



MARRIAGE & DIVORCE RECORDS, USA

*Is he/she married?
Is he/she divorced?*

by

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I. Overview

How can you find out if somebody's been married or divorced in the U.S.A.?

That's the subject of this report.

First, though, it's important to recognize that you may not always be able to determine someone's marriage or divorce status in the United States with 100% certainty. Marriage and divorce records are geographically scattered in states and counties throughout the country.. There are 50 states (plus the District of Columbia) and over 3,200 counties. Your subject may have gotten married in any of these jurisdictions.

Of course, it would be nice if you could just enter someone's name or social security number into a national database and find out if that person is married or divorced, but, unfortunately, there is no such database. There is no national repository of marriage or divorce records in the United States.

However, there are many state and county databases you can search, oftentimes online. These searches are confidential (he/she won't know you checked), and, since they utilize government databases of public information, they're free or nearly free, and completely open to the public.

So if you know where your subject has lived, you can check in those jurisdictions (states/counties) to see if there are marriage or divorce records in his/her name. To increase your confidence level, you can also quickly check some other areas, such as Clark County NV (where thousands of couples get married every year), and perhaps one or two additional states, say, the state where you know he once lived (and established residency) while working on a long-term contract or while on an extended vacation.

One other possibility: if you know your subject's social security number, that number may indicate where he grew up and, perhaps, where he got married. The first three numbers of the SSN reveal where the SSN was issued. You can enter these numbers at <http://www.claimspages.com/tools/ssn.asp> to determine this geographic area.

The above process will provide a fairly reliable indication of marital status. Most people get married in the county and state where they have been living. Same for divorce. If you got married in California and live there, that is where you will file for a divorce.

So even though there's no national repository of marriage/divorce records, you can still do a pretty good job of researching someone's marital status quickly and easily on your own -- if you have access to the URL's of searchable government websites that index marriage/divorce info.

As a matter of fact, you do -- those URL's are all provided in this report. (See our comprehensive list of searchable marriage and divorce records online databases, [below](#).)

Unfortunately, many counties and states don't maintain searchable databases. What do you do then?

There are several steps you can take in that case. First, you can call the county where he/she lives or has lived and ask for a name search while you wait. A full list of all 3200 U.S. counties is provided in this report, with phone numbers for each. See BackgroundCheckGateway.com/statelist.html.

If you want to cast a wider net, or if you don't know which county the event may have taken place in, you can also request that the state conduct a name search for you. Many states will do so if you follow their instructions for making the request, which may mean filling out a state-provided form or sending it to them by mail or fax. (A few will even do the search while you wait on the phone.) See [below](#) for a list of all states and their contact information.

Background Checks

Finally, to increase your confidence level to the maximum, you can run a basic public-records background check. Many public records indicate marital status, names of relatives, past and present occupants of your subject's residence, etc.

Before the Internet came along it was virtually impossible to run a background check yourself. First of all, you probably wouldn't have had any idea how to go about it. But even if you did, the public records you'd have needed would have been in widely-dispersed state and county offices -- extremely difficult to access.

As a result, you'd have probably had to hire a private investigator, with a \$1000+ price tag.

Nowadays, the situation is a lot different. You can run a background check yourself using Internet resources

(mostly government websites). Our own website, BackgroundCheckGateway.com, takes you through the entire process step-by-step, and it's free. Just click on "Step 1" on the homepage to get started doing a background check. It's not at all difficult.

There's one catch, though -- if you're in a hurry, doing it yourself may not be the way to go.

In that case, consider using our fee-based service, eBackgroundCheck.net. We have access to proprietary databases which enable us to produce a finished report in 2-3 business days. We upload the finished report to a secure web page, then email you the password. The report is fully confidential and legally compliant.

Summing Up

Summing up, the basic marital-status research process is this:

First, find out where your subject has resided for the past 5-10 years or more.

Second, check for marriage/divorce records at the county level in the counties where he/she has lived.

Third, if nothing was found at the county level, consider checking for marriage/divorce records at the state level.

Fourth, for further confirmation (and to learn much more about your subject) consider running a basic public-records background check. You can do the research yourself using our instructional website, BackgroundCheckGateway.com, or for quicker results you can order our fee-based report, eBackgroundCheck.net.

II. Why Research Somebody's Marital Status?

Determining the marital status of a potential life partner is not a frivolous thing to do -- it's vitally important.

If you are considering entering into a serious relationship with someone it's essential to know if that person is telling the truth about his/her marital status. The emotional cost of finding out later that the person is married (or is not divorced as he/she has claimed) can be huge. There are potential financial costs, too. For example, if you should marry someone who has been delinquent on child support payments from a former marriage (e.g., a marriage he/she didn't tell you about), you may find yourself jointly liable for those payments.

As is well-known, men are more prone to lie about their marital status than women. However, nowadays, both sexes are wise to check out the marital status of potential long-term partners or spouses. As said, the Internet has made the process much easier than it used to be. It's no longer necessary to personally visit courthouses and search for marriage records. Many states and counties now provide marriage/divorce records on public websites; and those which don't may provide this information by phone.

In this report, you'll learn in detail how to research this vital information quickly and with a minimum of time and effort. And if you wish to carry your research further, our do-it-yourself [Background Check Gateway](#) site shows you how to conduct a basic public-records background check on your own for free.

A WORD OF CAUTION: Today, innumerable websites and online information providers promise to answer the question "Is he (or she) married?" for a fee. Be sure to read the fine print. Inevitably you'll find that their coverage is limited to a few states, like Florida and Texas, which provide online searchable marriage/divorce web pages. But access to those states' marriage/divorce web pages is also provided [below](#) -- why pay someone to search them for you? You can check your subject's name in those states, plus many other areas as well, using the resources provided in this report. And it's all free (except in some cases a modest government fee is charged)..

You can go straight to [Section VIII](#) and start your research, if you wish. But we recommend that before jumping in you read through the remainder of this report (Sections III through VI) to gain a better understanding of U.S. marriage/divorce records, how they're maintained and accessed, and the terminology used. You'll have more confidence in the results of your research if you take a few minutes to learn the basics.

III. Marriage and Divorce Records -- The Basics

A. Marriage Records

Marriage licenses are maintained at the county level. However, most states can search for and issue marriage certificates (a document certifying that a marriage has taken place, not the same as a marriage license, which is obtained prior to the marriage).

It might seem that the easiest way to search for a marriage record would be to search the state's index of marriages, using the groom's name or bride's maiden name, plus some other identifier, like date of birth. In fact, you can do it this way in a few states, like Texas, Florida, Maine, and Colorado. Unfortunately, most states don't maintain online repositories of marriage records. You have to go to the county level. In [Section VIII](#), we've provided links to both state and county web pages which allow you to name search for marriage records.

If no searchable web pages are available for the jurisdiction you're searching, you'll need to call the county and request a name search by phone.

Which specific county office should you call?

Marriage record indexes are maintained by a variety of offices in the nation's counties. In most cases, you'll need the Recorder's Office; in some cases, it'll be the Family Court, and in a few rural counties, it's the "Filing Office". The switchboard operator should be able to direct you to the office you need. Just tell him/her, "I would like to have a marriage records search conducted. What office can do that for me?"

You can find telephone numbers for the county or counties you need to call at our website, <http://www.BackgroundCheckGateway.com/statelist.html>.

Note: If you need to find out what county a given city is in, go to [NACO.org](http://www.naco.org) and click on "About Counties," then on "Data & Demographics."

B. Divorce Records

Across the U.S., divorce cases are handled in various courts in the various jurisdictions. In some, they're handled in Superior or Probate Court, in others, in Family Court. Just ask the county telephone operator for the proper office to determine if a given individual has been divorced in their county.

As in the case of marriage records, a few states maintain statewide divorce indexes. At present, these are Texas, Florida, Nevada and Colorado. As more become available in the future, we'll add them to this report. If you're searching for a divorce filing in a state other than those few, you need to begin your search at the county level.

Again, the easiest way to do this may be online, using the county website. We've included a listing of all the divorce-related county websites and web pages we could find in [Section VIII](#), below. If the county you need isn't listed, then try calling them and requesting a name search. The clerk should be able to run a computer search while you wait. You can get the county's telephone number at BackgroundCheckGateway.com/statelist.html.

Note: If you need to find out what county a given city is in, go to NACO.org and click on "About Counties," then on "Data & Demographics."

C. Using VitalChek.com

Another way to search for marriage and divorce records is to use VitalChek.com, which is a private company utilized by most U.S. states and counties as their designated contractor for the provision of marriage/divorce certificates.

However VitalChek is somewhat expensive and requires, in many cases, that you provide the information you're searching for -- i.e, the name of the bride and groom and date and place of the marriage or divorce. Their business is really not marriage or divorce records searching; it's to provide certified copies of marriage or divorce records. Even so, they can be useful because, in some jurisdictions, they will conduct a search even if you don't know both the bride and groom's name or exact date of marriage or divorce (a span of years may be acceptable).

But there may be another restriction, which is that for many jurisdictions, a "tangible interest" must be demonstrated, meaning you must be a close relation of the bride or groom (or former wife or husband), or be their legally-designated representative.

Despite all these reservations, VitalCheck may be worth looking into if your own research isn't productive, or perhaps as a back-up to your own findings.

D. Verifying Your Subject's Identity and Finding Past Addresses

Are you certain your prospective date or partner or spouse is who he/she claims to be?

If not, you may need to do a little basic identity verification before you start your research.

It's useless to search for marriage records or a divorce decree for "James Peterson" if his real name turns out to be "James Williams."

Identity verification can range from simple to complex. Complex would involve biometric/biological identification methods such as fingerprints, eye striations, and DNA. Obviously, you need to concentrate on simple.

You know his or her name, or at least the name you were told. Does this name appear in the telephone directory or an online directory like whowhere.com, corresponding to the address you were given? If so, you might try calling the telephone number and see if he/she answers.

That's a pretty good rough-and-ready way to verify the person's identity.

But you also need to know where the person has lived for the past five to ten years or more so that you can check for marriage or divorce records in those jurisdictions. For example, if you want to check for marriage records, and your subject has lived in Chicago for the past year and Cincinnati for the seven years prior to that, you would then check Cook County IL and Hamilton County OH. Since many people get married in Las Vegas, you'd probably also check Clark County NV as well (Clark County maintains an easy-to-use website). If no marriage records show up in any of these areas, that is a pretty good indication he is not married (though you might wish to back up this conclusion using other methods, as discussed below).

Casual conversation is often the easiest way to find out where your subject has lived. Internet research is another.

Our free website, BackgroundCheckGateway.com, shows you how to check into the background of any U.S. citizen, using free public records (often via online sources).

IV. A Recap: Some Facts You Need to Know

Here again are the basic facts you need to know about marriage record searching --

1. Marriage licenses are maintained at the county level. However, most states issue marriage certificates.

2. Marriage record indexes (i.e., simple lists of marriage records by the parties' names) usually provide the info you're looking for. You just want to know if the person is married. You don't need an official marriage certificate. You'll find that there are websites (e.g., VitalChek.com) set up primarily to provide certificates, mainly for legal use by the parties themselves.

But to use such sites you may need to be one of the parties (husband or wife), or else a relative or lawyer of the parties, and you may need to know when the marriage took place and where. Obviously, if you knew all this, you wouldn't be conducting your research in the first place.

3. Marriage record indexes are maintained by a variety of offices in the nation's counties. In most cases, you'll need the Recorder's Office; in some case, it's the Family Court; and in a few rural counties it's the "Filing Office." The best strategy, if you place a call to a county, is to ask the telephone operator to direct you to the proper office. In general, you'll find county government workers to be very helpful.

4. Obviously, you'll need to search in the person's present state/county of residence. You should also search past states/counties of residence. So how do you determine where he or she has lived in the past?. Try to encourage the person to talk about himself, and reveal where he's lived in the past, then search records in those areas. Alternatively, you can run a basic public-records background check, either doing the research yourself, using our free website, BackgroundCheckGateway.com, or you can use our fee-based service E-BackgroundCheck.net.

Here are the basic facts you need to know about searching for divorce records --

1. Divorce cases are handled in different courts in different jurisdictions. In some, it's Superior or Probate Court, in others it's Family Court. Ask the county telephone operator for the proper office to determine if a given individual has been divorced in their county.

2. As in researching marriage records, you must first know where the event occurred. In this case, though, it's easy -- or should be. Just ask your subject to tell you. After all, the person is claiming he/she "got divorced." So it's reasonable to ask, "Where?" Then simply contact that county to determine if there are divorce filings there. (Alternatively, you can search all states/counties corresponding to his/her address history.)

3. Again, as in the case of marriage records, some states/counties provide websites that index this info, some don't. Scan our list of links [below](#) -- if the jurisdiction you need isn't listed you'll have to call the county and ask the clerk to do a name search. For a list of counties and their phone numbers, go to BackgroundCheckGateway.com/statelist.html.

V. Step-By-Step Research Process

Now let's frame this in a step-by-step format covering both marriage and divorce records searching.

Step 1: Determine your subject's address history

Since marriage/divorce records are maintained by local government jurisdictions (state/county) you need to determine your subject's current address and also the state, county, or city he's lived in for the past seven to ten years or more (or at the time you think he would have gotten married). You'll then search marriage/divorce records in all these jurisdictions.

Fortunately, though people move around a lot nowadays, most move within the same state, so hopefully you will only have one or two jurisdictions to search.

Keep in mind, though, that many people -- from virtually all social strata -- get married in Las Vegas (Clark County NV), so you should be sure to include that jurisdiction in your search. Clark County maintains an easy-to-use website (see [below](#)).

How can you find out where your subject has lived in the past? Try to get him/her to talk about his past a little.

Inevitably, place names will crop up. Ask him where he went to college. If it's Michigan State, he's very probably from Michigan, possibly Lansing. Where has he/she worked? If he's worked for Microsoft, he may well have lived in Seattle. Ask him how long he was there. If the answer is a few years, you may already have a good idea of where to check for marriage/divorce records.

Another way to derive an address history is to simply hire an information professional to run a basic background check for you. Our [E-BackgroundCheck](#) report provides an address history and much additional public info that will be of interest to you.

What about divorce records? In this case you're searching for court filings, usually at the Superior Court level. However, if your subject claims to be divorced, there's usually no great mystery about where he/she obtained the divorce -- just ask.

Step 2: Search Online

You're searching for a particular kind of public record -- a marriage record or a divorce filing.

Note that, if marriage info is your goal, you're not interested in obtaining a marriage certificate. You only want to know if your subject is married. You want information, not piece of paper from the state, certified or otherwise.

Although in most cases it's best to begin a public records search by calling the appropriate government office, in the case of a marriage/divorce records search, you should begin online, with the government agency's website, if one exists.

If the state doesn't have a website that lists marriage records or divorce filings by name, maybe the county does.

How do you find out what websites are available? Check our comprehensive listing [below](#).

What if your subject might have gotten married in a foreign country? In that case, you'll need to contact the foreign country's embassy or consulate to get instructions on how to search for marriage records. To locate the appropriate consulate office, go to: <http://www.state.gov/s/cpr/rls/fco/>.

If you can't find the information you need online, go to Step 3, below to continue your research offline.

Click [Here](#) to get started with your online searches.

Step 3: Search Offline

Many states and counties in the U.S. still don't provide marriage/divorce information online (though more and more are making the records available online all the time). In most of the cases where there's no online info, you can still get your search done quickly by simply calling the county office and requesting the clerk to do it for you while you wait.

You are much less likely to be able to get information from state offices this way. They are often overwhelmed with callers. If you call your state's Department of Vital Statistics, for example, you may find yourself caught in voice mail jail listening to taped instructions on how to order a certified marriage certificate. But, again, you don't want a marriage certificate, you want information on whether your subject has gotten married. So calls to the state are less likely to be productive.

Start by calling the county office. Just tell the telephone operator what you need, which is a name search of past years' marriage or divorce records. She'll refer you to the right place. For marriage info, the county clerk can search computer records by name of groom or maiden name of bride over a span of years, say ten years, and tell you if anyone with the given name was married in that county during that time period. (Obviously, if your subject has a common name, you should have other identifiers, like middle initial or date of birth or at least present age.) For divorce filings, a clerk at the courthouse may also be able to do a quick search for you while you wait.

You can find telephone numbers for every county in the U.S. in our website, BackgroundCheckGateway.com/statelist.html.

Some counties won't provide a telephone search, but will instead require that you submit your request to them in writing, perhaps with a small fee. If this happens, ask the clerk for the correct mailing address, the amount of the fee, and then send a letter with a check and a stamped self-addressed envelope enclosed.

Here's a SAMPLE LETTER:

(date)

Dear Sir/Madam:

Please search marriage [divorce] records in your county during the time period January 1990 to present to determine if a person with the name Robert N. Applegate was married [divorced] there during that period. If so, please provide any available details. I am enclosing a check for your specified fee of \$10 to cover the cost of this search. A self addressed-stamped envelope is enclosed for your response.

Thank you for your assistance.

(signed)

Ann Richards

Possibly you can get expedited service by faxing the request with a credit card number -- you might want to ask the clerk about this.

Note that it may also be possible to ask the state to run a statewide search over a given span of years. As said, it can be difficult to order a statewide search by phone. But all the states provide online info on how to order marriage/divorce

searches from them by mail or fax. See [Section IX, Informational State Websites](#), below. It may take a couple weeks, or even longer, to get your results from these state searches.

Step 4: Check for Marriage Announcements (Optional)

This step is strictly optional but it's worth mentioning because, thanks to the Internet, it's now easy to check local papers for past marriage announcements, such as engagement announcements and accounts of marriage ceremonies and receptions.

The catch is that this is not a reliable way to determine someone's marital status since, obviously, most engagements and marriages don't get reported in the local papers. Think of it as a back-up to your other research, one more potentially useful tool in your tool kit.

There are a number of Internet websites which can run instant name searches for you for free. One of the best is [NewsLibrary.com](#). Just click on the state or region where your subject lives or has lived, and enter his/her name in quotes -- hopefully, it's a fairly uncommon name. You can choose the time span for the search, such as Past Year, or "All Documents," meaning the search goes back seven years.

[NewsLibrary.com](#) will then provide headlines of all articles found which contain the name you've submitted. You can scan them, looking for marriage announcements. If you find one, you can order the full article for a modest fee.

If you don't find the local paper you need in [NewsLibrary.com](#), try [Newspapers.com](#). It's harder to run searches using this site (you have to use each newspaper's archives search feature) but it has a lot more papers.

Another, relatively new, news resource worth mentioning is [SmallTownPapers.com](#), which has collected a searchable database of small town papers, with page images, as far back as the 1800's.

Step 5. Run a basic public-records background check

Why run a background check?

A background check will access a wide variety of public records which may turn up references to a spouse or to children. Also, it will provide much additional information about your subject, including a criminal records search, real estate ownership, bankruptcies, civil judgments, and much more.

Is a background check an invasion of your subject's privacy? No, because you will be accessing only public information.

You will not attempt to access credit information, medical information, or any other private (nonpublic) information.

And your searches will be confidential -- your subject won't know he/she has been checked out.

Unlike in many countries, public records are still open and fairly comprehensive in the U.S.

State and local governments expend huge resources to compile and maintain these records for you to use to protect yourself from fraud, political favoritism, and other forms of abuse. Don't be shy about making use of them.

There are two ways to run a basic public-records background check. One is to do the research yourself, the other is to pay somebody else to do it.

Our company, Washington Research Associates Inc., has developed a website which makes it easier than it's ever been to do your own free background check. Go to BackgroundCheckGateway.com and click on "Step 1" to be taken through a step-by-step process of conducting a free public-records background check.

As you'll see, there are many public records which indicate marital status.

For example, suppose you check your subject's mortgage information through the County Clerk's office and find that his address shows a mortgage taken out by "Mr. and Mrs. Applegate, husband and wife." That pretty well answers your question.

However, if contacting government offices is not your idea of an great way to spend your leisure time, you may want to consider using our fee-based report, [E-BackgroundCheck](#). Its "Possible Relatives" section includes any present or past spouse. And it provides a complete public-records report on your subject (see web page for details and cost).. The report takes 2-3 business days to complete. We then upload it to a secure web page and email you the password. The report is confidential, meaning your subject will not know he/she has been "backgrounded."

VI. Genealogical Research

For those interested in genealogical research, here's some basic information on searching for historical marriage/divorce records in the U.S. (If genealogy is not of interest to you please skip to [Section VII.](#))

American genealogical records associated with marriage include: the consent to marry, marriage bonds, the marriage license, and any prenuptial agreements.

Different types of records were created in different periods and regions, depending on customs and the jurisdictions responsible for maintaining the records of marriage and enforcing the laws surrounding them.

Consent to Marry Documents - In early periods, the father of the underage person gave consent, especially in southern states. Most states enacted laws requiring that men be seventeen and women fourteen to get married. In the twentieth century ages were raised in most states. There is no formal repository for Consent to Marry documents and these are now only rarely found.

Marriage Bonds - Primarily in southern states, until well into the twentieth century, marriage bonds were posted prior to the issuing of a license. Bonds were posted by the groom or his father to defray the costs of litigation in the event the marriage was nullified.

Marriage Licenses - Marriage license applications were recorded in a county recorder book designed exclusively for this purpose. Note that application for or granting of a license is not proof that a marriage occurred. It means only that the couple sought or received a license to marry.

Prenuptial Agreements or Contracts - Prenuptial agreements and contracts are uncommon in early twentieth-century America but they were widely used in Louisiana during the colonial period to protect the property of both bride and groom.

PROOF OF MARRIAGE - Historically, there are three official records that verify that a marriage actually took place: a marriage return (notation) recorded in a civil register, an entry of marriage in a church register, and a certificate given to the couple by the individual who performed the ceremony.

In the twentieth century, many states began to require that a record of the marriage be transferred from the county to the state level. Thus at present it is sometimes

possible to search a statewide index, either online or by calling or writing the state Vital Statistics Office.

According to the website Ancestry.com, "There is no national historical marriage index for the United States, but when the place of marriage is not known, one possible search is the International Genealogical Index (www.familysearch.org)."

Another possible source of marriage information is local and city newspapers, which have historically carried lists of persons who applied for marriage licenses and reported on weddings, especially of local notables. Even today, as indicated above, engagement announcements are carried in most local papers, and can be searched using a number of Internet sites, such as NewsLibrary.com.

VII. Questions And Answers

Q: In a nutshell, how do I find out if my boyfriend is married? or divorced?

A: This is the subject of Parts I - IV of this report (above). But to summarize the process, you must first determine where he lives and where he has lived in the fairly recent past (his address history). Second, you access appropriate government websites to see if marriage (or divorce) records exist in those areas where he's lived (see [Part VIII](#), below.) If there are no such websites currently available, then you'll need to call or write to the county courthouses in the areas where he's lived. Alternatively, you can run a background check on him -- either free, using [BackgroundCheckGateway.com](#) or our fee-based report, [E-BackgroundCheck](#).

Q. Where are divorce records stored?

A. Divorce records are stored at both the state and the county level but access at the state level is not available in all states. Some states have repositories that contain all the county records stored in the state. Other states have no central record repository for divorce records, and they have to be obtained from the local county courthouse where the divorce was filed and granted. Results can usually be obtained in 2 to 9 business days, but some states and counties are not computerized, have limited personnel, and will only accept applications by mail. In those situations, results can take up to three weeks.

Q. What is the difference between a marriage certificate and a marriage license?

A. A marriage certificate certifies that a marriage took place; a license, which must be obtained prior to the marriage, certifies that the couple applied for and met the state's requirements for marriage, but it does not prove that the marriage actually occurred. Practically speaking, however, a license is a strong indicator that a marriage did take place.

Q. How do I request copies of a marriage certificate?

A. Requirements vary by state. In most states, you would obtain the certificate through the Vital Records Office or some similar office. You can obtain the certificate in person, by mail, or by fax. Identification is required. Some states will provide certified copies of certificates only to the parties to the marriage themselves, their immediate family members, or their legal/financial representatives. (However it may be possible to obtain an uncertified copy if you do not meet those requirements.) Some states require that you provide the name of both bride and

groom, date and place of marriage. Others will search based on partial information. The easiest way to obtain a marriage certificate is online, using the website VitalChek.com. This site provides ordering requirements and fees for all states.

Q. What information will be on a marriage certificate?

A. An uncertified copy of a marriage certificate will be a photocopy on plain, white paper of the original document. A certified copy will be a photocopy on security paper of the original document. The information provided on a marriage certificate typically includes the name and birthplace of the husband and wife, and the date and place of marriage. Some certificates include additional information such as the occupations and addresses of the husband and wife.

Q. How do I find information on the Internet about obtaining a marriage certificate?

A. Go to <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/howto/w2w/w2welcom.htm>

Q. How do I find information on obtaining marriage certificates from other countries?

A. For information on obtaining certificates from other countries, contact the embassy or the nearest consulate in the U.S. for the country in which the marriage occurred. Addresses and telephone numbers for consular offices in the U.S. can be found on the Internet at <http://www.state.gov/s/cpr/rls/fco/>.

Q. What is the difference between a divorce decree and a divorce record?

A. A divorce decree is the court's ruling summarizing the relative rights and duties of the parties. It is a final summary document stating the basic information about the divorce, the parties involved, the date of divorce, case number, the terms that the parties have agreed to, etc. A divorce record consists of all of the legal documents filed in a divorce. For a complex divorce settlement the divorce record can be hundreds of pages long.

Q. What is a marriage dispensation?

A. This term refers to a relaxation of the Catholic Church's canon law requirements for a valid marriage, and is usually granted by the parish bishop. Types of dispensations include mixed religion (a marriage between a Catholic and a Protestant), and consanguinity (marriage between third cousins or any nearer degree of kindred). Although dispensations are unusual at present, dispensation records (maintained by Catholic dioceses) are a favorite tool of genealogists for researching ancestral roots.

VIII. Online Resources

A. Online Marriage Records (Searchable)

If the jurisdiction you need to search doesn't have a searchable site listed below, try [calling the county](#) to request a name search, or go to the [Informational Websites](#) section to learn how to request that the state conduct a search for you.

Alabama

- [Autauga County Marriage Search](#)
- [Baldwin County Marriages](#)
- [Mobile County Marriage Search \(Bride\)](#)
- [Mobile County Marriage Search \(Groom\)](#)
- [Montgomery County Marriage Search](#)
- [Shelby County Marriage Search](#) (early)
- [Shelby County Marriage Search](#) (1970-current)
- [Tuscaloosa County Marriage Search](#)

California Marriage Search I

California Marriage Search II (1949-1985)

- [Contra Costa County Marriage Records](#)
- [El Dorado County Marriage Search](#)
- [Fresno County Marriage Search](#)
- [Kern County Marriages](#)
- [Marin County Marriage Search](#)
- [Nevada County Marriage Records](#)
- [Placer County Marriage Search](#)
- [San Francisco County \(limited info\)](#)
- [Stanislaus County Marriage Records](#)
- [Trinity County Marriage Search](#) {use "vital" for username}
- [Yolo County Marriage Records](#)

Canadian Marriage Search

- [Victoria Marriage Search](#)

Colorado Marriage Search I

Colorado Marriage Search II [fee]

- [Douglas County Marriage Licenses](#)
- [Larimer County Marriage Search](#)
- [Pitkin County Marriages](#)

- [Saguache County Marriage Search](#)

Connecticut

- [Rocky Hill City Marriage Search](#) {Hartford Co.}

Delaware

- [New Castle County](#)

Florida Marriage Search

- [Alachua County Early Marriage Search](#)
- [Alachua County Recent Marriage Search](#)
- [Burlington Area Marriage Search](#)
- [Clay County Marriage Search](#)
- [Escambia County Marriage Search](#)
- [Flagler County Marriage Records](#)
- [Gilchrist County Marriage Records](#)
- [Hernando County Marriage Search](#)
- [Leon County Marriage Search](#)
- [Manatee County Marriage Search](#)
- [Marion County Marriage Search](#)
- [Okaloosa County](#)
- [Palm Beach County Marriage Search](#)
- [Pasco County Marriage Search](#)
- [Pinellas County Marriages](#)
- [Santa Rosa County Marriage Records](#)
- [Sarasota County Marriage Search](#)
- [Seminole County Marriage Records](#)
- [St. Lucie County Marriage Records](#)
- [Suwannee County Marriage Records](#)

Georgia

- [Camden & Charlton Counties Marriage Database](#)

Indiana

- [Elkhart County Records](#)
- [Fulton County Marriage Search \(Akron, IN\)](#)
- [Marion County Civil Searches](#)
- [Montgomery County Marriage Search](#)

Iowa

- [Story County Marriage Search](#)
- [Van Buren County Marriage Search](#)

Kansas

- [Anderson County Marriage Records](#)
- [Coffey County Marriage Records](#)
- [Franklin County Marriage Records](#)

- [Johnson County Marriage Database](#)
- [Osage County Marriage Records](#)

Kentucky Marriage Search

Kentucky Marriage Records (1973-2000)

- [Hardin County Marriages](#)
- [Kenton County Marriage Records \(fee based\)](#)

Louisiana

- [Caddo Parish](#)
- [St. Tammany Parish Marriage Licenses](#)
- [Tangipahoa Parish \[fee\]](#)

Maine Marriage Index

Michigan

- [Barry County Marriage Search](#)
- [Clarveloix County Marriages \[unofficial\]](#)
- [Eaton County Marriages \[only back to May, 2004\]](#)
- [Emmet County Marriages](#)
- [Genesee County Marriage Search](#)
- [Ingham County Marriage Records](#)
- [Grand Traverse Marriage Records](#)
- [Kent County Marriage Records](#)
- [Saginaw County Marriage Search](#)
- [Washtenaw County Marriages](#)

Mississippi

- [Adams County Marriage Licenses \[fee\]](#)
- [Harrison County Marriage Search](#)
- [Pike County Marriage Records](#)

Missouri

- [Boone County Marriage Search](#)
- [Jackson County Marriage Search](#)

Nebraska

- [Douglas County Marriage Search](#)

Nevada

- [Carson City Marriage Records](#)
- [Clark County Marriage Search](#)

New York

- [Ulster County Marriage Search](#)

North Carolina

- [Buncomb County Marriages](#)
- [Caldwell County Marriages](#)
- [Dare County Recorded Documents](#)
- [Duplin County Marriages](#)
- [Guilford County Marriages](#)
- [Harnett County Marriages](#)
- [Iredell County Marriages](#)
- [New Hanover County](#)

North Dakota

- [Cass County Marriage Search](#)

Ohio

- [Cuyahoga County Marriage Search](#)
- [Hamilton County Marriage Search](#)
- [Montgomery County Court Cases](#)
- [Wood County Marriages](#)

Pennsylvania

- [Armstrong County Marriage Records \[fee\]](#)
- [Bedford County Marriages \[fee\]](#)
- [Blair County Marriages \[fee\]](#)
- [Butler County Marriages \[fee\]](#)
- [Cambria County Marriages \[fee\]](#)
- [Clarion County Marriages \[fee\]](#)
- [Columbia County Marriage Search](#)
- [Cumberland County Marriages \[fee\]](#)
- [Erie County Marriages \[fee\]](#)
- [Fayette County Marriages \[fee\]](#)
- [Huntingdon County Marriages](#)
- [Juniata County Marriages \[fee\]](#)
- [Mifflin County Marriages\[fee\]](#)
- [Montour County Marriages \[fee\]](#)
- [Pike County Marriages\[fee\]](#)
- [Potter County Marriages \[fee\]](#)
- [Monroe County Marriages \[fee\]](#)
- [Schuylkill County Marriage Info](#)
- [Westmoreland County Marriage Search](#)

Rhode Island

South Carolina

- [Anderson County Marriage Search](#)
- [Charleston County Marriages](#)
- [Richland County Marriage Search](#)

Tennessee

- [Lincoln County Marriage Search](#)
- [Shelby County Public Records & Notices](#)

Texas Marriage Search I [unofficial]

Texas Marriage Search II [unofficial]

Texas Marriages [download]

- [Colorado County](#)
- [Eastland County](#)
- [Ector County Marriage Search](#)
- [El Paso County Marriage Search](#)
- [Fort Bend County Marriage Search](#)
- [Gregg County Marriage Search](#)
- [Harris County Marriage Search](#)
- [Jefferson County Marriage Search](#)
- [Randall County Marriages](#)
- [Refugio County Marriages](#)
- [Tarrant County](#)
- [Travis County Marriages](#)
- [Winkler County Marriages](#)

Utah

- [Wasatch County Marriages](#)
- [Weber County Marriage Search](#)

Virginia

- [Fredericksburg Marriage Search](#) (to 1957 only)

Washington

- [King County Marriage Search](#)
- [Pierce County Marriages](#)
- [Snohomish County](#)

Wisconsin

- [Waukesha County Marriages](#)
- [Winnebago County Marriages](#)

B. Online Divorce Records (Searchable)

If the jurisdiction you need to search doesn't have a searchable site listed below, try [calling the county](#) to request a name search, or go to the [Informational Websites](#) section to learn how to request that the state conduct a search for you.

ALABAMA DIVORCE RECORDS

ALASKA

- [Fairbanks \(City\) Divorce Records](#)

CALIFORNIA

- [Riverside County Court Records](#)
- [San Diego County Court Records](#)

COLORADO DIVORCE RECORDS

- [Park County Divorce Records \(1957 - 1974\)](#)
- [Pitkin County Divorce Records \(1931 - 1964\)](#)

FLORIDA DIVORCE RECORDS

- [DeSoto County Divorce Records](#)
- [Hernando County Divorces](#)
- [Lake County Divorce Records](#)
- [Manatee County Divorce Records](#)
- [Orange County Divorce Records](#)
- [Osceola County Divorces](#)
- [Volusia County Divorces](#)

GEORGIA

ILLINOIS DIVORCE RECORDS

- [DeKalb County Court Records \[fee\]](#)
- [Kane County Court Records \[fee\]](#)
- [Kendall County Court Records \[fee\]](#)
- [Macon County Court Records](#)
- [Madison County Court Records \[fee\]](#)
- [Ogle County Court Records](#)
- [Sangamon County Divorces](#)
- [Will County Court Records \[fee\]](#)
- [Winnebago County Court Records \[fee\]](#)

INDIANA

- [Howard County Vital Records](#)

KENTUCKY DIVORCE INDEX

LOUISIANA

- [Orleans Parish \[genealogical\]](#)

MICHIGAN

- [Eaton County Divorces \[back to May 2004\]](#)
- [Macomb County Divorces](#)

MISSISSIPPI

- [Harrison County Court Dockets](#)

NEVADA

- [Clark County Divorce Cases](#)

OHIO

- [Hancock County Clerk of Courts](#)
- [Lawrence County Divorces](#)
- [Montgomery County Divorces](#)
- [Trumbull County Court Records](#)
- [Tuscarawas County Court Records](#)
- [Union County Court Records](#)

TEXAS DIVORCE SEARCH [unofficial]

TEXAS DIVORCE SEARCH [download]

- [Collin County Divorces](#)
- [Colorado County Divorces \[unofficial\]](#)
- [Eastland County Divorces](#)
- [Refugio County](#)

WISCONSIN

- [La Crosse County Divorces](#)

IX. Informational State Websites (Not Searchable)

Most states maintain web pages (see below) which provide information on how to order searches for marriage/divorce records within their state at both the state and county levels.

In many cases, you'll need to know the names of the parties and date and place of the event, which is not useful to you if your purpose is to determine if there's been a marriage or divorce.

However, many states will conduct a name search based on limited information, such as the groom's name and a span of years during which the marriage/divorce may have occurred. Some will conduct this search if you request it, even though it's not indicated on their website that they offer this service, so it's best to call and ask if you're not sure.

Also see, [NATIONAL CENTER FOR HEALTH STATISTICS](#) for an alternative source of state-by-state information. However, this site provides no telephone numbers. If you wish to call the state offices, the telephone numbers are provided below, together with recent fee information for requesting record searches.

Alabama

Alabama Center for Health Statistics
P.O. Box 5625
Montgomery, AL 36103-5625
(334) 206-5418

[More info](#)

Search Fee: \$12

Alaska

Alaska Department of Health & Social Services
P.O. Box 110675
Juneau, AK 99811-0675
(907) 465-3392
Fax: (907) 465-3618

[More info](#)

Search Fee: \$15

Arizona - Contact county.

Go to [Background Check Gateway](#) and scroll down to "Public Information Available at the County Level."

Arkansas

Arkansas Department of Health
Division of Vital Records
4815 W. Markham St., Slot 44
Little Rock, AR 72205-3867
(501) 661-2174

[More info](#)

Search Fee: \$10.00

California (marriage records 1905-1985, contact county for more recent information.

Go to [Background Check Gateway](#) and scroll down to "Public Information Available at the County Level."

Department of Health Services
Office of Vital Records
P.O. Box 997410
Sacramento, CA 96899
(916) 445-2684.

[More info](#)

Search Fee: \$13 for each decade searched

Colorado (marriage records 1974-present only, otherwise contact [county.](#))

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
Vital Records Office
4300 Cherry Creek Drive South
Denver, CO 80246-1530
(303) 756-4464

[More info](#)

Search Fee: \$15

Connecticut - Contact [county.](#)

Delaware

Division of Public Health
Office of Vital Statistics
P.O. Box 637
Dover, DE 19903
(302) 739-4549
Search Fee: \$10

District of Columbia

DC Superior Court,
Room 4485
500 Indiana Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 879-4840

Search Fee: \$10

Florida

Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services
Office of Vital Statistics
P.O. Box 210
1217 Pearl Street
Jacksonville, FL 32231
(904) 359-6900 ext. 9000
Fax: (904) 359-6993

[More info](#)

Search Fee: \$5 for first name searched

Georgia

Georgia Dept of Human Resources
Vital Records Service
2600 Skyland Dr. NE
Atlanta, GA 30319-3640
(404) 679-4701

[More info](#)

Search Fee: \$10

Hawaii

State Department of Health
Vital Records Section
P.O. Box 3378
Honolulu, HI 96801-9984
(808) 586-4533

[More info](#)

Search Fee: \$10

Idaho

Idaho Department of Health and Welfare
Vital Statistics
450 W State St., 1st Floor
P.O. Box 83720
Boise, ID 83720-0036
(208) 334-5988
Search Fee: \$13

Illinois (Verification only - contact county for search.
Go to [Background Check Gateway](#) and scroll down to
"Public Information Available at the County Level.")
Illinois Department of Public Health
Division of Vital Records
605 W. Jefferson St.

Springfield, IL 62702-5097
(217) 782-6553

[More info](#)

Search Fee: \$17

Indiana - Contact county.

Go to [Background Check Gateway](#) and scroll down to
"Public Information Available at the County Level."

Iowa

Iowa Department of Public Health
Bureau of Vital Records
Lucas State Office Bldg., 1st Floor
321 E. 12th Street
DesMoines, IA 50319-0075
(515) 281-4944

[More info](#)

Search Fee: \$10

Kansas

Office of Vital Statistics
Kansas State Department of Health and Environment
1000 SW Jackson Street, Suite 120
Topeka, Kansas 66612-2221
(785) 296-1400

[More info](#)

Search Fee: \$12

Kentucky

Dept for Public Health
Office of Vital Statistics
275 E. Main St.
Frankfort, KY 40621
(502) 564-4212

[More info](#)

Search Fee: \$6

Loiusiana - Contact parish.

Go to [Background Check Gateway](#) and scroll down to
"Public Information Available at the County Level."

Maine

Maine Dept of Vital Records
221 State Street, Station 11
Augusta, ME 04333-0011

(207) 287-3181

[More info](#)

Search Fee: \$10

Maryland

Maryland Division of Vital Records

Dept. of Health & Mental Hygiene

6550 Reisterstown Road Plaza

P.O. Box 68760

Baltimore, MD 21215-0020

(410) 764-3038

[More info](#)

Search Fee: \$12

Massachusetts

Massachusetts Registry of Vital Records and Statistics

150 Mount Vernon St., 1st Floor

Dorchester, MA 02125-3105

(617) 740-2606

[More info](#)

Fee: \$18

Michigan

Michigan Department of Community Health

P.O. Box 30721

Lansing, MI 48909

(517) 335-8656

[More info](#)

Search Fee: \$15

Minnesota

Contact county.

Go to [Background Check Gateway](#) and scroll down to

"Public Information Available at the County Level."

Mississippi

Mississippi Vital Records

2423 North State Street

P.O. Box 1700

Jackson, MS 39215-1700

(601) 576-7960

[More Info](#)

Fee: \$10

Missouri

Contact county.

Go to [Background Check Gateway](#) and scroll down to "Public Information Available at the County Level."

Montana

Contact county

Go to [Background Check Gateway](#) and scroll down to "Public Information Available at the County Level."

Nebraska

Nebraska Vital Records

P.O. Box 95065

Lincoln, NE 68509-5065

(402) 471-2871

[More info](#)

Search Fee: \$7

Nevada - Contact county.

Go to [Background Check Gateway](#) and scroll down to "Public Information Available at the County Level."

However, the state agency has an index and will relate the county and date of the event. Call 775-684-4242. The fee is \$8.00.

New Hampshire

New Hampshire Bureau of Vital Records & Health Statistics

Health & Welfare Building

6 Hazen Drive

Concord, NH 03301-6527

(603) 271-4650

[More info](#)

Search Fee: \$12

New Jersey

New Jersey Department of Health & Senior Services

Vital Statistics Registration

P. O. Box 370

Trenton, NJ 08625-0370

(609) 292-4087

[More info](#)

Search Fee: \$4 per record

New Mexico - Contact county.

Go to [Background Check Gateway](#) and scroll down to "Public Information Available at the County Level."

New York (not incl. NYC)
New York Department of Health
Vital Records Section
Empire State Plaza
Albany, NY 12237-0023
(518) 474-3038
Fax: (518) 474-3077

[More info](#)

Search Fee: \$30

New York City
New York City Department of Health
Bureau of Vital Records
125 Worth Street RM 133
New York, NY 10013
(212) 788-4520
Search Fee: \$15

North Carolina
North Carolina Vital Records Branch
1903 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1903
(919) 733-3526

[More info](#)

Search Fee: \$15

North Dakota
North Dakota Vital Records
600 East Boulevard
Bismarck, ND 58505-0200
(701) 328-2360
Fax: (701) 328-1850

[More info](#)

Search Fee: \$5

Ohio - Contact [county](#).
However state agency will do an index search from 1953 forward . There is a \$3 search fee per 10-year period searched. Telephone 614-466-2531 (Bureau of Vital Statistics).

Oklahoma - Contact county.
Go to [Background Check Gateway](#) and scroll down to "Public Information Available at the County Level."

Oregon

Oregon Health Division
Vital Records
P.O. Box 14050
Portland, OR 97293-0050
(503) 731-4108

[More info](#)

Search Fee: \$15

Pennsylvania - Contact [county](#)

Rhode Island

Rhode Island Department of Health
3 Capitol Hill, Room 101
Providence, RI 02908-5097
(401) 222-2811

[More info](#)

Search Fee: \$15

However, divorce records are maintained only at the county level.
Go to [Background Check Gateway](#) and scroll down to
"Public Information Available at the County Level."

South Carolina

South Carolina Division of Vital Records
S.C. DHEC
2600 Bull Street
Columbia, SC 29201
(803) 898-3630
Fax: (803) 799-0301

[More info](#)

Search Fee: \$12

South Dakota

South Dakota Department of Health
Vital Records
600 E. Capitol
Pierre, SD 57501-2536
(605) 773-4961
Fax: (605) 773-5683

[More info](#)

Search Fee: \$7

Tennessee (1949-present)

Tennessee Vital Records
421 5th Avenue N. First Floor

Nashville, TN 37247-0460
(615) 741-1763

[More info](#)

Search Fee: \$12

Texas (Marriage Records 1966-present. Verification only - otherwise contact county.

Go to [Background Check Gateway](#) and scroll down to "Public Information Available at the County Level.")

Texas Bureau of Vital Statistics

1100 W 49th St.

Austin, TX 78756

(512)758-73661

[More info](#)

Search Fee: \$9

Utah (Marriage records 1978-2001) Earlier contact county.

Go to [Background Check Gateway](#) and scroll down to "Public Information Available at the County Level."

Utah Office of Vital Records

Box 141012

Salt Lake City, UT 84114-1010

(801) 535-6105

[More info](#)

Search Fee: \$9

Vermont

Reference & Research

Vital Records Section

US Rte 2, Drawer 13

Montpelier VT 05633

(802) 828-3286

[More info](#)

Search Fee: \$9.50

Virginia (1853-present)

Virginia Office of Vital Records

P.O. Box 1000

Richmond, VA 23218-1000

(804) 662-6200

[More info](#)

Search Fee: \$12

Washington (Marriage records 1968-present. Contact county for earlier.)

Washington Department of Health

Center for Health Statistics

P.O. Box 9709
Olympia, WA 98507-9709
(360) 236-4300
Fax: (360) 352-2586

[More info](#)

Search Fee: \$17

West Virginia -

Bureau of Public Health, Vital Records
350 Capitol St., Rm 165
Charleston WV 25305
(304) 558-2931

[More info](#)

Search fee: \$5

However, divorce records are available only at the county level.

Go to [Background Check Gateway](#) and scroll down to "Public Information Available at the County Level."

Wisconsin

Wisconsin Vital Records
P.O. Box 309
Madison, WI 53701-0309
(608) 266-1373

[More info](#)

Search Fee: \$7

Wyoming

Wyoming Vital Records Service
Hathaway Building
Cheyenne, WY 82002
(307) 777-7591

[More info](#)

Fee: \$12

[End of Report]

Report prepared by:

Washington Research Associates Inc
1090 Vermont Ave., NW, Ste. 800
Washington DC 20005
(202) 408-7025

Visit our free instructional website at BackgroundCheckGateway.com.

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