

# Genogram – a pictorial representation of a family

[Science](#), [Genetics](#)



There has been always a fascination for drawing some sort of connection between the family members. If it is a joint family then the fun in making them doubles. The multiple numbers of connections, their relationships, names and everything makes it an exciting activity for kids. It has this advantage to keep it as a handy tool for the new comers in the family. It helps them to make out the relations and identify people correctly. When one is trying to depict the family structure, size, its members, in the form of a structured format, then it is a simple flowchart or a family tree. But when things go on a higher level, they are more organized with more information in one compact area. Genogram is one such easy tool to get your family a pictorial representation.

Historical background of genogram: The genogram has not a structured or defined history. But whatever facts are available, one can make out that it was somewhere in the late 70s that this term got recognition. After that it just grew in structure, definition and scope. Genogram was not actually the real term used. It was initially the name family diagram and then with evolved features added to it, the name genogram got popular. Coming back to the history and its early usage, it was Dr Murray Bowen who began using this terminology. It was used in the field of medicine and later got spread to other fields too. It was in the 80s that a book concerning this term was published. Later the usage and usefulness led to its widespread usage and became known to everybody. Genogram is this illustration trying to provide every important detail of the family and its members. It is an organized and structured approach towards the family's information.

Requirements of a genogram: Now that one knows what exactly a genogram is, one can get to making it. Since it is a pictorial description of the family and its members, it will require certain symbols to represent the members.

The commonly used symbols and their logics are represented as:

Gender specific symbols: There are two symbols to represent the two genders. A square box represents a male member while a circle depicts a female member. On these a combination of colors, crosses and lines depicts further information of the individual.

Defining relationships: There are a variety of lines with different symbols and signs on it. Each of these lines depict the type of relationship between people. It can depict marriage, divorce, or even hostile relations between two members of the family.

Colors: The wide varieties of colors are used to depict the particular disease the person is expected to develop or is suffering from. Each color is assigned a disease.

Making of a genogram: It is extremely easy to make a genogram when one is aware of the basic information of the family members. One should start with the first person who started the family. One can make the couple by using a simple connecting line between a square and a circle.

Depending upon the level of disease, one can depict it on the shapes.

Secondly one must get to the next generation of the couple. This has to be made with a line coming from the center of the connecting line between the previously drawn. No connecting line has to be drawn between the siblings.

This way one can easily make the whole diagram of the family, representing all the relations and the diseases. This is pretty easy to draw and fun too.

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**Advantages:** This technique has huge advantages owing to the varied uses of this technique. When put down to a list, the advantages are as follows: Easy to remember: Whenever there is a structured format of any piece of information it is always easy to remember for the doctor and the members itself. They can use the information in any manner owing to its usefulness.

**Useful information at a glance:** The availability of correct and useful information in an 'at-a-glance' format makes it extremely helpful during short notices. It makes it useful in case of emergencies as well. Helps in decision making: It is very good while making decisions. The information is also available in one go, so it is extremely advantageous for doctors and whoever uses it. It helps to make informed decisions while considering every possibility.

**Uses:** The uses and area of application include all those fields wherein there is a requirement of the history of the family. It gets the viewer an accurate assumption when such a brief and quick view of the information is possible.

The areas of its application are:

**Medicine:** While making any decision regarding the medical condition of the member, it can be extremely useful. The doctor can predict the behavior and responses to the treatment and medicines. He can get to accurate treatment.

**Counselors:** It is a great tool to find the reason behind any typical behavior of the concerning person. It helps them get to better medicines, understanding

the actual reasons behind some behavior. They can make the tensed relations to better ones.

NGOs: It is of monumental help when NGOs are trying to help any member of the family for the difficult mental condition. The genogram can help them to comprehend clearly the logics and links behind the condition.

## **Conclusion**

A genogram can thus be a very handy and useful tool in modern days to get to accurate decisions. The usefulness, the advantages and the whole concept behind this genogram making is fascinating. This will only help the concerning people and save a lot of further issues and troubles, which may otherwise come up due to incomplete information. It is a great record for the families or persons living alone and not having access to exact information. Also with the availability of software one can easily get a genogram made with the information, relations and lot more detail.