



Ancestry.com

Page **Discussion**

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Article status notice: This article has been marked as incomplete

This article needs additional work for its sourcing and verifiability to meet the wiki's [Content Guidelines](#) and be in line with our [Mission Statement](#) for comprehensive coverage of consumer protection issues. In particular:

1. This need work to fit the [company article format](#)
2. The section regarding the data leak is empty

This notice will be removed once the issue/s highlighted above have been addressed and sufficient documentation has been added to establish the systemic nature of these issues. Once you believe the article is ready to have its notice removed, please visit the [Moderator's noticeboard](#), or the [discord](#) and post to the [#appeals](#) channel.

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Ancestry.com, owned by [The Blackstone Group](#), is a genealogy company based in the US, known for its DNA testing and family trees.

Consumer impact summary [\[edit \]](#)

[edit source](#)]

Business Practices [\[edit \]](#) [edit source](#)]

Strict cancellation rules:

14-day window to avoid cancellation fees (\$25–\$50).

Privacy [\[edit \]](#) [edit source](#)]

2-year data breach (2015–2017):

Credentials leaked via RootsWeb; some of them reused on Ancestry. Exposed data remained public for years.

Anti-consumer practices [\[edit \]](#) [edit source](#)]

Ancestry.com



Basic Information

Release Year	1996
Product Type	Genealogy
In Production	Yes
Official Website	https://ancestry.com/ ↗

Cancellation policy [\[edit | edit source \]](#)

Ancestry.com may charge a cancellation fee for "Subscriptions Longer than a Month, Billed Monthly" if users do not cancel within the first 14 days.^{[1][2]}

Where offered, some subscriptions longer than a month may be eligible for monthly billing. Even though you will be billed monthly, you are committing to the entire length of your subscription (e.g. 6 months or 12 months).

...

(1) cancel immediately for a full refund of the first month's fee and immediate loss of access, or
(2) cancel effective at the end of the first month, subject to a cancellation fee. If you change from this type of subscription to a different type of subscription before the end of your subscription term, you will receive a prorated refund for the remainder of the current paid month, and you may be charged a cancellation fee. For subscriptions purchased on www.ancestry.com, cancellation fees are the lesser of (i) \$25 USD for 6-month subscriptions or \$50 USD for 12-month subscriptions (plus any applicable taxes) or (ii) the remaining cost of your subscription

Ancestry's older price pages showed an offer which followed these cancellation terms, along with a citation showing the commitment, but this offer has since been removed from the page.^[3]

Incidents [\[edit | edit source \]](#)

Data Breach (2015) [\[edit | edit source \]](#)

RootsWeb, an Ancestry service, suffered a significant data breach: a file containing the access data of 297.8 thousand users has been publicly accessible on their server from November 2015 to December 2017.^{[4][5][6]} The company published a security update on the official website, now unavailable, stating that they temporarily shut down RootsWeb and locked all the compromised Ancestry accounts, requiring users to change their passwords.^[7] Below is part of the full statement:

We want to share an important security update with you.

Last Wednesday, December 20, Ancestry's Information Security Team received a message from a security researcher indicating that he had found a file containing email addresses/username and password combinations as well as user names from a RootsWeb.com server. Our Information Security Team reviewed the details of this file, and confirmed that it contains information related to users of Rootsweb's surname list information, a service we retired earlier this year. For those of you who are unfamiliar, RootsWeb is a free community-driven collection of tools that are used by some people to host and share genealogical information. Ancestry has been hosting dedicated RootsWeb servers as a favor to the community since 2000. Importantly, RootsWeb does not host sensitive information like credit card numbers or social security numbers, and is not supported by the same infrastructure as Ancestry's other brands. We are in the process of informing all impacted customers and will also be working with regulators and law enforcement as appropriate.

We also reviewed the RootsWeb file to see if any of the account information overlapped with existing accounts on Ancestry sites. We did confirm that a very small number of accounts – less than one percent of our total customer group – used the same account credentials on both Rootsweb and an Ancestry commercial site. We are currently contacting these customers.

In all cases, any user whose account had its associated email/username and password included on the file has had their accounts locked and will need to create a new password the next time they visit.

What We've Done

As a result of this discovery, we have taken two immediate corrective actions.

First, for the approximately 55,000 customers who used the same credentials at RootsWeb's surname list and Ancestry – whether currently active or not – we have locked their Ancestry accounts and will require that they create a new password the next time they visit. We have also sent them emails to alert them to the situation. Though we have seen no activity that indicates these accounts have been compromised, we believe taking this additional measure is the right step to ensure the security of these customers. If you have not received an email or a notice requiring you to change your password, you have not been affected. Again, this issue involves less than one percent of our users, so there is a very good chance your account wasn't involved.

Second, we have temporarily taken RootsWeb offline, and are working to ensure that all data is saved and preserved to the best of our ability. As RootsWeb is a free and open community that has been largely built by its users, we may not be able to salvage everything as we work to resolve this issue and enhance the RootsWeb infrastructure.

What You Should Do

If you are a customer whose account was impacted, you will receive an email telling you that you need to change your password. In that case, you will be required to create a new password the next time you visit Ancestry.

For the vast majority of customers who are not impacted by this, there is nothing you need to do as a result of this incident. However, we always recommend that you take the time to evaluate your own security settings. Please, never use the same username and password for multiple services or sites. And it's generally good practice to use longer passwords and to change them regularly.

References [[edit](#) | [edit source](#)]

- ↑ "Ancestry Renewal and Cancellation Terms" [↗](#). *Ancestry.com*. Retrieved 2025-02-05.
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- ↑ "What happened in the Ancestry data breach?" [↗](#). *Twingate*. 22 Feb 2024. Retrieved 9 Aug 2025.
- ↑ Spring, Tom (27 Dec 2017). "Leaky RootsWeb Server Exposes Some Ancestry.com User Data" [↗](#). *threatpost*. Retrieved 9 Aug 2025.
- ↑ Blackham, Tony (23 Dec 2017). "RootsWeb Security Update" [↗](#). *Ancestry*. Archived from the original [↗](#) on 27 Dec 2017. Retrieved 9 Aug 2025.

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