

Genealogical numbering systems

Several **genealogical numbering systems** have been widely adopted for presenting family trees and pedigree charts in text format. Among the most popular numbering systems are: Ahnentafel (Sosa-Stradonitz Method), and the Register, NGSQ, Henry, d'Aboville, Meurgey de Tupigny, and de Villiers/Pama Systems.

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The first Ahnentafel, published by Michaël Eytzinger in *Thesaurus principum hac aetate in Europa viventium* Cologne: 1590, pp. 146-147, in which Eytzinger first illustrates his new functional theory of numeration of ancestors; this schema showing Henry III of France as n° 1, *de cujus*, with his ancestors in five generations.

Ascending numbering systems

Ahnentafel

Ahnentafel, also known as the **Eytzinger Method**, **Sosa Method**, and **Sosa-Stradonitz Method**, allows for the numbering of ancestors beginning with a descendant. This system allows one to derive an ancestor's number without compiling the list and allows one to derive an ancestor's relationship based on their number.

The number of a person's father is the double of their own number, and the number of a person's mother is the double of their own, plus one. For instance, if the number of John Smith is 10, his father is 20, and his mother is 21.

The first 15 numbers, identifying individuals in 4 generations, are as follows:

(First Generation)

1 Subject

(Second Generation)

2 Father

3 Mother

(Third Generation)

4 Father's father
5 Father's mother
6 Mother's father
7 Mother's mother

(Fourth Generation)

8 Father's father's father
9 Father's father's mother
10 Father's mother's father
11 Father's mother's mother
12 Mother's father's father
13 Mother's father's mother
14 Mother's mother's father
15 Mother's mother's mother

Ahnentafel with generation

In order to readily have the generation stated for a certain person, the ahnentafel numbering may be preceded by the generation, hence (with more readable alternative):

(First Generation)

1-1 (01-001) Douglas Paul Maxwell

(Second Generation)

2-2 (02-002) Father
2-3 (02-003) Mother

(Third Generation)

3-4 (03-004) Father's father
3-5 (03-005) Father's mother
3-6 (03-006) Mother's father
3-7 (03-007) Mother's mother

(Fourth Generation)

4-8 (04-008) Father's father's father
4-9 (04-009) Father's father's mother
4-10 (04-010) Father's mother's father
4-11 (04-011) Father's mother's mother
4-12 (04-012) Mother's father's father
4-13 (04-013) Mother's father's mother
4-14 (04-014) Mother's mother's father
4-15 (04-015) Mother's mother's mother

This method's usefulness comes readily into view when applied further back in the generations, e.g., *08-146*, is a male preceding the subject by 7 (8-1) generations. This ancestor was the father of a woman ($146/2=73$) (in the genealogy line of the subject), that was the mother of a man ($73/2=36(.5)$), further down the line the father of a man ($36/2=18$), father of a woman ($18/2=9$), mother of a man ($9/2=4(.5)$), father of the subject's father ($4/2=2$). Hence, *08-146*, is the subject's father's father's mother's father's father's mother's father.

atree

atree or Binary Ahnentafel method uses the same numbering of nodes in the binary ancestors tree as Ahnentafel method, but uses binary numbers instead. For a female in the root the correspondence between binary and atree numbering is straightforward, but for male in the root - the first digit is 1 (i.e. M anyway) - to avoid trimming 0s. The advantage of atree system is easier understanding of the genealogical path (as a path from the root) and binary numbering system is natural for the binary tree.

The first 15 numbers in 4 generations in atree system (note that "M" and "F" represent "male [ancestor]" and "female [ancestor]" respectively, as opposed to "mother" and "father"):

[Placeholder for subject, to be filled with M if subject is male or F if subject is female]
M Father
F Mother
MM Father's father
MF Father's mother

```

_FM Mother's father
_FF Mother's mother
_MMM Father's father's father
_MMF Father's father's mother
_MFM Father's mother's father
_MFF Father's mother's mother
_FMM Mother's father's father
_FMF Mother's father's mother
_FFM Mother's mother's father
_FFF Mother's mother's mother

```

Explanation of the correspondence between atree IDs and Ahnentafel decimal IDs:

person	Ahnentafel format	binary format	atree (for women)	atree (for men)
Subject	1	1	F	M
Father	2	10	FM	MM
Mother	3	11	FF	MF
Father's father	4	100	FMM	MMM
Father's mother	5	101	FMF	MMF
Mother's father	6	110	FFM	MFM
Mother's mother	7	111	FFF	MFF

Surname methods

Genealogical writers sometimes choose to present ancestral lines by carrying back individuals with their spouses or single families generation by generation. The siblings of the individual or individuals studied may or may not be named for each family. This method is most popular in simplified single surname studies, however, allied surnames of major family branches may be carried back as well. In general, numbers are assigned only to the primary individual studied in each generation.^[1]

Descending numbering systems

Register System

The Register System uses both common numerals (1, 2, 3, 4) and Roman numerals (i, ii, iii, iv). The system is organized by generation, i.e., generations are grouped separately.

The system was created in 1870 for use in the *New England Historic and Genealogical Register* published by the New England Historic Genealogical Society based in Boston, Massachusetts. *Register Style*, of which the numbering system is part, is one of two major styles used in the U.S. for compiling descending genealogies. (The other being the NGSQ System.)^[2]

```

(-Generation One-)
1 Progenitor
  2   i Child
    ii Child (no progeny)
    iii Child (no progeny)
  3   iv Child

```

```

(-Generation Two-)
2 Child
   i Grandchild (no progeny)
  ii Grandchild (no progeny)
3 Child
   4   i Grandchild

```

```

      (-Generation Three-)
4 Grandchild
  5      i  Great-grandchild
      ii  Great-grandchild (no progeny)
  6     iii Great-grandchild
  7      iv Great-grandchild

```

NGSQ System

The NGSQ System gets its name from the *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* published by the National Genealogical Society headquartered in Arlington, Virginia, which uses the method in its articles. It is sometimes called the "Record System" or the "Modified Register System" because it derives from the Register System. The most significant difference between the NGSQ and the Register Systems is in the method of numbering for children who are not carried forward into future generations: The NGSQ System assigns a number to every child, whether or not that child is known to have progeny, and the Register System does not. Other differences between the two systems are mostly stylistic.^[1]

```

      (-Generation One-)
1 Progenitor
+ 2      i  Child
  3     ii  Child (no progeny)
  4     iii Child (no progeny)
+ 5      iv Child

```

```

      (-Generation Two-)
2 Child
  6      i  Grandchild (no progeny)
  7     ii  Grandchild (no progeny)
5 Child
+ 8      i  Grandchild

```

```

      (-Generation Three-)
8 Grandchild
+ 9      i  Great-grandchild
 10     ii  Great-grandchild (no progeny)
+ 11     iii Great-grandchild
+ 12     iv Great-grandchild

```

Henry System

The Henry System is a descending system created by Reginald Buchanan Henry for a genealogy of the families of the presidents of the United States that he wrote in 1935.^[3] It can be organized either by generation or not. The system begins with 1. The oldest child becomes 11, the next child is 12, and so on. The oldest child of 11 is 111, the next 112, and so on. The system allows one to derive an ancestor's relationship based on their number. For example, 621 is the first child of 62, who is the second child of 6, who is the sixth child of his parents.

In the Henry System, when there are more than nine children, X is used for the 10th child, A is used for the 11th child, B is used for the 12th child, and so on. In the Modified Henry System, when there are more than nine children, numbers greater than nine are placed in parentheses.

Henry	Modified Henry
1. Progenitor	1. Progenitor
11. Child	11. Child
111. Grandchild	111. Grandchild
1111. Great-grandchild	1111. Great-grandchild
1112. Great-grandchild	1112. Great-grandchild
112. Grandchild	112. Grandchild
12. Child	12. Child
121. Grandchild	121. Grandchild
1211. Great-grandchild	1211. Great-grandchild

122. Grandchild	1212. Great-grandchild	122. Grandchild	1212. Great-grandchild
123. Grandchild	1221. Great-grandchild	1221. Great-grandchild	1212. Great-grandchild
124. Grandchild		123. Grandchild	
125. Grandchild		124. Grandchild	
126. Grandchild		125. Grandchild	
127. Grandchild		126. Grandchild	
128. Grandchild		127. Grandchild	
129. Grandchild		128. Grandchild	
12X. Grandchild		129. Grandchild	
		12(10). Grandchild	

d'Aboville System

The d'Aboville System is a descending numbering method developed by Jacques d'Aboville in 1940 that is very similar to the Henry System, widely used in France.^[4] It can be organized either by generation or not. It differs from the Henry System in that periods are used to separate the generations and no changes in numbering are needed for families with more than nine children.^[5] For example:

```

1 Progenitor
  1.1 Child
    1.1.1 Grandchild
      1.1.1.1 Great-grandchild
      1.1.1.2 Great-grandchild
    1.1.2 Grandchild
  1.2 Child
    1.2.1 Grandchild
      1.2.1.1 Great-grandchild
      1.2.1.2 Great-grandchild
    1.2.2 Grandchild
      1.2.2.1 Great-grandchild
    1.2.3 Grandchild
    1.2.4 Grandchild
    1.2.5 Grandchild
    1.2.6 Grandchild
    1.2.7 Grandchild
    1.2.8 Grandchild
    1.2.9 Grandchild
    1.2.10 Grandchild

```

It should be noted the Huntington Family Association used this numbering system in their family memoir published in 1915, 25 years before Jacques d'Aboville is credited with inventing it. It may very well be true the Huntington family invented this numbering system.

Meurgey de Tupigny System

The Meurgey de Tupigny System is a simple numbering method used for single surname studies and hereditary nobility line studies developed by Jacques Meurgey de Tupigny of the National Archives of France, published in 1953.^[6]

Each generation is identified by a Roman numeral (I, II, III, ...), and each child and cousin in the same generation carrying the same surname is identified by an Arabic numeral.^[7] The numbering system usually appears on or in conjunction with a pedigree chart. Example:

```

I Progenitor
  II-1 Child
    III-1 Grandchild
      IV-1 Great-grandchild
      IV-2 Great-grandchild
    III-2 Grandchild
    III-3 Grandchild
    III-4 Grandchild
  II-2 Child
    III-5 Grandchild
      IV-3 Great-grandchild
      IV-4 Great-grandchild

```

IV-5 Great-grandchild
III-6 Grandchild

de Villiers/Pama System

The de Villiers/Pama System gives letters to generations, and then numbers children in birth order. For example:

```
a Progenitor
  b1 Child
    c1 Grandchild
      d1 Great-grandchild
      d2 Great-grandchild
    c2 Grandchild
    c3 Grandchild
  b2 Child
    c1 Grandchild
      d1 Great-grandchild
      d2 Great-grandchild
      d3 Great-grandchild
    c2 Grandchild
    c3 Grandchild
```

In this system, b2.c3 is the third child of the second child,^[8] and is one of the progenitor's grandchildren.

The de Villiers/Pama system is the standard for genealogical works in South Africa. It was developed in the 19th century by Christoffel Coetzee de Villiers and used in his three volume *Geslachtregister der Oude Kaapsche Familien* (*Genealogies of Old Cape Families*). The system was refined by Dr. Cornelis (Cor) Pama, one of the founding members of the Genealogical Society of South Africa.^[9]

See also

- Ancestral File Number
- Ahnentafel
- Cousin chart (Table of consanguinity)
- Family tree
- Family tree mapping
- GEDCOM
- Genogram
- Kinship terminology
- Pedigree chart
- Pedigree collapse

References

1. Curran, Joan Ferris. *Numbering Your Genealogy: Sound and Simple Systems*. Arlington, Virginia: National Genealogical Society, 1992.
2. Curran, Joan Ferris, Madilyn Coen Crane, and John H. Wray. *Numbering Your Genealogy: Basic Systems, Complex Families, and International Kin*. Arlington, Virginia: National Genealogical Society, 1999.
3. Henry, Reginald Buchanan. *Genealogies of the Families of the Presidents*. Rutland, Vermont: The Tuttle Company, 1935.
4. Généalogie-Standard: Les systèmes de numérotation (Numbering Systems) (<http://www.genealogie-standard.org/outils/numerotation.html>)
5. Encyclopedia of Genealogy: d'Aboville Numbers (<http://www.eogen.com/dAbovilleNumbers>)
6. Guide des recherches généalogiques aux Archives Nationales. Paris, 1953 (Bn : 8° L43 119 [1])

7. [Standard GenWeb: La numérotation Meurgey de Tupigny \(http://francegenweb.org/~standard/index.php?page=numberotation\)](http://francegenweb.org/~standard/index.php?page=numberotation)
8. [Numbering Systems In Genealogy - de Villiers/Pama \(http://www.saintclair.org/numbers/numdvp.html\)](http://www.saintclair.org/numbers/numdvp.html) by Richard A. Pence
9. [Genealogical Society of South Africa \(http://www.ggsa.info/\)](http://www.ggsa.info/)

Notes

- [About.com: Numbering Your Family Tree \(http://genealogy.about.com/cs/research/a/numbering.htm\)](http://genealogy.about.com/cs/research/a/numbering.htm)
- [Numbering Systems in Genealogy \(http://www.saintclair.org/numbers/\)](http://www.saintclair.org/numbers/) by Richard A. Pence

External links

- [Encyclopedia of Genealogy-Numbering Systems \(http://www.eogen.com/NumberingSystems\)](http://www.eogen.com/NumberingSystems)
 - [Numbering Systems in Genealogy \(http://www.saintclair.org/numbers/\)](http://www.saintclair.org/numbers/)
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