

Genogram Symbols: The Complete Key



Genograms use a standardized set of symbols so that anyone can read them the same way. Shapes show each person, the lines between them show relationships, and shading records health and behavioral patterns. Here is the complete key, grouped by what each symbol does.


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Individuals & gender

Every person is a shape. The base shape encodes sex, while inner shapes, triangles, and outlines record gender identity, orientation, and special roles.



Male

A square represents a male family member.



Female

A circle represents a female family member.



Unknown sex

A triangle is used when a person's sex is unknown.



Transgender male

A circle inside a square marks a transgender man.



Transgender female

A square inside a circle marks a transgender woman.



Gay

A downward triangle inside a square marks a gay man.



Lesbian

A downward triangle inside a circle marks a lesbian woman.



Bisexual male

A dashed inner triangle in a square marks a bisexual man.



Bisexual female

A dashed inner triangle in a circle marks a bisexual woman.



Index person

A double outline marks the subject the genogram is built around.



Pet

A diamond represents a pet or animal in the family.



Institution

A house shape stands for a care home, agency, or institution.



More than two cultures

A sprout above the shape marks someone of multiple cultures.



Immigration

A double sprout above the shape marks an immigrant.

Dates, age & death

Birth years, current age, and death are written on the person's shape so a lifespan can be read at a glance.

1980_



Birth year & age

The birth year sits above the shape and the current age inside it.



Age at death

Corner crosses mark a death; the age at death stays inside.

1980_2020



Birth, age & death

Birth and death years above, with age at death inside the shape.



Deceased

An X inside the shape shows the person has died.

Relationship lines

Horizontal lines join partners. The line's style and color show the type of union, and slashes mark a separation or divorce.





Marriage

A solid line shows a legal or committed marriage.



Engagement

A dashed line shows an engaged but not yet married couple.



Cohabitation

A dashed line with a house marks unmarried partners living together.



Legal cohabitation

A dash-dot line with a house marks a registered partnership.



Casual relationship

A dotted line shows a casual relationship or dating.



Love affair

A long-dashed line marks a love affair.



Separation in fact

A single backslash across the line indicates a de facto separation.



Legal separation

A single slash across the line marks a legal separation.



Divorce

Two slashes across the line indicate a divorce.



Engagement & cohabitation

A dashed line with a house marks an engaged, cohabiting couple.



Engagement & separation

A dashed line with a slash marks a broken engagement.



Cohabitation & separation

A dashed line, house, and slash mark separated cohabitants.



Legal cohabitation & separation

A dash-dot line with a slash marks a dissolved partnership.

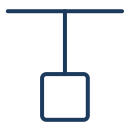


Casual relationship & separation

A dotted line with a slash marks an ended casual relationship.

Children & pregnancy

Children hang from the couple's line. The connector and shape show how each child joined the family, plus pregnancies and losses.



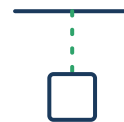
Biological child

A solid vertical line connects a biological child.



Adopted child

A dashed connector marks an adopted child.



Foster child

A dotted connector marks a foster child.



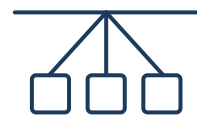
Fraternal twins

Two lines from one point show fraternal (non-identical) twins.



Identical twins

A bar joining the twins marks them as identical.



Triplets

Three lines from one point show triplets.



Pregnancy

A triangle marks a current pregnancy.



Miscarriage

A small crossed triangle marks a miscarriage.



Abortion

A crossed triangle with a bar marks an induced

abortion.



Male stillbirth

A small crossed square marks a male stillbirth.



Female stillbirth

A small crossed circle marks a female stillbirth.

Emotional relationships

A second layer of lines records how people feel about each other. Green ties are positive, red are strained, and arrows point at the focus of a behavior.



Indifferent / apathetic

A fine dotted line shows an indifferent, apathetic tie.



Distant / poor

A dashed line shows a distant or poor relationship.



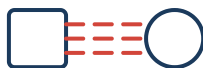
Cutoff / estranged

Two bars across the line mark a cutoff or estrangement.



Discord / conflict

A red dashed line shows discord or conflict.



Hate

Three red dashed lines show hatred.



Harmony

A solid green line shows a harmonious relationship.



Friendship / close



Love

A green dashed line shows friendship or closeness.

Best friends / very close

A thick green band shows a very close, best-friend bond.

A green line with a ring shows love.



In love

A green line with two rings shows being in love.



Fused

Three red lines show an enmeshed or fused relationship.



Distrust

A red ladder of bars across the line shows distrust.



Hostile

A red jagged line shows hostility.



Distant-hostile

A straight line breaking into a jag shows distant hostility.



Close-hostile

A double line with a jag shows a close but hostile tie.



Fused-hostile

Triple lines with a jag show a fused, hostile relationship.



Violence

A sharp red jagged line shows violence.



Distant-violence

A straight line breaking into a sharp jag shows distant violence.



Close-violence



Focused on



Focused on negatively

A double line with a sharp jag shows close violence.

An arrow shows one person focused on another.

A jagged arrow shows a negative focus on another person.



Abuse

A jagged line marks an abusive relationship.



Physical abuse

A jagged arrow marks physical abuse directed at a person.



Emotional abuse

A jagged arrow marks emotional abuse directed at a person.



Sexual abuse

A blue jagged arrow marks sexual abuse directed at a person.



Neglect

A dashed arrow marks neglect directed at a person.



Never met

A crossed box on the line means the two never met.



Manipulative

A red cross on the line marks a manipulative tie.



Controlling

A red crossed box marks a controlling relationship.



Fan / admirer

A ring near one person marks a fan or admirer.



Limerence

Two rings near one person mark limerence or infatuation.

Medical & behavioral markers

Shading inside a person's shape records health and behavioral information. Colors and quadrants are assigned in a key.



Physical illness

A fully shaded shape flags a physical illness.



Mental health

A left-half fill flags a mental health condition.



Mental & physical illness

A split fill flags both a mental and a physical condition.



Substance use

A bottom-half fill flags substance use or addiction.



In recovery

A bottom quadrant fill marks recovery from addiction.



Suspected condition

A dashed outline flags a suspected or at-risk condition.



Get the printable symbols key

A one-page, branded reference with every symbol on this page: individuals, relationship lines, emotional bonds, children, and medical markers. Print it for class, or keep it open while you build.

[Download the Genogram Symbols PDF](#)

Build a genogram with these symbols, automatically

Describe your family in plain English and Genogenie places the right symbols for you. No legend memorizing required.

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Genogram symbols FAQ

Quick answers to the questions people ask most about reading and using genogram symbols.

What do the symbols in a genogram mean?



Each symbol is a shorthand for a person or a relationship. Shapes show individuals (square for male, circle for female), the lines between them show how people are

connected (marriage, divorce, biological children), and a second layer of lines records emotional bonds like close, distant, or estranged.

What is the difference between a male and a female symbol? ▼

How do you show divorce on a genogram? ▼

How do you show that someone has died? ▼

Is there a printable genogram symbols key? ▼



Keep exploring

What is a genogram? →

The definition, what it shows, and how it differs from a family tree.

Genogram examples →

Real, filled-in genograms you can read and open in the tool.

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