call number)**, i.e., the order number of the file, which you find in the archive's online search (Section 2.8). (Q352)
Ordering in advance pays off: at the Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden, for example, orders placed on site are only retrieved at fixed times (as of November 2026: by 9:30 a.m., 11 a.m., and 1 p.m.); anything ordered later will not be ready until the next opening day. In Dresden you may have at most five files on your table at once. In Bautzen, files only come out of the stacks Monday to Wednesday at 11 a.m., and you cannot get more than ten in one day. (Q351, Q355, Q451)

The application for use

Before your first visit on a given topic, you fill out an **application for use (Benutzungsantrag)** at the Staatsarchiv. In it you state your name, address, and your research topic with time period, for example „Familie Tittel, Raum Freiberg, 1750–1900" (Tittel family, Freiberg area, 1750–1900). With your signature you promise, among other things, to respect the rights of third parties. The form is available for download or in the reading room; filled out at home, it saves time on the first morning. (Q351, Q353, Q354)
Bring your Personalausweis (German national ID card); the archive may ask you to identify yourself. (Q354)

Your call number list

Before the trip, create a **call number list (Signaturliste)**: a table with archive, call number, title of the file, and your question about it, sorted by importance. That way you always know in the reading room what comes next – even if a file is restricted.

6.3 In the reading room

The rules

Every archive has its own reading room rules (Lesesaalordnung); some rules, however, apply almost everywhere:

- **Bags and coats** go into a locker. At the Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden you need 50-cent coins for this, in Bautzen one euro as a deposit (as of November 2026). (Q351, Q355, Q452)
- **Pack a pencil.** Ink, ballpoint pens, and highlighters can damage originals forever. Many archives therefore require pencils, the Stadtarchiv Leipzig (Leipzig City Archives), for example, for entries in the user sheets attached to the files. (Q356, Q452)
- **No food or drink** in the reading room. (Q355, Q452)
- **Handle the originals gently:** Keep the sheets in their order, never use a file as a writing surface, and turn pages with dry fingers. If you notice damage, report it to the supervising staff. (Q351, Q355, Q452)

Laptops, tablets, and notepads are generally allowed; whether you may take photographs yourself varies. At the Staatsarchiv this is permitted free of charge with your own devices (without flash), in Bautzen only with the staff's permission, and at the Landeskirchenarchiv it is, as a rule, not permitted (Sections 1.3 and 1.5). Ask in advance at any other archive. You may publish archive images only with the archive's permission (Section 4.6). (Q351, Q355)

Planning your day

Reading old script is more tiring than you think. Plan realistically:

- **Mornings:** the most important things, with a fresh mind.
- **Midday:** a proper break outside the reading room.
- **Afternoons:** photograph rather than read, where permitted – the reading is done at leisure at home.
- **Return files in time.** In Dresden at the latest a quarter of an hour before closing (as of November 2026). (Q351)

- **After two archive days,** a day without the reading room – for example, for a walk through your ancestors' home village; that is part of research, too.

Do not count on more than three or four files per day that you really work through.

6.4 The places where your ancestors lived

Churches: Village churches are often locked outside of services. Which churches in Saxony are open at fixed times is shown on a map published online by the Landeskirche (regional Lutheran church) (as of June 2026). Otherwise, write to the Pfarramt (parish office) a few weeks in advance – often someone is happy to unlock the church. (Q362)
Cemeteries: Do not expect too much. The Saxon burial law (Bestattungsgesetz) prescribes a minimum rest period of 20 years, shorter for small children; the cemetery can set longer periods. After that, a grave can be reassigned; if no one extends the right of use, it is usually cleared. Graves from the 19th century are therefore rare; worthwhile are old grave slabs on church walls and family burial plots (Erbbegräbnisse). Whether and what you may photograph in the cemetery is governed by the cemetery bylaws (Friedhofssatzung or Friedhofsordnung) of the cemetery's operator – if in doubt, ask the cemetery administration. (Q357, Q358, Q359, Q361, Q456)
Local history museums and local chroniclers: Small museums (Heimatmuseen) and volunteer local chroniclers (Ortschronisten) often know where the old mill stood, which houses were renumbered, or who owns an old local chronicle (Ortschronik). The municipal administration (Gemeindeverwaltung) can give you contacts.
Conversations with locals: Older residents remember farm names (Hofnamen) and family stories. Write down what you hear, with the date – as a lead with the degree of certainty "possible" until sources confirm it (Section 5.3).

Photographing considerately

For your private album you may photograph a great deal. If you want to publish pictures, for example in a family chronicle or on the internet, stricter rules apply:

- **Buildings from the outside:** Anything that stands permanently on public streets, paths, or squares you may photograph, and you may also distribute the pictures (so-called freedom of panorama, Panoramafreiheit) – but only the exterior view, as any passerby sees it from public ground. Not covered are aerial photos taken with a drone and pictures taken from a neighboring house or someone else's garden. Whether ladders or telescopic poles reaching over fences and hedges are still permitted has not been clearly settled – do without them. Freedom of panorama never applies to interiors; there, ask in advance. (Q360, Q453, Q454)
- **Private property:** Enter only with permission, even if the house once belonged to your ancestors. Frame your shot so that current residents, name plates, and license plates cannot be recognized.
- **People:** You may publish pictures in which someone is recognizable only with that person's consent. Do not photograph mourners in the cemetery at all. (Q455)
- **Graves:** Newer gravestones name people whose relatives are still living. Publish such pictures only with care, and follow the cemetery bylaws.

These notes are not legal advice. If you want to show pictures in a book or a work that is sold, get advice if in doubt.

6.5 Documenting on the road

Three habits help make sure nothing gets lost:

- **Daily log:** Every evening, enter in your research log (Section 5.6) which files you went through and to what extent – with and without findings. Even "nothing found" saves you a second search later.
- **Name photos right away:** At the start of each file, also photograph the call number (Section 1.5). Name the pictures the same evening.

If you already know the event, use the scheme from Section 5.4; otherwise, archive, call number, and folio (Blatt) are enough for now, for example „HStA-Dresden_Signatur_Bl-12“ – without umlauts or spaces.

- **Back up twice:** Every evening, copy the pictures to a second storage device, for example a USB flash drive (more on backups in Section 5.4). A lost phone must not cost you three archive days.

6.6 Practical matters

Getting there: The Deutschlandticket (Germany-wide public transit pass) is valid nationwide on regional trains, S-Bahn and U-Bahn (commuter rail and subway), streetcars, and buses, but not on ICE, IC, or EC trains. It costs €63 per month, €66.80 from January 1, 2027 (as of November 2026). The ticket is only available as a subscription, which can be canceled monthly. (Q363)

Accommodation: Choose lodging close to the archive or to a streetcar stop. You can reach the Hauptstaatsarchiv in Dresden, for example, by streetcar to Albertplatz or on foot from Dresden-Neustadt station (as of November 2026). (Q351)

Accessibility: Ask in advance about access, elevators, and restrooms. The Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden has a barrier-free entrance to the reading room, two disabled parking spaces, and an accessible restroom (as of November 2026). At the station, Deutsche Bahn's mobility service (Mobilitätsservice) helps with boarding, changing trains, and getting off. Register your needs with the Mobilitätsservice-Zentrale (mobility service center), ideally by 8 p.m. on the day before your trip – online, by phone, or by email (as of November 2026). (Q351, Q364, Q457)

6.7 Example: three days in Saxony

The following itinerary is entirely made up and shows how archive work and visits to places can be combined. Suppose you are looking for the Tittel family of miners, who lived in a village near Freiberg around 1800. You found

the call numbers online, ordered the files in advance, and filled out the application for use at home. Some of the Saxon court books (Gerichtsbücher) have meanwhile been digitized; check beforehand in the Staatsarchiv’s online search (Section 2.8) whether you can already read your book at home. (Q458)

Day	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Tuesday	Arrival; from 11 a.m. Bergarchiv Freiberg: files on miners	continue in the reading room (until 4 p.m.), photograph pages	Daily log, name and back up photos
Wednesday	Travel to Dresden; Hauptstaatsarchiv: court book with an inheritance contract (Erbvertrag)	Lunch break outside; then more files (open until 6 p.m.)	Log, backup, plan for tomorrow
Thursday	Home village: visit the church with the parish office (appointment arranged in advance)	Cemetery and walk through the village; conversation with the local chronicler	Trip home; at home, evaluate everything at leisure

Keep in mind the opening hours from Section 6.2: Freiberg is closed on Mondays, Dresden on Fridays. (Q350)

6.8 Checklist “Travel bag”

Personalausweis (national ID card)
Application for use, filled out
Confirmations of appointments and advance orders
Call-number list, sorted by importance
Notes: family tree excerpt, open questions, place names
Pencils, sharpener, eraser, notepad
Laptop or tablet with charger
Camera or phone, charged extra battery pack, charging cable
Magnifying glass, reading glasses if needed
USB flash drive for the evening backup

50-cent and 1-euro coins for lockers
Deutschlandticket or train tickets, accommodation confirmation
Contact details for parish office, local chronicler, local history museum
Comfortable shoes and a jacket for the cemetery and the village walk

When you finally stand in front of the house where your ancestors lived, you will know what the effort was worth.

Sources for Chapter 6

The abbreviations Q1, Q2 … in the text refer to this list. Online sources accessed on November 1, 2026 unless otherwise stated.

- Q350 https://www.staatsarchiv.sachsen.de/kontakt-3941.html (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Sächsisches Staatsarchiv, „Kontakt, Öffnungszeiten und Anfahrt“ (last modified 27.10.2026): Dresden Mon/Wed 9 a.m.–6 p.m., Tue/Thu 9 a.m.–4 p.m., Fri closed; Leipzig Mon 9 a.m.–4 p.m., Tue/Wed 9 a.m.–6 p.m., Thu/Fri groups only by arrangement; Chemnitz and Freiberg Tue/Thu 9 a.m.–4 p.m., Wed 9 a.m.–6 p.m., Mon/Fri closed; Bautzen Mon 10 a.m.–2 p.m., Tue 9 a.m.–6 p.m., Wed 9 a.m.–4 p.m., Thu/Fri closed; advance orders via forms
- Q351 https://www.archiv.sachsen.de/hauptstaatsarchiv-dresden-8503.html (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Sächsisches Staatsarchiv, location page Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden (last modified 27.10.2026): application before first use on a topic (PDF or in the reading room); orders by 9:30 a.m./11 a.m./1 p.m. presented the same day, from 1 p.m. on the next opening day; return at the latest 15 min. before closing; lockers with 50-cent coins; permission to use includes photography unless restricted; barrier-free entrance at the corner of Albertstraße/Archivstraße, two disabled parking spaces, accessible restroom in the foyer; Archivstraße 14, streetcar to Albertplatz among others, on foot from Dresden-Neustadt station
- Q352 https://www.archiv.sachsen.de/formulare-9120.html (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Sächsisches Staatsarchiv, „Formulare“ (last modified 27.10.2026): online form „Vorbestellung von Archivgut (Lesesaal)“; Benutzungsantrag as PDF (valid from October 13, 2022) for Chemnitz, Dresden, Freiberg, Leipzig; Bautzen via the Archivverbund
- Q353 https://www.archiv.sachsen.de/download/Benutzungsantrag_gueltig_ab_2022-10-13.pdf (accessed November 1, 2026)

Supports: Sächsisches Staatsarchiv, Benutzungsantrag (valid from October 13, 2022): information on name, address, research topic with time period (example „1650–1800“); obligation to respect copyright, personality rights, and other rights of third parties; deposit copy (Belegexemplar)

- Q354 https://www.revosax.sachsen.de/vorschrift/1596-Saechsische-Archivbenutzungsverordnung (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Sächsische Archivbenutzungsverordnung (SächsArchivBenVO) [Saxon Archives Use Ordinance] of September 8, 2022, SächsGVBl. p. 526, version valid from October 13, 2022: § 2 (2) written application, persons must identify themselves on request; § 4 (1) viewing generally in reading rooms; § 6 (2) self-service copies at the discretion of the Staatsarchiv; Annex No. 3 own devices free of charge
- Q355 https://www.archivverbund-bautzen.de/benutzung/einsichtnahme; https://www.archivverbund-bautzen.de/fileadmin/media/archivverbund/Lesesaalordnung-ab-2013-10-01.pdf (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Archivverbund Bautzen, „Einsichtnahme“ (undated): registration/seat reservation required; retrieval Mon, Tue, Wed 11 a.m.; at most 10 files per user per day; reading room rules from October 1, 2013: bags/coats in cloakroom lockers (€1 deposit); only writing materials and laptops allowed in the reading room, other items such as digital cameras with permission; food and drink not permitted; do not change the internal order, do not use as a writing surface, no bookmarks, do not moisten fingers
- Q356 https://www.landesarchiv-bw.de/sixcms/media.php/120/LABW_Lesesaalordnung_2025_August.pdf (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg, Lesesaalordnung (August 2025) – example of a common rule outside Saxony: § 6 (3) handwritten notes exclusively in pencil; § 5 (2) no outerwear or bags in the reading room; § 6 (4–6) care, state of order, report damage. No separate pencil rule found online for Saxon archives (negative finding: SächsArchivBenVO, Benutzungsantrag, HStA page, Bautzen reading room rules) → “many archives” in the text
- Q357 https://www.revosax.sachsen.de/vorschrift/4526-Saechsisches-Bestattungsgesetz (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Sächsisches Bestattungsgesetz (SächsBestG) [Saxon Burial Act], consolidated as of May 25, 2018, § 6 (2): minimum rest period 20 years (children under 2 years, miscarried/stillborn 10 years); (3): operator may provide for longer rest periods; (4) right of use according to the rules of use
- Q358 https://www.evlks.de/Friedhofsordnungen/Januar_2024/34021-2024-008.pdf (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Ev.-Luth. Friedhofsverband Leipzig, Friedhofsgebührenordnung (resolution 24.11.2023, announcement 24.01.2024): row grave rest period 20 years, grave plot of choice (Wahlgrab) period of use 20 years; fee per year for extending the right of use
- Q359 https://sonntagsblatt.de/artikel/epd/verbraucherschuetzer-abgelaufene-grabstellen-rechtzeitig-raeumen (accessed November 1, 2026)

Supports: epd/Sonntagsblatt, „Verbraucherschützer: Abgelaufene Grabstellen rechtzeitig räumen“, 13.04.2023 (Aeternitas): cemetery administrations call for clearing after the period of use expires; the grave monument may pass to the cemetery operator according to the bylaws (BayVGH 03.03.2023, 4 B 22.819). General, not specific to Saxony

- Q360 https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/urhg/__59.html (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: § 59 UrhG [German Copyright Act] (works in public places): (1) works permanently located on public paths, streets, or squares may, among other things, be reproduced, distributed, and publicly communicated by photograph; for buildings only the exterior view; (2) no reproduction on a building
- Q361 https://www.compgen.de/?p=52188 (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Verein für Computergenealogie, „Fotografieren für das Grabstein-Projekt“, 29.08.2022: photography in a cemetery is governed by the respective cemetery rules; if prohibited, ask the municipality for an exception (experience report)
- Q362 https://www.evlks.de/fileadmin/userfiles/EVLKS_interessiert/F._Service/Presse/Pressemitteilungen/2026/PM-Kirchen-%E2%80%93-k%C3%BChle-Orte-bei-Hitze-39-2026.pdf (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Ev.-Luth. Landeskirche Sachsens [Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony], press release 39/2026 of June 25, 2026: overview map of all reliably open churches in Saxony online; not every church is open regularly, inform yourself in advance
- Q363 https://regional.bahn.de/tickets/Deutschlandticket (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: DB Regio, „Deutschlandticket“: €63 per month until December 31, 2026, from January 1, 2027 €66.80; valid on buses, U-Bahn, S-Bahn, regional transport, not on IC/EC/ICE; only as a subscription, cancellation by the 10th of the month
- Q364 https://www.bahnhof.de/dresden-hbf/mobilitaetsservice (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: bahnhof.de, Dresden Hbf, Mobilitätsservice: help with boarding, changing, and getting off daily 6 a.m. to midnight; persons with reduced mobility contact the Mobilitäts-Service-Zentrale (MSZ). No registration deadline stated on the page
- Q450 https://www.evlks.de/service/landeskirchliches-archiv/benutzung (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Ev.-Luth. Landeskirche Sachsens, Landeskirchliches Archiv, „Benutzung“ (undated, © 2026, list of filmed parish registers January 2026): Mon 9 a.m.–6 p.m., Tue–Thu 9 a.m.–4 p.m., Fri closed; retrieval times Mon–Thu 10 a.m. and 1 p.m.; „Eine Voranmeldung ist erwünscht“ (advance registration is requested) (phone/email); application for use on site shortly before use; own reproductions generally not possible; closing periods 2026/2027 on the page
- Q451 https://www.archiv.sachsen.de/hauptstaatsarchiv-dresden-8503.html (accessed November 1, 2026)

Supports: Sächsisches Staatsarchiv, location page Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden (last modified 27.10.2026; supplements Q351): at most five archival items at the same time; tracing, folding, soiling prohibited, report defects; items held in reserve up to three weeks; streetcar lines 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11

- Q452 https://static.leipzig.de/fileadmin/mediendatenbank/leipzig-de/Stadt/02.1_Dez1_Allgemeine_Verwaltung/10.9_Stadtarchiv/PDF_und_Dokumente/Benutzungs-_und_Hausordnung_2025.pdf (accessed November 2, 2026: linked on the „Rechtliche Grundlagen" page of the Stadtarchiv, https://stadtarchiv.leipzig.de/benutzen/rechtliche-grundlagen; same rules of December 14, 2020, in force January 1, 2021, § 2 (1), § 4 (1), § 5 (2/4/5), § 7 (5), § 9 (2) identical in wording; earlier file .../Benutzungs-und-Hausordnung_2020.pdf no longer available since November 2, 2026, accessed there November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Stadt Leipzig, Benutzungs- und Hausordnung des Stadtarchivs Leipzig [rules of use and house rules of the Leipzig City Archives] of December 14, 2020, in force January 1, 2021: § 2 (1) outerwear/bags/backpacks in cloakroom lockers; § 4 (1) food and drink prohibited; § 5 (2) do not change the order, do not use as a writing surface; § 5 (4) report damage; § 5 (5) „Die Eintragung in den Benutzerblättern hat nur mit Bleistift zu erfolgen" (entries in the user sheets must be made in pencil only); § 7 (5) no own tripods/lighting/flash; § 9 (2) pictures of staff/users only with written consent. Saxon source for pencil (limited to user sheets); for the state archives still no published pencil rule found (negative finding: Q350–Q352, Q354, 2 web searches)
- Q453 https://www.lto.de/recht/hintergruende/h/bgh-i-zr67-23-panoramafreiheit-drohne-perspektive-menschliches-auge; https://www.roedl.com/insights/urheberrecht-bhg-drohne-luftbildaufnahmen-unzulaessig/ (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: BGH [Federal Court of Justice], judgment of October 23, 2024, I ZR 67/23 (drone photos), according to LTO report: freedom of panorama only for perspectives that people can take from generally accessible places; drone photos not covered; observation towers/public bodies of water still permitted according to OLG Hamm. Ladders not addressed in the report. Supplemented by Rödl & Partner, 23.10.2024
- Q454 https://lexetius.com/2003,2286 (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: BGH, judgment of June 5, 2003, I ZR 192/00 (Hundertwasser-Haus), margin nos. 23, 26, 27: only pictures „von den öffentlichen Wegen, Straßen und Plätzen aus" (from the public paths, streets, and squares); view from a place inaccessible to the general public (private apartment opposite) not covered. Aids such as ladders not mentioned → "not clearly settled" in the text
- Q455 https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/kunsturhg/__22.html (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: § 22 Kunsturhebergesetz (KUG) [Art Copyright Act]: portraits may be distributed or publicly displayed only with the consent of the person depicted; after death, consent of relatives for 10 years (exceptions in § 23 not evaluated)

- Q456 https://www.revosax.sachsen.de/vorschrift/4526-Saechsisches-Bestattungsgesetz (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Sächsisches Bestattungsgesetz § 7 (1) (supplements Q357): municipalities regulate the use of municipal cemeteries by bylaw (Satzung); no state-law rule on photography
- Q457 https://www.bahn.de/handicap (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Deutsche Bahn, „Barrierefrei reisen“ (bahn.de/handicap): registration of assistance with the Mobilitätsservice-Zentrale recommended „bis spätestens 20 Uhr am Vortag der Reise“ (by 8 p.m. on the day before the trip at the latest); abroad 24 hours' notice; online (msz.bahnhof.de, around the clock), phone +49 30 65212888 (Mon–Fri 6 a.m.–10 p.m., Sat/Sun/holiday 8 a.m.–8 p.m.), email. bahnhof.de states no deadline (Q364)
- Q458 https://www.compgen.de/?p=30274 (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Verein für Computergenealogie, „Weitere Gerichtsbücher aus Sachsen online“, 18.02.2021: digitized court books from record group (Bestand) 12613 Gerichtsbücher of the Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden (including the Amtsgericht [local court] districts of Annaberg, Brand-Erbisdorf, Chemnitz)

Chapter 7

Checklists to Take Along

Here you will find the checklists from all chapters in one place – to print, check off, and take along. In addition, there is a quick route for getting started, a checklist for publishing your family tree, and two blank templates. The references in parentheses point to the sections with all the details.

> **Note:** The lists summarize the chapters. The information given there, with its stated date, is what counts. All information is provided without guarantee.

7.1 First steps in 10 points

1. **Collect what is certain.** Family papers, certificates, memories: note what is documented and what is only told (2.9).
2. **Clarify time and place.** For each person: when and where? Look up the place in the Historisches Ortsverzeichnis (historical gazetteer of Saxony) – and check where it belonged at the time (1.1, box „Welches Sachsen?“ [Which Saxony?]).
3. **Find the responsible office.** From 1876 on, the Standesamt (civil registry office) or archive; before that, the Kirchenbücher (parish registers) (1.7).
4. **Online first.** Address books (Adressbücher), local family books (Ortsfamilienbücher), parish register portals, newspapers (Chapter 2).
5. **Note every find with its source citation.** A find on the internet remains a lead until you have seen the original (2.1, 5.2).
6. **Learn to read the old script.** AI delivers suggestions; every fact is checked against the original (Chapter 4).
7. **Keep things organized.** File names, research log, degrees of certainty, backups (Chapter 5).

8. **Make targeted inquiries.** One inquiry per office, with a cost limit and postal address (Chapter 3).
9. **Travel when it is worth it.** Order files in advance, take your call number list (Signaturliste) along (Chapter 6).
10. **Check before sharing.** Living persons, image rights, sources (Section 7.3).

And above all: keep at it.

7.2 The chapter checklists

Chapter 1: What is where?

For each person I am looking for, I have noted when and where the event took place (1.1).
I know where the place belonged at the time and which municipality (Gemeinde) it belongs to today (1.1, 1.2).
Events from 1876 on: I ask at the Standesamt of today's municipality; after the closure period (Sperrfrist) has expired (births 110, marriages 80, deaths 30 years), at the Stadtarchiv or Kreisarchiv (city or county archives) (1.2). (Q11, Q12, Q13)
Events before 1876: I search via the Pfarramt (parish office), the place search at Archion, or the Landeskirchenarchiv Dresden (archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony); for Catholic parishes via Matricula (1.3).
For the eastern Oberlausitz (Upper Lusatia) around Görlitz, I have taken the special features into account: civil registry offices as early as October 1874, a different Landeskirche (regional Protestant church) (1.3). (Q10, Q83)
For property, inheritance, and occupation, I have thought of the Staatsarchiv (Saxon State Archives) (1.5).
Address books and newspapers are planned in (1.6).

Chapter 2: Online first

For each person I am looking for, I have noted name, place, and approximate year.
I know which church the place used to belong to.
I have searched the address books at SAXORUM.
I have looked for an Ortsfamilienbuch (local family book) for the parish.
I have searched FamilySearch (with an account) for index cards and images.
Before buying an Archion pass, I checked whether my place is online.
I have searched the newspaper portal (Zeitungsportal) for name, place, and occupation.
I have checked the casualty lists (Verlustlisten) 1914–1918.
I have searched the Staatsarchiv's online search for holdings on my place.
For each find, I have noted the portal, source citation or call number (Signatur), and date accessed.
Every important find from a transcript is marked "still to be checked against the original."
The open questions are on my list for the first inquiry.

Chapter 3: My inquiry

I searched online beforehand and know what is missing there.
I know which office is responsible for the time and place.
The inquiry states the name (for women, also the maiden name), place, and a narrow time period.
For civil registry entries, I have enclosed copies showing my relationship, and checked whether a copy of my ID is needed.
I have stated the purpose („private Familienforschung" [private family research]) and a cost limit.
My complete postal address is in the inquiry – in an email, too.
All questions to this office are in one inquiry.
About living relatives, I have written only what is necessary.

Date, recipient, and a copy of the inquiry are filed; I have noted the earliest date on which I will follow up.

Chapter 4: Reading old handwriting

I have a letter chart (Buchstabentafel) for Kurrent script (and, for more recent letters, for Sütterlin script) at hand.
I practice first on entries whose content I already know.
I keep a list of abbreviations and Latin terms.
I convert feast-day and Sunday dates with a calendar tool.
Before every upload, I have checked whether I may share the image and whether it contains data on living persons.
Every fact from an AI suggestion has been checked against the original.
Uncertain readings are marked.

Chapter 5: Staying organized

For every piece of information, I have noted the source citation: repository (Verwahrer), record, exact location.
For online finds, the image number, web address, and date accessed are included.
I distinguish between original and derivative (transcript), and between firsthand and secondhand information.
Every piece of information has a degree of certainty: proven, probable, possible, or open.
Contradictions are in my notes with both source citations.
My files follow a fixed naming scheme.
I back up according to the 3-2-1 rule, with online copies encrypted, and I have tested the backup.
I do not publish information about living persons.
My program can export GEDCOM; I know the version.
My research log also contains the searches without results.

Chapter 6: Travel bag

Personalausweis (German national ID card) and filled-out application for use (Benutzungsantrag)
Confirmations of appointments and advance orders; call number list, sorted by importance
Notes: family tree excerpt, open questions, place names
Pencils, sharpener, eraser, notepad
Laptop or tablet, camera or phone, extra battery pack, charging cable
Magnifying glass, reading glasses if needed; USB flash drive for the evening backup
50-cent and 1-euro coins for lockers (Q351, Q355)
Deutschlandticket (Germany-wide public transit pass) or train tickets, accommodation confirmation
Contact details for parish office, local chronicler (Ortschronist), local history museum (Heimatmuseum)
Comfortable shoes and a jacket for the cemetery and the village walk

7.3 Before every publication of your family tree

Whether on the internet, in a society journal, or as a family chronicle: by publishing, you leave the private sphere (5.4).

Living persons

Living persons have been left out, or they have consented (preliminary note [Vorbemerkung], 3.8, 5.5).
I name recently deceased persons only with care – preferably only once their death demonstrably lies at least 33 years back or their birth more than 120 years. This is a cautious rule of thumb, not a legal deadline (3.8).
After exporting, I checked whether there really are no living persons left in it (5.5).
Names of living interviewees, for example from oral information, are not included (5.2).
I read the portal's terms before uploading (5.5).

Image rights

I show images from archives and portals only with permission or within the provider's terms (4.6, 6.3).
I show buildings only from the outside, as they are seen from public ground (6.4).
Recognizable people only with consent; name plates and license plates cannot be recognized (6.4).
I publish pictures of newer graves only with care (6.4).

Sources

Every piece of information has its source citation and its degree of certainty (5.2, 5.3).
Contradictions are shown openly, not smoothed over (5.3).
I do not use data from the services of the Verein für Computergenealogie (CompGen, German genealogy society) commercially (2.6).
Where in doubt, I have sought advice (6.4).

7.4 Template: research log

Enter every search – including those without results, with the scope searched (5.6).

Date	Question	Where searched (source, call number)	Scope	Result	Next step

7.5 Template: person sheet

One sheet per person. For each piece of information, enter the source citation and the degree of certainty: proven, probable, possible, or open (5.3). Information about living persons stays in your private records.

Item	Entry	Source citation	Degree of certainty
Given name and surname (for women, maiden name)			
Spelling variants			
Birth or baptism (date, place)			
Father			
Mother			
Marriage (date, place, spouse)			
Children			
Occupation, social status (Stand)			
Places of residence (with years)			
Death or burial (date, place)			
Contradictions			
Open questions, next step			

Sources for Chapter 7

The abbreviations Q1, Q2 … in the text refer to this list. Online sources accessed on November 1, 2026 unless otherwise stated.

- Q10 LWL-Archivamt: Standesamtsregister und Sammelakten – gesetzliche Grundlagen, https://www.lwl.org/waa-download/pdf/Standesamtsregister%20und%20Sammelakten_gesetzliche%20Grundlagen.pdf (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Reichsgesetz über die Beurkundung des Personenstandes [Imperial Civil Status Act] of February 6, 1875, in force January 1, 1876
- Q11 § 5 (5) PStG [Personenstandsgesetz, German Civil Status Act], https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/pstg/__5.html (accessed November 1, 2026)

Supports: retention periods (Fortführungsfristen): marriage/civil partnership 80 yrs., birth 110 yrs., death 30 yrs.

- Q12 § 7 (3) PStG, https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/pstg/__7.html (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: after the period expires, registers are to be offered to the responsible public archives for transfer
- Q13 § 61 (2) PStG, https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/pstg/__61.html (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: after the period expires, archive law applies to their use
- Q83 https://www.evangelisch.de/inhalte/91370/09-01-2014 (epd, 09.01.2014, accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: EKBO formed on January 1, 2004 from the Ev. Kirche in Berlin-Brandenburg and the Ev. Kirche der schlesischen Oberlausitz
- Q351 https://www.archiv.sachsen.de/hauptstaatsarchiv-dresden-8503.html (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Sächsisches Staatsarchiv, location page Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden (last modified 27.10.2026): application before first use on a topic (PDF or in the reading room); orders by 9:30 a.m./11 a.m./1 p.m. presented the same day, from 1 p.m. on the next opening day; return at the latest 15 min. before closing; lockers with 50-cent coins; permission to use includes photography unless restricted; barrier-free entrance at the corner of Albertstraße/Archivstraße, two disabled parking spaces, accessible restroom in the foyer; Archivstraße 14, streetcar to Albertplatz among others, on foot from Dresden-Neustadt station
- Q355 https://www.archivverbund-bautzen.de/benutzung/einsichtnahme; https://www.archivverbund-bautzen.de/fileadmin/media/archivverbund/Lesesaalordnung-ab-2013-10-01.pdf (accessed November 1, 2026)
  Supports: Archivverbund Bautzen, „Einsichtnahme“ (undated): registration/seat reservation required; retrieval Mon, Tue, Wed 11 a.m.; at most 10 files per user per day; reading room rules from October 1, 2013: bags/coats in cloakroom lockers (€1 deposit); only writing materials and laptops allowed in the reading room, other items such as digital cameras with permission; food and drink not permitted; do not change the internal order, do not use as a writing surface, no bookmarks, do not moisten fingers