

Book Layout Suggestions for Family History

Thank you for your interest in our new book making service. Here are some guidelines but they will have to be fairly vague as it is up to you what gets printed. We appreciate that at first sight this all seems rather laborious but paying attention to the detail will result in a professional looking book saving you the great expense of a design charge.

Please do pay special attention to the section about margins as it is important that you allow for an extra wide margin where the page goes into the spine of the book and of course this will alternate between left hand pages and right hand pages where the pages are to be printed double sided.

Note: This service is for handmade books using A4 printed pages only. If you have old documents then these will be better preserved in our archiving folders. It is not possible nor would it be appropriate to bind them into a permanent book. You will need to scan any old documents and then place the images into your working document.

How should you submit the finished document?

When you are happy with your finished pages there will be one last step to do to them before sending the book through to us. You will need to use a fairly simple free program to create one or more PDF documents. These will then need to be checked for layout accuracy as they will represent exactly what is printed and bound into your book cover. Please see the section at the end of this document for full instructions on how to do this.

These instructions are an example of a PDF document that has been created by a free download program.

What program is suitable for creating the file?

If you use a program such as Microsoft Word or any other publishing program then you will be able to put in whatever information you deem to be appropriate. We will just require the finished file in digital format for use by our printer.

Many family historians have software on their computer that will output a series of reports, charts (on A4 pages) and in some cases a contents and index page. The program may even number the pages for you.

A family tree software program is excellent for getting all the data in the right order and attached to the right individuals and families. It will output information in a logical format and make up paragraphs of information from the data you have keyed into the program. However, it is more than likely going to need a degree of editing. Luckily many programs will allow you to export reports in a RTF (Rich Text File) format.

Once you have exported your data from your favourite genealogy program then you are free to do what you like with it in a word processing or publishing program. We have a few suggestions of what else you might want to do to finish off your book.

Gedcom files from Ancestry, Find My Past, Genes Reunited and My Heritage etc

A gedcom file merely contains the basic data about your family history and perhaps notes you have added along with sources. It is not an appropriate file for us to take and print. It would be better for you to import a gedcom file into a computer-based family tree program and then for you to format different reports based on you, your ancestors and their descendants.

If the above seems a bit daunting, then you may be interested in our service that will create books from a gedcom file. We can produce a .pdf copy of your book using your gedcom file. Simply send us your gedcom file and we will compile the book for you in pdf format ready for printing. The book will include a front cover page and contents page, please note any amendments due to data entry errors in your file will incur extra charges. More details here:

www.my-history.co.uk/acatalog/Book-PDF-made-from-a-Gedcom-file-GEDBOOK.html

Images and Image Quality



The quality of your book will be improved tremendously if you are able to incorporate images. We suggest an image should be scanned at a minimum resolution of 300 dpi (dots per inch). This will allow you to slightly enlarge without the image appearing to be made up of tiny squares in the final document. We suggest you include as many images as possible to make your book interesting to younger readers. If you don't have an image of someone who lived 200 years ago then consider a photograph of the area where they lived. There are plenty of second hand postcard dealers around with extensive collections of village scenes.

Cover

We expect authors will either provide an image associated with the book contents or if no image is available then we can create an attractive cover using just your supplied cover text. We don't have any stock images suitable for use on the book covers.

The middle cover shown in our illustration has a wrap-around image that goes from the back cover to the front and it is really just to demonstrate that this can be done if you have an appropriate photograph. Obviously a landscape format image would work best but there is no reason why we couldn't take a portrait format and use the same image on both covers with the edge of the front one wrapped round the spine.

Page Layouts and Margins

Before we print the book pages we require you to set the margins with an extra 1cm for the part of the page that fits into the spine (the gutter). This extra margin needs to be mirrored on opposite pages. It is very likely that this will be an option in the part of your program where you set the margins. We will set page one as a right hand page so it will require the extra margin to be on the left-hand side of the page. You may wish to include a blank page just prior to the main part of the book so that the first chapter starts on a right hand page.

More technical information for margins

If your book is to appear professional then we suggest you will need to spend some time getting the margins set up correctly. Your pages will be printed double sided so that means you will need to 'mirror' your settings as we require your pages to have an extra 1cm on the margin that goes into the spine of the book. This 1cm section of the page is known as the 'gutter' in Microsoft Word. We would suggest a margin of around 1.3 – 1.5 cm around the rest of the text so the resulting margins for a page spread will be something like:

Left-hand page (even numbers)		Right-hand page (odd numbers)	
Left Margin	Right Margin	Left Margin	Right Margin
1.3cm	2.3cm	2.3cm	1.3cm

Headers & Footers

We would suggest leaving a 2cm margin at the top and bottom of the page but the heading and page numbering often goes within these margins. You will need to experiment a little if you require a header and page number on each page. It's worth doing as it makes your book look so much more professional. In Microsoft Word these two areas of the page are known as the 'header' and 'footer'. Most other word processing applications will have something similar and many family tree program even has a facility built into the main program to do these.

Page Borders

We don't recommend it but If you wish to have a border around the page then the border should be set at a fixed distance from the text. If you just allow the border to be a fixed distance from the edge of the page then there is danger that the border near the spine will not be seen or it will look wrong. It is not possible for us to go into much detail about borders as they may be set up in different ways in a variety of programs. You may find it beneficial to miss out the border next to the spine.

Order of Pages/Sections

Below is a suggested layout for a typical book. Although we've put optional next to some of the items, please remember that it is your book and therefore everything is ultimately open to change as it is up to you how much or how little you put in. It doesn't even have to be a family history. It could be a history of your house.

Cover

Book Title
 Subtitle (optional)
 Author

Title Page

Book Title
 Subtitle (optional)
 Author

Publishing Page

Book Title
 Researched and Compiled by: (usually your name)
 Copyright © (usually you name)
 All Rights Reserved
 No part of this book may be copied, reproduced, translated or transferred to any electronic medium without the prior consent of the author.
 Printed by: (optional)
 Authors address: (optional)
 Authors email: (optional)

Contents Page (optional)

Contents showing the order of chapters in the book.

Foreword, Preface or Introduction Page (optional)

This is where you could summarise your book and explain about what the reader is going to find in the later pages. You might tell them about how long it has taken, who has helped, where more information might be found. You could explain that the work is on-going or that you have reached brick walls on some of the lines going back in time. It is up to you what to put and of course it is optional.

The Main Story

This is the part you will have created using your family tree program and it may be split into as many chapters as you like.

You could include extra stories and photographs and scans of additional documents that you consider making the story more interesting. You could also reference entries in an appendix at the end of the book.

Appendix or Appendices

Any additional pages of information to support your story. For instance it could be the original images of article that you have transcribed for inclusion in the main part of the book. Or it could be lists of parish records that you deem important but do not want to include in the main chapters.

Index

This is a useful place to reference all the people and places that feature in the book and indicate the pages where they appear. As genealogists we all know that the index is always a good place to start when a reader picks up a book about family history.

Notes

Our book assembly process will add in an end paper at the front and back of hardback books. We may also add up to 2 - 3 blank pages at the end of the book to bring the number of pages up to a thickness suitable for binding. We think it may be a neat idea to have a few spare pages at the end of the book for future generations to add new family events.

Remember that it is often better to start a chapter on a right-hand page rather than a left-hand page therefore it may be necessary to include a few blank pages in the book, particularly at the start. Please leave any intentional blank pages, blank.

A few final tips and encouragement.

- Try and get someone else to proofread your book. From our own experience we know that proofreading our own work does not always reveal errors.
- Leave some time before finishing your book and sending it for printing. A break of a few days or a week before a final read will also help spot any errors.

- Few books are perfect (even professional ones) so do not be too worried if the odd error gets through. It is better to publish with an error or two than aim for perfection and never publish. Remember that you are probably doing something that has never been done in your family before. Your readers in the future will be so grateful for the family history that they will probably be very forgiving about the odd error here and there.

Creating PDF Documents from any program

It is much better to send a PDF document to us than any other type of file for printing as it is a universal document that will appear the same on any computer and what you see is what we print.

There are many free programs that you may download and install*. Here is a list of just a few of them:

PDF24 Creator
CutePDF writer
PDF Candy
PDF995

If you search 'free program for creating PDF' on the internet you will see other alternatives to the above

* Be careful not to accept any additional programs during the download and install process. Whilst they are unlikely to be harmful for your computer, they can be an irritation and may duplicate something you already have.

The free PDF program will work a bit like a printer when you select it, except instead of printing on paper, it creates a PDF document which you must name and save to a folder on the hard drive of your computer. You may then attach the saved file to an email and send it to *charts@my-history.co.uk* for printing and binding here at My History.

You may create a PDF file for literally anything that you would otherwise print from any program you are using.

We are unable to offer you support on any PDF program as there are so many available, but the are usually very easy to use and we are not aware of any customers that have had difficulty using this type of utility program.

If you require further clarification on any of the above points, please email:

charts@my-history.co.uk

How much will it cost:

On our website you may choose to have your book printed as a softback, or two choices of hardback book. Cover text and printing will depend on the type of book you order. More details here:

www.my-history.co.uk/acatalog/Family_History_Book_Making.html