

The Five Elements of the Genealogical Proof Standard (GPS)

1. Reasonably Exhaustive Research

This means looking **broadly and deeply enough** to answer a research question with confidence. It requires identifying and searching all relevant record types for the time and place—not just the easiest or most obvious sources—so conclusions are not based on incomplete evidence. **Why it matters:** Missing records can lead to incorrect assumptions and fragile conclusions.

2. Complete and Accurate Source Citations

Every source used must be cited clearly and precisely so it can be **located, evaluated, and reused**. Good citations document *where information came from* and allow others (and your future self) to assess reliability. **Why it matters:** Without citations, evidence cannot be verified or trusted.

3. Analysis and Correlation of Evidence

Information must be evaluated, compared, and connected across multiple sources. This includes distinguishing between information and evidence, weighing reliability, and identifying patterns through timelines, tables, maps, or other tools. **Why it matters:** Records rarely speak for themselves; meaning comes from thoughtful analysis and correlation of facts.

4. Resolution of Conflicting Evidence

Conflicting information must be **addressed, not ignored**. Resolving conflicts requires understanding why records differ and determining which evidence carries more weight—or whether uncertainty remains. **Why it matters:** Unresolved conflicts weaken conclusions and reduce credibility.

5. Soundly Reasoned, Coherently Written Conclusion

The final conclusion explains *how* the evidence supports an answer to the research question. It presents reasoning clearly, addresses conflicts, and demonstrates that the first four standards have been met. **Why it matters:** Proof is not just finding records—it explains why the conclusion is correct.