

Scandinavian Research

Scandinavia generally refers to Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. However, Finland had the same record-keeping system as Sweden and often used the Swedish language in earlier records. Finnish research is similar to Swedish research. Icelandic research is similar to Danish.

The Language: In order to do research, you need to learn some Scandinavian words, the alphabet, and how spellings have changed over time. This is not too difficult. Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish are all Germanic languages, which means they are closely related to English, German, and to each other. As in English, some words have different forms: *die, dies, died, death, dead, deceased, passed away.*

<u>English</u>	<u>Danish</u>	<u>Norwegian</u>	<u>Swedish</u>
father	fader, far	far	fader
mother	moder, mor	mor	moder, mor
wife	hustru, kone	kone	hustru
son	søn	sønn	son
daughter	datter	datter	dotter
death	død, døde	død, døde	död, döde
baptized, christened	daab, døpte	døbt, døpte	dop, döpte
witness, witnesses	fadder	faddere	fadder

The Alphabet: Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish have three extra letters that English does not have. These come at the end of the alphabet: Danish and Norwegian: Æ Å Ø Swedish: Ä Å Ö Before 1956, Å in Danish was written as AA and came at the beginning of the alphabet.

To write these letters on your computer, hold down the Alt key and type the following on the 10-key pad. Be sure the Num Lock key is on. (See “diacritics” in the help section of PAF.)

Ä 0196	Å 0197	Æ 0198	Ö 0214	Ø 0216
ä 0228	å 0229	æ 0156	ö 0246	ø 0248

To change your keyboard to another language, go to *start, settings, control panel, keyboard*. Click on language tab and follow instructions. (Use Google to find an example of a keyboard in another language.)

Spelling: This has changed over time. Here are some of the most common changes for all three countries:

old	new	old	new	old	new	old	new
w	v	dt	t	i	j	c	k
fw	v	d	t	e	ä æ	ch	k
hw	v	ki	tj	u	v	q	k

For more about the alphabet and spelling changes, see the word lists at www.familysearch.org

Jurisdictions: Countries are divided into both civil and religious jurisdictions. The largest civil jurisdiction is called county or province in English, but would be like a US state, as it is the largest division. (Danish: *amt*, Norwegian: *fylker, amt*, Swedish: *landskap, län*.) Names and boundaries have changed over time.

<http://www.familysearch.org>, <http://www.swegate.com/> The next civil jurisdiction (equivalent to our counties) is called a district. Although tax and census records were kept on a district level, it is not as important for genealogical purposes as the parish.

The state church (Lutheran) in all the Scandinavian countries kept the vital records including births, deaths, and marriages in the parish, the most important record-keeping jurisdiction. (Danish: *sogn*; Norwegian: *sokn, församling*; Swedish: *socken, församling*)

Inside the parishes are villages, farm clusters, or other small areas often used for identification.

In recording places on genealogy sheets, the small area should be recorded first, followed by the parish, county, and country. The district is usually not recorded.

To discover where your ancestors lived, you often need to consult a good atlas or gazetteer and use your imagination, as the information may have been recorded using old spellings, old jurisdictions, English spellings, or misspellings. Some parish names may include prefixes such as *north, south, east, west, large, or small*.

Scandinavian Names

A. Types of naming systems:

1. **Patronymic names:** This naming system was common in Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Iceland, and most of Finland from the 1400s through the end of the 1800s, and still exists in Iceland today. It was used by about 90% of the people before the mid-1800s. Under this system the "son" affix is attached to the father's given name. For example, if a man called Anders Johansson had a son named Karl and a daughter named Karin, the children's names would be Karl Andersson (Andersen) and Karin Andersdotter (Andersdatter). Karl Andersson's children would be Karlsson (Karlsen) or Karlsdotter (Karlsdatter.)
2. **Surnames:** The nobility and higher class individuals often used a surname such as "Lindberg" that became the child's surname: Anders Lindberg's son Karl would be Karl Lindberg and his daughter would be Karin Lindberg.
3. **Military names:** When Swedes entered the military, they were given a military name in addition to their patronymic name. Their children usually did not take this military name. If Anders Johansson became a soldier, he might be given the soldier name of Lindberg and would be known as Anders Johansson Lindberg or Anders Lindberg. His son would be known as Karl Andersson and his daughter as Karin Andersdotter. (Note that "Lindberg" could be either a "higher class" surname or a military name.)
4. **Occupational names:** People in cities and in occupations other than farming also sometimes took surnames that may or may not have been used by their children.
5. **Norwegian farm names:** In Norway the farm name was often attached to the person's patronymic name. If Jon Anderssen settled on a farm called Bakken, he would be called Jon Anderssen Bakken, that is: Jon Anderssen, who lives at Bakken. If he moved to a farm called Vik, his name would be Jon Anderssen Vik. Sweden and Denmark also used farm or village names to identify people, but a preposition such as "from" or "in" separated the person's name from the farm name.

B. Female names: Until the mid-1800s, married women did not take their husband's name as a surname. Thus prior to that time, all women were known by their maiden names.

C. Changes to the naming system in the late 1800s and early 1900s: Around the 1860s it became popular for most people to adopt a family surname carried from one generation to the next. A lot of families adopted a name connected to their home village or a name connected to nature. However, the majority just "froze" their patronymic name as their family name with daughters changing "dotter" to "son." Married women also began using their husband's name.

D. Finding Scandinavian Names in Family Search:

1. "Search all resources" will usually give you too many hits since you cannot limit the search by place.
2. Do not rely on Ancestral File. Because Scandinavian names were so common, many were incorrectly linked.
3. If you do not find your ancestor in the IGI by using a regular search, use a parent search. (To find out how to do a parent search, click on "Tips on how to search the International Genealogical Index.")
4. The Vital Records Index contains some extracted names for Scandinavian parishes. Click on "country" then "county" then "city/town" to see whether your parish has been included.

Remember: Scandinavian names before 1850 are mostly patronymic. Names such as Nils, Olof, Per are very common. People could and often did change their names in the mid-1800s and when emigrating to the United States. Be sure to check place names, dates, and names of other family members to ensure that you have found the right ancestor.

Scandinavian countries kept excellent records. Once you have learned some basic Scandinavian research technics, you will generally have success in researching your Scandinavian ancestors.