DNA Tester Beware! Watch Out for These DNA Testing Scams and Sales Tactics

Tips on Avoiding DNA Scams and Getting the Most for Your DNA Dollar

As personal DNA testing increases in popularity, there is also an increased focus from media on the topic of DNA and family history. In addition, you can bet that the opportunists looking to make quick money are coming out of the woodwork! Even the most savvy shopper or knowledgeable genealogist can get taken in on some of these tricks, many of which have increased in their sophistication!

Stay Safe – Use a Reputable DNA Testing Company

- **Always stick with the Big 5 DNA testing companies** if you want to use DNA test data for genealogy and family history research: 23andMe, AncestryDNA, Family Tree DNA, Living DNA and MyHeritage DNA.

- **Beware of "fly by night" companies** that you’ve never heard of or that don’t provide a way to match and connect with other DNA testers on their site. Do your research and check the List of DNA Testing Companies at the International Society of Genetic Genealogy Wiki.

- **Avoid Review Sites on the Internet.** Many of the review sites that you find out on the Web tend to be “gamed” . . . meaning that they accept payment for posting positive reviews or use affiliate links to make income on positively reviewed products (especially without full disclosure as to the affiliate relationship). For reliable reviews of DNA test kits, stick with reputable review sites. See The Best DNA Ancestry Test, a review from the Wirecutter website.
Watch DNA Prices – Not Too Low and Not Too High

Remember that I recently predicted that the lowest price we would see during National DNA Day is $49 USD for a basic autosomal DNA test (and that won’t include shipping)!

- Watch out for super low prices such as $29 USD or $39 USD for a DNA testing kit. Many of these tests are only for the DNA collection materials (spit or swab) and then you are required to pay extra to actually get your results!

Here is an example: While this item from Grant Enterprises via Amazon might look like the 23andMe DNA test kit (the basic Ancestry Service kit, normally $99 USD) now on sale for $59 USD. This vendor is selling the “saliva kit” for $49 USD on Amazon. If you click here or the image below you will see that there is an “extra fee” for lab processing once you send in the sample.

Well, the “saliva kit” is a legitimate, albeit in my opinion “misleading” product sold by 23andMe in several Big Box stores such as Wal-Mart, Best Buy and Target as well as the online stores for these merchants. Click here or the image below to see that Best Buy is selling the exact same “saliva kit” for $29.99 USD.
- **Don't overpay with DNA tests!** The converse of the above warning is just as true. Check out the [AGS Health & Wellness Genetic Test](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B07ZWD6F6B) by Advanced Genomic again via Amazon, priced at an unbelievable $499 USD! There are not many reviews (that should make you suspicious), and one of the critical reviews points out that you are not getting any more information than a lower priced DNA test with health data would provide. Again, you would be better off going with the 23andMe Ancestry Service + Health test, regularly $199 USD (click [HERE](https://www.23andme.com) for latest sale price, as low as $99 USD!).

![AGS Health & Wellness Genetic Test](https://example.com/dna-test.png)

- **A DNA certificate is not worth anything.** Look closely at the [Premium Female DNA Test mtDNA](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B07ZWD6F6B) by DNA Consultants via Amazon, another over-priced test (an amazing $339 USD!). It provides a fancy, authoritative looking certificate that is actually worthless. Big deal, it says you took a DNA test – good for you! And it lists your haplogroup! Wow! These certificates cannot be used legally or to prove any genealogical research. Don’t waste your time and money on them. You would be better off purchasing the [mtFull Sequence test](https://www.familytreedna.com) at Family Tree DNA, regularly $199 USD (click [HERE](https://www.familytreedna.com) for latest sale price, as low as $146 USD!).

![DNA Certificate](https://example.com/dna-certificate.png)
Access to Your DNA Test Results is Important!

You pay good money for a DNA test and you should have easy access to the raw data from the DNA test results.

- **Any reputable DNA testing vendor will provide an easy way** for you to download the raw DNA data and let you keep it to use at other sites. You should never have to pay extra to get your DNA data.

- **Make sure you safeguard your DNA test results.** This includes backing up any DNA data files on your computer and not posting your raw DNA data unless you are familiar with the website (like [GEDmatch](https://gedmatch.com)).

Be Wary of These DNA Test Claims

There are TONS of myths, urban legends and outrageous claims when it comes to DNA testing. Again, the reason? The increasing popularity of at-home DNA testing. See the recent article [DNA Fact or Science Fiction? 6 Genetic Genealogy Myths](https://www.familytreemagazine.com/article/dna-fact-or-science-fiction-6-genetic-genealogy-myths) at Family Tree Magazine.

- **Avoid DNA tests that say they can prove Cherokee or other specific Native American tribe identification.** There is no such technology or DNA test available at this point in time. Some reputable tests, such as AncestryDNA and Family Tree DNA will show Native American ethnicity in your ethnicity estimate although the accuracy of such estimates is in dispute.

  In fact, here is the statement on Native American ethnicity estimates from the AncestryDNA website: “The AncestryDNA test may predict if you are at least partly Native American, which includes some tribes that are indigenous to North America, including the U.S., Canada and Mexico. The results do not currently provide a specific tribal affiliation. (Please note that your AncestryDNA ethnicity results cannot be used as a substitute for legal documentation.)”

  In addition, see [Genetic Markers Not a Valid Test of Native Identity](https://www.familytreemagazine.com/article/genetic-markers-not-a-valid-test-of-native-identity).

- **Paternity DNA tests cannot be used for genealogy and family history research.** If you think hearing “you are NOT the father” will help with genealogical research, then think again. Many of these tests are very low priced ($19.99 USD and up), but don’t provide any real usable data or allow you to match with other DNA testers.

- **A reputable DNA testing company should be able to provide documentation on the science behind its testing methodology.** In addition, that documentation should be peer reviewed! Some DNA tests are making unfounded claims in terms of specific migration routes and locations. Other tests are based on unsound research that has been disputed by the genetic genealogy community. Click [here](https://www.ancestrydna.com/blogs/education) for an example of AncestryDNA’s documentation.
Yes, Virginia, There is DNA Spam!

Keep in mind that when anything becomes “popular” the spammers are sure to try and find opportunities!

- **Verify all emails related to DNA test purchases and results.** Lately we’ve seen many “phishing” emails either verifying the purchase of a DNA test that you never made OR telling you that your DNA test results are ready. If you did in fact purchase a DNA test or are awaiting results, ALWAYS go to the DNA testing company’s website, log in and you should see a notification on the website.

- **Manage Your DNA Test Result Notifications.** Once your DNA test results are ready, the DNA testing company will update you via email when you have new matches with others who have tested (if you gave your consent to be matched). These emails are not spam, per se, but if you are overwhelmed by the frequency, visit the DNA testing company website and change your notification settings.

**Stay Educated and Stay Safe**

In addition, remember, when it comes to DNA products and services, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is! Check out the many FREE DNA education tools and resources at [DNA Bargains](http://DNA Bargains) BEFORE you decide to purchase and take a personal DNA test!

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**PLEASE NOTE:** The post content above contains affiliate links. This means I make a percentage of sales via these links. This does not INCREASE the price you pay as a consumer. It simply supplements my income so I can continue providing as much free genealogy content as possible through my “abundance model.”

**Disclaimer:** All prices and offers are subject to change. Some items may be sold out and have limited inventory. Also check to see if you have automated purchase settings enabled, such as Amazon Buy with 1-Click: it is your responsibility to make sure you are getting the correct price for an item before you check out and finalize the transaction.

**Disclosure statement:** I have material connections with various vendors and organizations. To review the material connections I have in the genealogy industry, please see [Disclosure Statement](http://Disclosure Statement).

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