



*Teaching
Genealogists AI™*
Instructor: Sylvia
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Getting Started in Genealogy – A Practical Beginner Guide

Course Instructor: Sylvia Vargas

Organization: Puerto Rican Genealogy Group

Website: <https://puertoricangenealogy.org>

Date Created: 2026-02-17

Total Modules: 4

Estimated Time: Self-paced (30–45 minutes per module)

Who Is This Course For?

This free course is designed for Puerto Ricans living in the mainland United States who want to start researching their family history but don't know where to begin. No prior genealogy experience is needed.

If you've ever wondered where your family came from in Puerto Rico, what your great-grandparents' names were, or why your family moved to the mainland – this course will give you the tools to start finding answers.

What You'll Need

- A computer, tablet, or smartphone with internet access
 - A free Google account (for Google Docs and Google Sheets)
 - Curiosity about your family's story
 - Optionally: a phone or notebook for interviewing relatives
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Before You Begin: Create Your Free FamilySearch Account

Take 2 minutes right now to create your free account at FamilySearch.org. You will need it in Module 3, and having it ready means you can start searching the moment you get there.

1. Go to <https://www.familysearch.org>
2. Click **Sign In** → **Create Account**
3. Enter your name, email, and a password
4. Check your email and click the verification link

FamilySearch is run by a nonprofit organization. It does not sell your data or share your personal information. No credit card required. No subscription fee. Your account is private by default.

What You'll Walk Away With

- A written record of what you already know about your family
 - A list of questions to ask your living relatives
 - Knowledge of where to find Puerto Rican records for free online
 - A simple research log to track your progress
 - Google Sheets templates to organize your findings
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Course Modules

Module 1 – Start With Yourself

Begin by writing down what you already know. Your own name, your parents, your grandparents. You'll work backward one generation at a time and learn the five key questions every genealogist asks about each person.

Module 2 – Talk to Living Relatives

Your best sources of information are the people still alive. This module teaches you how to interview family members, what questions to ask, and how to handle the stories and details they share – especially about migration from Puerto Rico.

Module 3 – Collect Basic Documents

Learn what documents to look for (birth certificates, marriage records, obituaries, census records) and where to find Puerto Rican records online for free. Includes a glossary of common Spanish record terms you'll encounter.

Module 4 – Keep a Research Log

Good research means writing down what you searched, what you found, and what you didn't find. This module introduces you to a simple research log using Google Sheets and teaches you why tracking your work matters.

Companion Materials

- **Quick Reference Card** – A one-page printable summary of all 4 steps and the 5 beginner research questions
 - **Google Sheets Templates** – Specifications for three ready-to-use spreadsheets:
 1. Family Information Tracker
 2. Research Log
 3. Document Checklist
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A Note on Language

This course is written in English. However, many Puerto Rican genealogical records are written in Spanish. Throughout the course, you will see key Spanish terms in *italics* with their English translations. A short glossary of common record terms is included in Module 3.

You do not need to be fluent in Spanish to research your Puerto Rican family. Many online tools can help with translation, and the Puerto Rican Genealogy Group community is here to support you.

Connect With Us

- **Website:** <https://puertoricangenealogy.org>
 - **Community:** Join the Puerto Rican Genealogy Group to share your progress, ask questions, and connect with other researchers
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