"Quick and easy system shows how to organize and keep track of your mound of genealogy notebooks, paperwork, photos, boxes and files - with no major change in what you are already doing - and how to find what you want when you want it, fast."
Dear Fellow Researcher,

Thank you for trusting me enough to invest your time and money - and for giving me the chance to help your organize your genealogy materials and find them fast when you need them.

As with all of my tutorials and guides, there is one main goal – to **EMPOWER YOU** in your genealogy and family history research. In this guide you will learn important (but simple) organizational and indexing skills that you will use from this day forward.

Here you will discover how to manage all of the "stuff" that you gather as you strive to find information on your ancestors. Because, even in this wonderful computer-age, there is paperwork, photos, and miscellaneous things that will always be there to pile up on the family history researcher.

**Here again is the promise that this powerful system offers you:**

"**Quick and easy system shows how to organize and keep track of your mound of genealogy notebooks, paperwork, photos, boxes and files - with no major change in what you are already doing - and how to find what you want when you want it, fast."**

Another big benefit is that you can use this system with other things that you have to keep track of in your personal and business life.

The magic of this guide is in the content. It was meant for you to **USE!** Write on the blank pages. Make notes, underline and highlight things. Read the enclosed system more than once and ponder it.

When you grasp these concepts and apply them, I am confident that you will agree, that the knowledge you gain will be **priceless** to you.

Sincerely,

Robert Ragan
Welcome to a Whole New Approach to Organizing and Keeping Track of All of Your Genealogy "Stuff."

Since you have ordered this system, you have probably been meaning to organize your genealogy and family history materials for some time now. This is a kind of task that is dreaded by most researchers - because it has the potential to be even worse than cleaning the garage, attic, or basement.

And even though you read the promises made about this new "quick and easy" system, are you still bracing yourself to be knee-deep in a pile of clutter, with long hours of paper shuffling before you collapse in an exhausted heap on the couch?

If this is how you feel, you are going to be delightfully surprised by how effective and easy this system is once you discover how it works.

Why Most Organizational Methods Have Never Worked For Me:

If you are like me, you have probably already investigated different organizational systems already. Some are in print, some are on the Internet and I'm certainly not knocking them, but they have never worked for me for these reasons; see if you can relate to this:

• **PROBLEM**: They are far too confusing, complicated, and time consuming.

What has baffled me the most is the unusual ancestor numbering systems that some people have come up with. This is where you start to assign each ancestor a number or letter. I hate to be critical, because I know that it may work for some, but it does not suit me at all. Consider this:

Why is it necessary to come up with an ancestor numbering system in the first place? By now, you should already have a genealogy computer program. And, that genealogy program normally assigns a number to each ancestor or each person that you enter into that database for you.

So there is no need to reinvent the wheel and confuse things. If you need to refer to an ancestor by an assigned number, for heaven's sake - go
with just *one* number (the number from your genealogy program) if at all possible. Here is the other problem:

- **PROBLEM: Having to do a complete overhaul of everything.**

  Have you ever gotten involved in a big project and wound up having things pile up? You wind up stuck - and are forced to continue until it's done. And of course, it always takes a lot longer than you thought it would.

  **The bottom line is:** Systems I have seen are very unrealistic because of the way that I am and the way that you are… **HUMAN!**

**THE SOLUTION - Why this System Will Work for You:**

- **It is realistic, flexible, and easy.** This system is structured so that once you understand the concepts you can customize it to your own situation, your own lifestyle, and your own time frame. You can do this at your own speed. There is no pressure and no being stuck in an upheaval of records that will take you days to deal with.

- **You will feel a great sense of relief because the burden of painstakingly organizing all of those papers and files will be gone.** You WILL make a few minor changes to your stuff - but as promised, you can "leave it where it lay" (so to speak).

- **A surprise benefit that was too depressing to mention in the promotions for this system:** You can show someone else how your setup works in about 2 minutes… "Just in case."

  It is important to have a system that *someone else* can understand. It doesn’t matter if your family members are not interested in genealogy. You can show them how this simple system works, just in case, heaven forbid - something happen to you.

  Here is a true story about an avid genealogist in her mid-fifties who got into a sudden and tragic car accident and died: Her daughter (who was not interested in genealogy) was going to throw away all of her records.
Fortunately, a friend of mine talked her into donating it to a Family History Center nearby which her mother had attended frequently.

Also, I remember being contacted by a woman who could not find her late father’s autobiography, which he had been writing using his computer before he died. The material was either damaged or lost. Heart breaking.

With this system, once you have everything set up, anyone can follow what you have done.

About the Genealogy Notebooks in Your Life:

If you are like most people you probably already have enough genealogy notebooks in your life. Here are some of the types of notebooks that you could or should have right now:

- Various general notebooks stuffed full of genealogy information. They may or may not have different divider tabs in them. These are common in the average researcher's world. They are handy to take on a trip out of town, to the library, or to a Family History Center.

- Notebooks containing printed pages from your computer. This may include information from the Internet, E-mail, and other computer related things. If you do not do this already, you might consider at least printing out the small percentage truly valuable on-line information you come across from time to time, that really pertains to your ancestors.

- Another very important type of notebook that you should make it a priority to have is one that has a hard copy (printouts) of ALL of the information from your genealogy computer program. It’s always good to print out the individual pedigree charts and the different family group sheets.

  Having this hard copy is the ultimate backup. I had a computer program where there were glitches and my data was corrupted. Of course, I had it backed up on disk, but for some reason I could not access that information and even the disks were corrupted. If it were not for that hard copy backup, I would have jumped off of a cliff.
So, the typical genealogy and family history researcher has notebooks all over the place. It’s natural. But I want to introduce you to a **NEW** kind of notebook. It is called a "Key Index Notebook."

**The Three Step "Do at Your Own Speed" Plan:**

**STEP 1:** Set up your own personal "Key Index Notebook." This is the heart of the system, and will be the most important genealogy related notebook you will own.

**STEP 2:** Give the *containers* (notebooks, file folders, boxes, storage bins, etc.) that hold your "stuff" *numbered references.*

**STEP 3:** At your leisure - go though your genealogy stuff and start indexing (with brief notations) in your Key Index Notebook.

Your personal Key Index Notebook is the most important part of the system. Why?

**Because it will be your MAIN INDEX to **ALL** of your genealogy stuff.**

This is why the first and most important thing you need to do is decide how you want to set yours up. I will show you step by step with examples, and then you will decide exactly how you want to do yours.

Keep in mind that there is room for flexibility, where you will have to tailor it to your specific situation. But, having a Key Index Notebook is *mandatory.* I promise you that this will save you countless hours of time in the weeks and months to come as you develop yours.

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**Supplies You Will Need**

- **ONE 1 or 1-1/2 inch notebook:** for your "Key Index Notebook."
- **Page dividers:** (that you can label) for the "Key Index Notebook."
- **Numbered page dividers:** for any existing genealogy notebooks you may have.
- **Blank labels:** to put "numbered references" on any existing genealogy notebooks, hanging file folders, regular file folders, etc.
Have you ever put something important in a file folder in the file cabinet or stuffed in a box somewhere - and then forgot all about it?

Now, do you remember the times when you did feel motivated to dig through a few files and came across that item and thought something like "Gee - I could have really used this last month when I was doing some research on the so-and-so line."

Out of sight and out of mind. We all do things like this. Honestly, I have to strain to think what I had for breakfast yesterday… I certainly can't remember everything that I put in my file cabinets, etc. Stuff is coming at me all of the time. How about you?

Having your own personal Key Index Notebook will bring you a feeling of peace of mind concerning your genealogy records.

You can put things away like always, and forget about it (like always?). The trick is that you made a very brief note in your Key Index Notebook (I will show you how to do it), and can now find things fast, anytime that you want. You earned the right to forget about it, and believe me… it feels great!

It doesn’t matter if you keep things in shoebox, in a filing cabinet, in notebooks, in boxes in the attic or basement, or all of the above. With your Key Index Notebook, you will be able to easily and quickly go get that record, that photograph, that will, that marriage certificate, or whatever, without having to tear your house apart trying to find it.

IMPORTANT NOTE: You will not want to lose your Key Index Notebook. If you loose your car keys you can’t drive your car. Your Key Index Notebook is so important, that if you lose it, all will be lost (or, you will have to start it over again).

Have you noticed that we have not even talked about organizing things yet? Actually organizing the records is secondary. In fact, after you have set up your Key Index Notebook, it will be easier to decide how you want to organize your records. And again, if you want to leave your records exactly where they are and not organize them at all, that is fine too.
How to Set-up Your Key Index Notebook:

You will create your own personal "Key Index Notebook" from scratch.

You do not have to go buy a bunch of supplies to create your Key Index Notebook. The only thing you need is a 1 or 1 ½ inch notebook (the 1 inch notebook is recommended for the average researcher) and a set of inexpensive page dividers (with tabs).

OPTIONAL: Since this notebook is so important, you might want to get one that has a place on the front cover where you can insert a piece of paper. Then, you can do a fancy cover sheet with your word processor and dress it up a little.

Your Page Dividers Need to Have Tabs that You Can Label:

For your Key Index Notebook, make sure that you get the kind of page dividers allow you to write (or type on your computer) the topic on the tab. Avoid the A-Z tab dividers.

NOTE: As you get further in this guide, you will see that page dividers with numbered tabs are an option for OTHER genealogy notebooks. But it is critical that you have tabs that a topic can be labeled for your Key Index Notebook.
How to Label the TABS in Your Key Index Notebook:

Deciding how you want to label the tabs in your Key Index Notebook is a surprisingly important step.

Decide how many TABS the page dividers in your Key Index Notebook will have BEFORE you buy them.

In almost any office supply place, you will be able to buy tabbed page dividers that you can label yourself. They normally come in sets of 5, 8, 10, and 12. You can have as many as you want. But I do recommend that you do not go over 12 tabs unless you do genealogy research full time.

Now, in spite of all the tons of information that you may have, you need to ask yourself, "What research lines are MOST important to me right now?"

Think about it… You probably have dozens of surnames you are researching. After all, this is the nature of family history research, right? Don't worry, you will be able to account for all of them in your Key Index Notebook. But which group of surnames are you most interested in? What research lines are you "actively" pursuing, AND which lines do you have the most information on?

Here are some examples that will help you understand how to best label the page divider tabs in YOUR Key Index Notebook:

There are a total of eight labeled tabs in my Key Index Notebook. Note that there are three tabs that have to do with my surname "Ragan."

Also note that the bottom two are called "MISC" and "INFO."
But **WHY** did I label the tabs in my Key Index Notebook like this? Because it works best for me in *my* situation…

![Image of labeled tabs](image)

**For example's sake, here is a brief background of my situation:** In my piles of genealogy "stuff," I have information from many different lines, but as you might guess, I am very interested in the *Ragan* surname.

**Ancestors that Have Lived in Specific Regions Over a Period of Time, Form "Family Clusters."**

An important thing that you want to look for in your research is a group (or groups) of your ancestors that have formed what I call "Family Clusters."

For instance, there is a large family cluster of Ragans that come from a certain region in Georgia. Generations of them lived there for many years, and I have many records from that area.

- That large bunch of Ragans, and records from that region of Georgia, are important enough to me to warrant having a tab in my Key Index Notebook labeled "**RAGAN, GA**."

- Also, there is another family cluster of the Ragans in Florida. I have several different records and photos from this group, and since this Florida information is especially important to me - there is a "**RAGAN, FL**" tab in my Key Index Notebook.
• The plain "RAGAN" tab is for all other miscellaneous Ragan information that I have. Why? It is simply a choice I made because of my situation.

Keep in mind that I do have enough Ragan information from Georgia and Florida to justify setting up individual tabs for both regions. But let's go further to the Ragan history: I know that there are family clusters in Missouri, and I know that there are family clusters of Ragans in Indiana.

Please note that I have some information from both of the Missouri and Indiana clusters, as well as a bunch of other miscellaneous Ragan stuff. But these records rate lower on my priority list. So, any reference to these records and other various Ragan stuff will get put under the "RAGAN" tab.

• Wainwright is one of the other lines that I’m researching. Anything and everything to do with this surname name will be referenced under the "WAINWRIGHT" tab.

• Another line is Hillhouse, so I have a tab that says "HILLHOUSE."

• Another one of my lines is Jones, which by the way, is my most frustrating. But there is a "JONES" tab because it is my mother's maiden name and this line is important to me. All of those Jones ancestors come from North Carolina. So if I wanted to have a "Jones, NC" tab I could do it. But I decided against it.

Every Key Index Notebook Should Contain a "MISC" Tab and an "INFO" Tab:

• The "MISC" (miscellaneous) tab is where references to ALL OTHER surnames are kept. There are always plenty of other names and loose ends to keep track of, but all of these research lines will be a lower priority to you.

• There is one other tab that you should have in your Key Index Notebook that is NOT connected to a surname. The "INFO" (information) tab. This is where all references to general information will be kept.
You will run across information about general genealogy research on-line and off-line. There are places and things that you want to keep track of.

Maybe you read an article from the newspaper and cut it out. Then a friend sends you an E-mail message about genealogy research and you printed it - or whatever. If it’s important enough to keep, the "INFO" tab is where you want to index that type of information.

**Another Example:** My wife Ellen, is a "Custer" girl from Indiana. She is not as involved with family history as I am - but she does have some good information, and does do some record gathering and has done some family projects. Here is how we will set up her Key Index Notebook when she is ready to get more serious:

Her situation: Her father came from (now here is a mouthful) a family cluster of "Custers" from Ohio. Her dad was born and raised on a family farm and has roots in Ohio. He married and settled down in Indiana, but the large groups of Custers remain in Ohio.

She could set up a "CUSTER, OH" tab if she wanted; but since there is no other known family cluster of the Custer surname that she has records on - she will simply have a tab labeled "CUSTER."

There are other surnames in her research lines, but there are no real family clusters to justify anything other that one tab per surname. Here is how her tabs should be labeled:

**CUSTER - MASON - LAND - STORER - REED - MISC - INFO**

She needs seven tabs in her Key Index Notebook. Note that five of the tabs are surnames of the lines of research she is most interested in, and the last two tabs (MISC and INFO) are the tabs that should be in *every* Key Index Notebook - including yours.

Before you turn the page, make sure that you understand the logic behind the way that the page divider tabs in a Key Index Notebook are labeled. Read over it again and don't let the "Family Cluster" situations throw you off.
Now It’s Your Turn to Decide How to Label YOUR Tabs:

Even if you don’t have a notebook and tabs in front of you, think about how you will do this. Consider these questions so you can decide how you want to label the tabs in your Key Index Notebook according to your wants, needs, and unique situation:

- **What research lines are important to you (what are the surnames)?**
- **Do you have a whole lot of information on any of those surnames?**
- **For the surnames that you have a lot of "stuff" on, is there a way you can break them up into "Family Clusters"?**
- **Is there more than one family cluster for the same surname?** If so, you might want to have more than one tab for that surname. If not, one tab will suffice. Your ancestors may be from all over the place. But even so, if you have just one tab for ancestors that lived in several different regions that will work just fine.

"So Robert… How many tabs should I buy?" It’s all up to you. Read the above questions and decide the total number surname tabs will you use. Make sure that you include a "MISC" tab and an "INFO" tab in your total. And remember that all of your surnames that have a lower priority will be indexed under the "MISC" tab.

Now, write them all down and count how many tabs you will use in your Key Index Notebook. Will you need to buy a 5, 8, 10, or 12 pack of tabs?

**Note:** It is normal to want to "do it all" and have the urge to use too many tabs. Keep in mind the busy world that you live in. Unless you have plenty of time on your hands you’ll only be able to concentrate on the names that are the most important to you.

Are you thinking, "Gee - all of this fuss over a few page divider tabs?" At this point in the guide, I can't blame you. But shortly, you will discover how the real secrets of effective and easy organization will take place in your Key Index Notebook. Read on…
Can you have more than one Key Index Notebook? Yes, you can. Let’s say that you were a long time researcher and had done extensive search on your name. But, you were also interested in researching your spouse’s name and research lines as well. It may be a good idea to have an individual Key Index Notebook for you and one for your spouse. But, to have more than two, would be a real challenge.

How to Set-up the PAGES in Your Key Index Notebook:

This is very easy to do because ALL of the pages in each section will be the same (with the exception of the pages under the "INFO" tab). These pages will have CATAGORIES listed on them. Here they are:

- Bible:
- Biographies:
- Birth (vital):
- Cemetery:
- Census:
- Church:
- Correspondence:
- Court:
- Death Records (vital):
- E-mail:
- Emigration & Immigration:
- Family History Library/Center:
- Internet Favorites/Bookmarks:
- Internet Records:
- Land & Property:
- Letters, Diaries, & Journals:
- Marriage (vital):
- Military:
- Naturalization and Citizenship:
- Newspaper:
- Notes:
- Periodicals:
- Photographs & Negatives:
- OTHER Types of Records:

Take a good look at these recommended categories.

You can add or subtract any category from the pages that you will put in your Key Index Notebook. You can customize this list to suit you.

What is important to remember is that all these different categories are the typical KINDS of records that the average genealogy researcher now has, or will have in the future.

Turn the page and note the example of how a page in your Key Index Notebook would look using these categories…
Key Index Notebook Page - What KIND of Records Do I Have?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bible:</th>
<th>Internet Favorites/Bookmarks:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biographies:</td>
<td>Internet Records:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth (vital):</td>
<td>Land &amp; Property:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cemetery:</td>
<td>Letters, Diaries, &amp; Journals:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Census:</td>
<td>Marriage (vital):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church:</td>
<td>Military:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correspondence:</td>
<td>Naturalization and Citizenship:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Court:</td>
<td>Newspaper:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death Records (vital):</td>
<td>Notes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail:</td>
<td>Periodicals:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emigration &amp; Immigration:</td>
<td>Photographs &amp; Negatives:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family History Library/Center:</td>
<td>OTHER Types of Records:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This page is an example of how a page in your Key Index Notebook should look. It is only a TEMPORARY page.*
To start out, you can rip out one of the extra pages at the back of this guide and use them in the different sections your Key Index Notebook.

Again, except for the pages that go under the INFO tab, these temporary Key Index Notebook pages will go under every tab in your Key Index Notebook.

Or, you can type up a page (like the example on page 14) for your Key Index Notebook on your word processor, and print them out to use in your Key Index Notebook.

"Key Index Notebook Page - What KIND of Records Do I Have?"

If you create these pages on your computer, it would be a good idea to put this title on the top of the page. But I would suggest that you make one small change under the tabs that are labeled with a surname.

Here is an example: Under my "HILLHOUSE" tab, I would put a page with the title: "Key Index Notebook Page - What KIND of HILLHOUSE Records Do I Have?"

And under my "RAGAN, GA" tab, I would say "What KIND of RAGAN, GA Records Do I Have?" and so on.

This single page is a starting point. As you start indexing your actual records under each one of your tabs, the number of pages will grow. After all, there is only so much space between each category.

IMPORTANT NOTE: As you start indexing, these temporary Key Index Notebook pages will start filling up fast. It is easiest to HAND WRITE the notations first, then type what you have written (being sure to include all of the categories) in your work processor. Then, you print out the updated Key Index Notebook page (which is now on your computer) and put it under the appropriate tab in your Key Index Notebook.

When you start indexing again, you will STILL hand write your notations on that newly updated Key Index Page (that you printed). When you start running out of space to write, you will update that page on your computer again, print out an updated version and use it.
The Pages Under the "INFO" Tab:

The categories that go under the "INFO" tab are different and fewer.

Again, you can type them up yourself or make a copy from the example page at the back of this guide.

So far, you have been learning how to set-up your Key Index Notebook. But before you start the actual process of making references (indexing with brief notations), you need to go on to STEP 2.

Do not go any further until you understand how to set up your Key Index Notebook. Please make sure that you have already decided and written notes on paper of exactly how you are going to set yours up before you go to the next step.

STEP 2: Give the containers (notebooks, files folders, boxes, storage bins, etc.) that hold your "stuff" numbered references. (In plain English, you are going to start putting numbers everywhere.)

Where your genealogy materials are actually located is not that important because your Key Index Notebook will send you to any location. What is important is that you make a point of reference, which will create the location you can come back to.

It is important to give a point of reference to all of the "containers" that hold your genealogy records. You will use numbered references (labels with numbers on them and page dividers with numbers on them, etc.).

You will have several different options in doing this, depending on your preferences. Other than adding these numbered references to your "stuff," I am not suggesting that you change anything if you don't want to.
Glance around your office or home and make a mental note of all of the containers that you keep your genealogy paper records in. Chances are you have genealogy notebooks, plenty of files, photographs. There’s bound to be boxes or storage bins too.

Since you are in an organizational mode and reading this guide, you might feel more comfortable gathering all of your genealogy notebooks and putting them on one shelf, or gathering all of your genealogy files and putting them in the same file drawers.

Or, as I have promised you many times now, you can leave them exactly where they are. Either way is fine.

**Numbered Referencing Made Easy:**

The good news is that you do not have to number every scrap of paper and every record that you have. But you do have to label the things that hold your genealogy records with numbered references:

**Genealogy Notebooks:** If you keep some of your genealogy materials in notebooks. Assign each individual notebook a number. Use a label. You can print it or write on the label by hand. Just make sure it has a number.

For example, I have three giant notebooks that are filled with miscellaneous genealogy information. I call them Notebook 1, Notebook 2 and Notebook 3. It can’t get any easier than that.
These three notebooks have numbered references. Think of them as three individual locations to go to. This is simple, but important.

How many genealogy notebooks do you have? Label one of them "Notebook 1" and continue labeling until each notebook has a numbered reference.

The Page Dividers in Your Genealogy Notebooks:

Do you already have page dividers in your genealogy notebooks? If so, they will work with this system. But, I want you to consider making a minor change - use page dividers with numbered tabs.

You can go to an office supply place and see plenty of choices for page dividers with numbered tabs. I have seen them with 8, 10, 12, 15, 25, 31, and even 50 tabs.

**Strongly Recommended:**
Go with page dividers with a high set of numbers. The 25 tab set is good. Often you will see a 31 tabs set. These are fine as well.

If you use large notebooks, the 50 tab set would be a good choice.
Each one of your genealogy notebooks should have page dividers with numbered tabs in them. For example, let's say you have a total of five medium sized (2 inch) notebooks. You decide that you want to use the 25 tab set (they have numbered tabs 1-25). You would need to get five packs of the 25 tabs sets (one for each notebook).

Then, you would insert the numbered tabs in your genealogy notebooks. You can leave the stuff in the notebooks in the same order that it is right now. You see, it does not matter what information is under each of those tabs - what is important is that you have made more numbered references and given yourself specific locations to return to (and return to with lightening speed I might add).

By Using These Numbered Page Dividers, You Are Breaking These Numbered POINTS OF REFERENCE in to Bite-Sized Pieces.

You may ask, "But Robert, I already have genealogy notebooks with tabs in them - and they are set-up the way that I like them. What do I do?"

The Answer: Take them out and throw them away. When you are done watching the video and reading this guide, you will never want to go back to your old system.

Boxes, Storage Bins, and Shoeboxes: All containers like these get numbered too. Keep it simple (Box 1, Box 2, Box 3 and so on).

The attic, the basement, under the bed... Where you keep your different boxes does not matter. But they all need a numbered reference. No matter where they are. Label them.
What about what is inside the boxes?

If possible, the items inside the boxes need to have numbered references as well. If there are too many varied items in a box (like file folders, copies of things that are stapled together, some letters, some photos, etc.) Forget about giving them a reference. Just know that they WILL be accounted for in your Key Index Notebook no matter what.

If you have "like items" in the same box - it is easy to make numbered references. Here is an example of this using a shoebox as the container:

Let’s say that when you get your photos developed, you keep them in a shoebox. Of course, you are going to put them in an album one day, but for right now, they are in a shoebox. You know how they come in little packets from the photo place, right? These packets can be considered "like items."

Now, let’s say that there are eight packets of photos (including the negatives). Well, you only had one shoebox; you need to label it "Shoebox 1" (because you never know when you’ll add another shoebox to your collection). You will go through with a pen (or stick on labels) and label those packets of photos. In this case, you will have "Packet 1" through "Packet 8."

Now think about this: What if you have a bunch of old loose photographs in a big box? Let’s say that there are no envelopes, just a pile of photographs in a box. What would you do?

I recommend that you get some envelopes (between 20 and 30 of them), and quickly sort through the pictures. You can sort them in any way that you like - just do it quickly. Photographs have a way of naturally falling into groups. Examples of this: A pile of pictures from grandma's old farm, family reunion pictures back in the old days, studio portraits of the so-and-so from 1935, etc.

Then you would stuff the photographs in the envelopes. Then you would number the envelopes ("Envelope 1," etc.). So now instead of a box full of photos, you have them in numbered envelopes. This gives you smaller points of reference. Because of this, you will never have to sort through that whole box of photos to find a certain groups of photos again.
How to Set up Your File Folders or Hanging File Folders:

**File Cabinet Drawers:** Do you keep your file folders in a file cabinet? If so, each drawer of that file cabinet should be numbered.

Give them numbered references. Label each drawer (Drawer 1, Drawer 2, etc.)

**What kind of file folders do you prefer:** Regular folders, hanging folders, or both? Whatever the case, they also need numbered references.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** DO NOT MIX hanging folders and regular folders in the SAME CONTAINER. For example, if you have a file cabinet that has hanging file folders in it, do not put regular folders in those hanging folders.

If you want to use regular folders in say, a portable file box—use only regular folders. You may have a second portable file box that has all hanging file folders in it. This is fine. Just do not mix the two kinds of folders in the same storage container. Use one or the other.

**Here are a few suggestions on how to set them up:**

"Regular" File Folders:

You probably have plenty of these everyday file folders already. If you ONLY use this type of file folder (with no hanging file folders), number them.

You can use stick on labels or just write the numbers on the folders. For example: "Folder 1" and "Folder 2" and so on.
How Many Regular File Folders Per Drawer?

It is recommended that you put FIFTY file folders per drawer. For instance: "Drawer 1" of your file cabinet will have regular file folders labeled 1 through 50 in it. "Drawer 2" will also have another set of file folders labeled 1 through 50 in it.

What kind of genealogy stuff you put in these numbered folders is completely up to you; the system will get you to the information in these file folders quickly, and when you want it.

Hanging File Folders:

Note: This is if you use hanging file folders ONLY. This is where you put your genealogy stuff in the hanging folders without using any regular file folders.

It is recommended that you put FIFTY hanging file folders per drawer: It is very easy to number these type of files because they come with those handy plastic tabs.

Just like the above example of the regular file folders, there will be hanging file folders, with tabs labeled 1 though 50, in each drawer.
The same principle applies to portable file boxes as well: Again, they get hanging file folders 1 through 50.

Some of these file boxes are smaller in size than others. In this case, hanging file folders 1 though 25 works well.

**AT LAST - the Big Pay Off for Your Efforts!!!**

Up to this point, you having been preparing for this event. Now everything will start to come together for you - and THE MAGIC STARTS!

**Before you can start Step 3, you will have already:**

- **Set up your Key Index Notebook** (starts on page 7) by deciding how you want to label your page divider tabs, and by inserting your Key Index Notebook pages under each tab (see page 8).

  **Note:** Look in the back of this guide for extra Key Index Notebook pages to get you started for now. You can also make copies of those pages.

  Remember that these Key Index Notebook pages are temporary. You will create your own pages on your computer, so that you can customize them; and because the single page under each tab now, will expand to many pages after you start the "Find It Fast" indexing process you are about to learn.

- **Given all of the containers that hold your genealogy stuff, numbered references** (starts on page 16). This MUST be done before you can continue.

  Have you followed all of the instructions given in Steps 1 and 2? If so, let's take the plunge into…
STEP 3: At your leisure - go through your genealogy stuff and start indexing (with brief notations) in your Key Index Notebook.

The principal of indexing using a word or words to actually send you to a location, is what makes the "Find It Fast" method so powerful. The good news is - this indexing process is quick and easy.

ALL of the indexing will be done in your Key Index Notebook. The Key Index Notebook pages are like road maps, which point the way to all of your genealogy stuff (which now has numbered references in various containers). So now, no matter where your stuff is located, you can get to it quick; and keep track of it better than ever before.

How to Index with Brief Notations in the Key Index Notebook:

When you are ready to start: You will grab your Key Index Notebook, and get some of your "genealogy stuff." Then you start the process of indexing this stuff, no matter what container it is in.

For instance, if you sit down with one of your genealogy notebooks (not to be confused with your Key Index Notebook), you will flip through the page dividers with the numbered tabs and start indexing.

This will not take a long time. Remember to make brief notations in your Key Index Notebook. You will spend maybe fifteen or twenty minutes indexing an average genealogy notebook, NOT hours.

Here is an example using some of my "genealogy stuff" that is in one of my genealogy notebooks:

- It is a 3 inch notebook labeled "Notebook 1."

- Inside, there are page dividers with numbered tabs 1 through 25.

- Behind these 25 tabs, there are various records, paperwork, and photos.
• Together, you and I will go through the process of indexing the information behind some of these number tabs. Brief notations will be written in the pages of my Key Index Notebook.

**Note:** It does not matter what kind of records are in my genealogy notebook (or yours). Also, it is not important what order those records are in. What does matter is that the brief notations go under the correct tab, in the correct category, in my Key Index Notebook.

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**As a Reminder to You:** On the left are the names of the labeled tabs that are on the eight pages dividers in my Key Index Notebook.

Please follow carefully along with the examples that I am about to show you. It is important that you understand this indexing process because you will be making these same type notations when you start indexing your stuff.

**Now, with my Key Index Notebook in one hand and "Notebook 1" in the other, I am ready to start indexing...**

**Stuff in Notebook 1 - Tab 1:** Some old pedigree charts that I filled in by hand years ago. Most of this is Ragan information. Include on this pedigree chart is some Hillhouse information.

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**Notation on Key Index Notebook page - "RAGAN, FL" Tab:** Since these charts are filled out by hand, I am going to make this notation in the "Notes" category: "Ragan, Hillhouse handwritten Pedigree - Notebook 1, TAB 1."
Do you remember when I mentioned how some organization systems had you make duplicate copies of records to store in different places? There is no need to do that here, but you may want to make DUPLICATE NOTATIONS. This is optional. For example, I could make this same notation under my Hillhouse tab:

**OPTIONAL DUPLICATE Notation on Key Index Notebook page - "HILLHOUSE" Tab:** I will make an almost identical notation here in the "Notes" category: "*Hillhouse, Ragan handwritten Pedigree - Notebook 1, TAB 1.*"

- **Stuff in Notebook 1 - Tab 2:** Under this tab, there are handwritten notes about my Ragan line from areas other than Florida and Georgia, and also some notes on the surname *Herring*. There is also some information in a letter that my Grandpa Ragan sent me about Ragans from Live Oak, FL area where some of our ancestors came from.

**NOTE:** It does not matter if this different “stuff” under Tab 2 has any connection to any surname, or has any sense of order at all. What matters is: HOW and WHERE it gets organized (gets indexed) it in my Key Index Notebook.

**Notation on Key Index Notebook page - "RAGAN" Tab:** Here is another notation for the "Notes" category: "*Notes on Ragan family - Notebook 1, Tab 2.*"

**Notation on Key Index Notebook page - "MISC" Tab:** Did you notice that there is not a tab on the surname *Herring* in my Key Index Notebook? So, I make a notation in the "Notes" category under the "MISC" tab: "*Notes on Herring - Notebook 1, Tab 2.*"

**Notation on Key Index Notebook page - "RAGAN, FL" Tab:** Under the “Letters, Diaries, and Journals” category: "*Letter from Grandpa Ragan, Notebook 1, Tab 2.*"
Do you see how simple this is? Do you think that you could index your own genealogy notebook right now? I bet you can.

Making Notations Under the "INFO" Tab:

This is the only page of the Key Index Notebook where the categories are different. This is the place to index genealogy information that is NOT connected to any of the surnames you are researching.

- For example, my dad sent me an article about genealogy on the Internet from the October 1999 issue of Reader's Digest. It is called "Click Here For Your Roots." If it gets filed in Drawer 2, Hanging File Folder 39 - how should I make the notation?

On the Key Index Notebook page - "INFO" Tab: The notation would be made in the "Articles" category: "Click Here For Your Roots - Reader's Digest 10/99 - Drawer 2, HF 39."

You might do it a little different; and that's fine. As long as you understand how the indexing process in your Key Index Notebook works, you can be very flexible.

Do you now see how easy and powerful this system is?

Can you see how there is no major upheaval? Once you give all the containers that hold your genealogy stuff numbered references, there is hardly any muss or fuss.

You can do this a little at a time. Maybe you want to do it for ten minutes today; maybe you want to do it for twenty minutes tomorrow. That’s the beauty of this system, its flexible, its realistic and it will allow you to manage all of your genealogy stuff effectively.
But please, please - keep those notations brief:

There is plenty of room to write extensive notes about your ancestors in other places, like your computer genealogy program, etc. The purpose of your Key Index Notebook is to be able to find your genealogy stuff fast.

I challenge you to follow this system: It works so well. Once you start indexing your genealogy stuff in your Key Index Notebook - you will never fail to "find it fast."

In fact, you will start to depend on your Key Index Notebook. When all is said and done (and indexed), you won't know how you ever got along without it. It is honestly realistic and flexible.

Now It Is YOUR Turn: Re-read the guide, get your supplies, set up your personal Key Index Notebook and DO IT!