

# DNA & DAR Applications: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

## General DNA Questions

### **1. What is the DAR's current policy regarding the use of DNA evidence as proof of lineage?**

The DAR currently accepts both Y-DNA and autosomal DNA (atDNA) evidence in specific situations. Our DNA policies are available on the "DNA and DAR Applications" section of both our public and Members' websites: <https://www.dar.org/national-society/genealogy/dna-and-dar-applications>. Although we do not accept mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) by itself as proof of lineage, it may be possible to use it in conjunction with Y-DNA or atDNA results. In addition, we have long accepted paternity, maternity, and siblingship tests of the types currently accepted by the court system.

The use of any DNA, except for paternity tests and their variants, requires (1) an analysis, (2) proof of the matching person's lineage, and (3) permission by the match to use his or her information. Please note that DNA can **only** be used when traditional documentation of lineage does not exist. Therefore, a reasonably exhaustive search of traditional documentation, including that found only in physical repositories, must be documented in the analysis. Additionally, in cases of adoption, or when a non-biological parent is named on a birth certificate, a brief explanatory statement from the applicant or parent should accompany the application.

If DNA evidence is used to prove lineage, we ask that all tested parties join the NSDAR DNA Group Project at FamilyTreeDNA (FTDNA). In most cases, results from AncestryDNA, 23andMe, and other companies can be transferred to FTDNA and "unlocked" for a \$19 fee, so that additional testing is not required.

## Autosomal DNA Questions

### **2. I was adopted at birth, but I recently discovered my biological family through a DNA test. How can I go about proving my parentage on a DAR application?**

Adoptees typically use one of three methods to prove parentage. The easiest method is to submit copies of both your original birth certificate and your amended birth certificate after adoption, or your amended birth certificate along with a copy of the adoption papers naming your biological parents. However, the availability of these sealed records varies from state to state. For more information, please see the "Adoption Records Guide" on pages 15-16 of our *Genealogy Guidelines, Part Two*.

If these records are not available due to legal restrictions in your state, the next preferred option—if there is a living biological parent or full sibling—is a paternity, maternity, or siblingship test, of the type used by the courts. Although these tests **do not** have to go through the court system, they need to be from a certified lab that maintains chain of custody. Paternity tests and their variants usually yield a 99% probability of a biological relationship. (Similar tests can identify a half-sibling as well, but they are less reliable.) Such tests should be accompanied by a brief statement from at least one of the biological parents. If neither parent is living, a statement from a close family member, such as a sibling of one of the biological parents, can be substituted.

If, for some reason, these types of maternity, paternity, or siblingship tests cannot be performed, then there is a possibility of using commercial autosomal DNA test results along with an analysis comprising the amended birth certificate, background information, affidavits from family members, and proof of lineage of the other close family members tested. The three main companies who provide autosomal testing are AncestryDNA, 23andMe, and FamilyTreeDNA. If tested at AncestryDNA or 23andMe, test results from all parties can be transferred for free to our NSDAR DNA group partner, FamilyTreeDNA, at <https://www.familytreedna.com/groups/nsdar/about>, where the prospective member will have to "unlock" the results for \$19 in order to use their analytical tools. Prospective testers may receive a discount on FamilyTreeDNA's Family Finder atDNA tests by joining the project at the link listed above and ordering test kits at the same time.

No matter which route you use, please keep in mind that a birth and/or death certificate for the biological parent who descends from the patriot will be required. Additionally, in any scenario where DNA evidence is used to establish lineage through a biological parent who is living, **a signed statement from him or her, acknowledging parentage and granting permission to use his or her DNA results and/or biographical information**, will also be required.

**3. My half-sister is a DAR member, and I would like to join as well. We have the same father and different mothers, but my father is not listed on my birth certificate. A DNA test shows that we are half-sisters, but both my parents are deceased, so neither can provide an affidavit stating the facts. What is the best way to proceed with my application?**

Autosomal DNA (atDNA) is definitely a possibility in this case. Because the half-sibling relationship range also includes the possibility of other relationships, such as grandparent, aunt/niece, and grandchild, a simple analysis will be required. Certainly, because of ages, some of these other relationships may be eliminated. The analysis should also include background information about your relationship with your half-sister. For example, how did you two discover one another? Did you know you were sisters prior to testing? Did your mother have siblings or other children who were aware of her relationship with your biological father?

In addition, a statement from you and possibly your half-sister, if she has pertinent information, will be required, as well as her permission to use her DNA results. None of these statements need to be notarized, and we will restrict them for 100 years, as if they were vital records.

**4. My mother recently took a DNA test and discovered that the father named on her birth certificate was not her biological father. I am already a member, and the lineage on my application goes through the man my mother thought was her father. What should I do? Will this affect my membership status?**

We understand how distressing this issue is for you, but we sincerely appreciate your transparency in bringing this development to our attention to make our records accurate. Neither your membership status, nor that of anyone else who has joined through the same line, will be impacted; however, we will need to code your ancestor as FAMP/C and your mother's lineage as being in error (EL), in order to prevent future members from joining through this same lineage. Should additional information be necessary to explain the issue, we would appreciate it if you submit printed documentation to us, along with a detailed cover letter outlining the problem, to our Corrections Team at 1776 D St. NW, Washington DC 20006-5303. Please note that no private information will be listed in the GRS, and that only staff genealogists will have access to our DATACF explaining the error in lineage.

**5. I took a DNA test with AncestryDNA, and I found my ancestors through their ThruLines tool. May I submit that report as proof of my lineage?**

Unfortunately, we do not accept Ancestry ThruLines, or any other commercial testing company match report, as proof of lineage. Because autosomal DNA alone can only predict the relationship between two people, the match relationships provided by the commercial testing companies are estimates, at best. Additionally, ThruLines works by comparing the user-submitted family trees of each tester. As a result, they are only as accurate as the trees on which they are based, and mistakes in other users' trees can lead to inaccurate conclusions. Therefore, we will only accept DNA evidence to prove lineage when it is paired with traditional documentation—preferably in original records—as part of an analysis.

## Y-DNA Questions

**6. Y-DNA tests show that I am a descendant of a Revolutionary War patriot who has not yet been established in the GRS. Can I use my Y-DNA test results to prove lineage from him?**

Unfortunately, it is not possible to establish descent from a New Ancestor using Y-DNA evidence, because this requires comparing test results with a male-line descendant of a previously proven son of the patriot.

**7. My patriot ancestor has only been proven through descendants of one of his daughters. We believe we are descended from the patriot in an all-male line, and my brother took a Y-DNA test and matched a descendant of another son at 37/37 markers. Can my brother's Y-DNA test results be used as proof of my descent from the patriot, even though only one of his daughters has been established to date?**

DNA, whether Y-DNA or autosomal, can only be used as part of an analysis. The requirements and instructions on using Y-DNA test results to prove descent from a patriot are listed on both the public and Members' websites: <https://www.dar.org/national-society/genealogy/dna-and-dar-applications>. Ideally, when using Y-DNA, one matches a previously proven son of the patriot; however, in this case, only a daughter has been proven. In order to use your match, you must first prove the lineage of your matching test subject(s) to an unproven son of the patriot using direct evidence. Then, using direct evidence and traditional documentation, you must be able to prove your lineage up to the missing link—the patriot's son.

**8. I am interested in using Y-DNA to prove descent from an established patriot. Since females do not carry Y-DNA, whom should I consider testing as Test Subject #1?**

Although females themselves do not carry Y-DNA, you can learn about your direct paternal line by testing close male family members. A good rule of thumb is that you should ask any close family member with your maiden name to test. These ideal candidates include—but are not limited to—your brother, your father, your brothers' sons, your father's brothers (and their sons), and your paternal grandfather. If the patriot is on your mother's surname line, you might consider testing her brothers and/or their sons, her father, or her father's brothers (and their sons and male-line grandsons).

**9. I plan to use Y-DNA evidence to prove my lineage, and I have already asked my brother to take a Y-37 test. What is the easiest way to locate a potential Test Subject #2?**

The easiest way to determine whether other members have an all-male line of descent from your patriot is to look at their abstracted lineages in the GRS and/or schedule some time with your chapter registrar, who has access to the application images.

If you go to the GRS on the DAR website and enter your patriot's name under the "Ancestor" tab, a listing of all applications through that ancestor will appear. Clicking on the purple "D" associated with lineages descending from the patriot's sons will display abstracted lineages from those applications, known as the Descendants List. You can then determine which of those lineages follow an all-male line. Because the first three generations for recent applications are restricted, you will need to contact your chapter registrar if you locate a promising lineage, in order to determine if the member or her mother share your maiden name.

If you locate a member with a viable lineage, you can contact her chapter registrar and ask whether the member would like to participate. It is possible she is already one of the over 6,000 people in the NSDAR DNA group project. In addition, you may also join the desired surname project, or have your Test Subject #1 join. You could then contact any of the surname group matches (37/37 markers or greater) to see if they have a female descendant or sibling who has already applied through the desired ancestor.