

1. Determine on the strength of diagnostic evidence that a set of languages are genetically related, that is, that they constitute a 'family';
2. Collect putative cognate sets for the family (both morphological paradigms and lexical items).
3. Work out the sound correspondences from the cognate sets, putting 'irregular' cognate sets on one side;
4. Reconstruct the protolanguage of the family as follows:
 - a Reconstruct the protophonology from the sound correspondences worked out in (3), using conventional wisdom regarding the directions of sound changes.
 - b Reconstruct protomorphemes (both morphological paradigms and lexical items) from the cognate sets collected in (2), using the protophonology reconstructed in (4a).
5. Establish innovations (phonological, lexical, semantic, morphological, morpho-syntactic) shared by groups of languages within the family relative to the reconstructed protolanguage.
6. Tabulate the innovations established in (5) to arrive at an internal classification of the family, a 'family tree'.
7. Construct an etymological dictionary, tracing borrowings, semantic change, and so forth, for the lexicon of the family (or of one language of the family).