



DNA for your ONS: Matching

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Are your participants set to match within the project or match the whole database? This is a very important consideration.

Until a few years ago, the default was match within the project, so when a kit was ordered, that was how it was set. Then the default was changed, and now **the default is match to the database**, which gives participants matches with other surnames.

The current default results in more people having matches, so they feel they are getting something from testing. Unfortunately, these matches with other surnames are in many/most cases not genealogically relevant.

Depending on the number of participants in your project and the frequency of their different 37 marker Y-DNA results in the general population, you could get these other surname match emails frequently, if your participants are set to match to the database.

There is also the risk that these other surname matches encourage the participant to pursue avenues, such as research or additional testing regarding these other surname matches, which may not be in his best interest.

Until the vast majority of the trees test for a surname, it is premature to assume another surname match means a surname change that occurred through adoption, infidelity, illegitimacy, or voluntary name change. In addition, some genealogical evidence of the event is desirable. Some genetic trees may be large, and you may have many trees with your surname match, and other genetic trees are very small – perhaps only one male surviving, and he may not match the large group that matches because he represents another surname origin – and not an adoption, infidelity, illegitimacy, or name change.

Depending on your level of access to a kit, you can change the default setting to Matches Only within the Project. If you do this, some people in your project will have to wait for matches with your ONS surname, though the benefit from this setting is that you are not bombarded with match emails for other surnames, and waste time investigating these matches.

To change the match setting, you need either:

1. the kit number and password for a kit, or
2. the participant to set his kit for limited Administrator access.

If you don't have either of these, you will need to encourage the participant to set the match setting to within the project.

To change the setting, from any GAP report, such as Member Information, click on a kit number to log into their Personal Page, then click My Account, Match Email Settings, and down the page move the selection dial to Only within the Project, and click save.

I always set kits to match within the project before the participant gets their results. In the email I send them explaining their results, I tell them that there are two match settings, and they can see their other surname matches at any time by clicking on Advanced Matching, and matching against the whole database. I then explain why these matches are typically irrelevant. Of course, if the participant knows they or someone in their direct male line is adopted, then they would be interested in these other surname matches, and would set their kit to match in the database, and will probably need to upgrade their markers tested to reduce the scope of their matches.

As more people test, everyone will have matches with other surnames. At the time of adoption of surnames, multiple men had the same or close Y-DNA result, and adopted different surnames. Only a small portion of the British Isles has tested, and it is only a matter of time until you have more matches with other surnames, even close or exact matches.

Over a decade ago, it was rare that people had matches with other surnames at 12 markers. As the database grew, this changed, and now having 12 marker matches with other surnames is common. The same is expected to happen with 37 marker results. Some 37 marker results even now have dozens of matches with other surnames, and the number will rise as more people test.

In looking at other surname matches, if you have a match to a single origin surname or one with only a few origins, this is very helpful. For those from other countries trying to determine where to test in the British Isles to find a match, these matches with rare or low frequency surnames with limited geographic origins point you to a general area. Of course, there have been migrations over time. Mapping both your surname and the surname you match which is a single or limited origin can give you a smaller geographic area to begin your hunt for a same surname match in the ancestral country.

As the Group Administrator of a DNA Project, it is probably worth your time to look at the other surname matches for your participants periodically, to see if there is some unknown surname evolution, and to see if there is a match to a single or limited origin surname, which will provide a general location to start for finding a match for your participant to someone with his surname or variant. ■