

## DNA Testing, Is It Right for You?

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Note, this is a personal opinion.

DNA testing is a commercial application of the science which generally promises great things that it can't deliver for most Jews. Chances are you'll waste a lot of time unless you have specific goals to accomplish. A good goal would be to see if two people match and at what level. Another goal might be to join a surname or town group to see if your DNA matches others within the group. Doing the testing for "let's see what turns up" is most times frustrating and non-rewarding.

DNA testing for immediate families is easy, and determining ethnic origin is easy, in between is not yet ready for prime time.

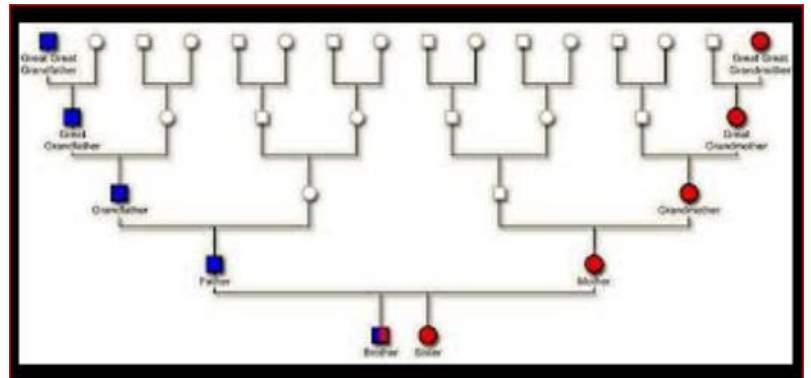
Basically there are three kinds of DNA testing: those tests that only trace the male line (Y-DNA), those tests that only trace the female line (mt-DNA or mitochondrial DNA) and those tests that trace everyone (Autosomal DNA).

To emphasize, for the male test, you can only trace your father, his father, his father etc. It is a very small part of your tree. The same applies to the female test.

Now you might ask, why is it they sent me 300 or 3000 "distant cousins"?

The answer is that Ashkenazi Jews are all so closely related, it is especially difficult to winnow out all the DNA to find people who are second or third cousins. Most of your "matches" will be folks you share 25 or 50 generations back, much further than our current capabilities can research.

Next the family finder, or autosomal test, will test against everyone in your tree. The bad news is that it is not particularly exacting. Why? This DNA is only partially passed down. You receive 50% from each parent, who only receives 50% from their parents, and so on. Thus when someone shares 7% of their autosomal DNA with me, we can make an educated guess that we are closely related...and



yes, it's my first cousin!

Just one personal success story before i go. Laurel lives in DelRay, she is 88 and my mother's first cousin. Her autosomal test found me as first cousin, but also three men named Smith.

Smith? you might ask...

With some digging and communication with the family genealogist in the Smith family, we determined that Laurel's grandfather indeed had 3 sons in Minsk, before he emigrated and married Laurel's grandmother in Chicago. Now she has 300 more half-cousins to email with. Go Laurel! Go DNA!