Getting Acquainted with the Revised Version of Find-A-Grave.com
Ted Bainbridge, Ph.D.

https://www.findagrave.com is a web site that collects individuals' cemetery and other information, whether a grave marker is present or not. The site's database includes over 165 million people's memorials, and adds about 1 ½ million per month. It contains information from almost half a million cemeteries around the world. This free site can be searched in several ways, and its information is easy to download onto a home computer. The site is menu-driven and intuitively easy to use. Registration, which is optional and free, gives the visitor access to features that are not otherwise available. Everybody should explore the tutorials.

Think of the home page as being organized into four areas:
• the main menu, near the top of the page and filling its entire width
• the search panel for individuals' graves, which dominates the background photograph
• the link to findagrave tutorials, a blue oval button near the bottom right of the page
• other less-frequently used items, occupying the rest of the screen below the background image

Hunting A Person

By far, the most common use of findagrave is hunting individuals. The simplest search is done as follows. Enter a first name in the box provided near the center of the background photo. (This is optional, but if you don't do it you will get an enormous hit list for all but the most unusual surnames.) I recommend leaving the box for middle name blank, because grave markers usually don't show middle names. Put a surname in the appropriate box. (This is required.) There is no option for "similar spelling" or "similar sound", so do separate searches for each variant spelling of the first name and surname.) Click the search button. A hit list appears, showing records that match your request and headed with the count of how many records are on the list. Search the hit list for the person you want, then click that person's name. You will see that person's information page. (If a picture of the grave stone exists, look at it in detail. Sometimes this will show that the typed information on the page contains an error.) To save the information on that page, you can command a "print" from your computer's operating system. Alternatively, you can scroll to the top of the page, click "save to", click "copy to clipboard", open the program you will use to save the information, paste the clipboard's content into that program, and save within that program. To save the source citation scroll to the bottom of the person's page, click "source citation", copy the text of the cite, paste that text wherever you want it to be, and save that destination's content within the appropriate program. The person's page might include links to findagrave pages for relatives. Click those links to see their information.

Typing only the first and last name probably will produce a hit list that is too long to read. If that happens, search for that name again but narrow the search by using the pull-down menus next to the "year born" and "year died" boxes below the name boxes you used. In addition to or instead of those restrictions, you can use the location box next to those date boxes. As you type a place into that box, an auto-fill list appears. When you see the appropriate place, select it from the list. (Typing the name and clicking the "search" button instead won't give good results.) If you use all three restrictions and the new search doesn't find the person you want, remove one of those restrictions and search again. If that search fails, replace that restriction and remove another one. If you fail again, repeat. If all those searches fail, use only one restriction at a time and do all three restricted searches. Repeat this process until you are successful. (But remember that not everyone is in findagrave, so all your searches might fail. In that case, try again later, remembering that findagrave adds about 1 ½ million records per month.)

Next to the "search" button you can see "more search options". Clicking that makes the following available:

- "Famous" separates a famous person from others who have the same name. (Asking for Marilyn Monroe creates a hit list of 29 people. Going to the top of the list, clicking "refine search", pulling down "more search options", clicking "famous", and then clicking "search" shows only the movie star we all know.

- "Sponsored" shows only pages that have no advertisements because somebody paid to remove them.

- "Nickname" must be checked if you ask for somebody by nickname instead of given name.

- "Maiden name" must be checked if you ask for somebody by maiden name instead of married name.

- "Partial last name search" lets you search by putting only the first letters of a first or last name in the appropriate boxes. (Requesting "wana" shows Wana, Wanamaker, Wanabaker, and other surnames that begin with those four letters; but it doesn't list Wannamaker.)

- "No grave photo" gives only people who have no grave photo on their information page.

- "Grave photo" gives only people who have a grave photo on their information page.

- "Flowers" gives only people who have virtual flowers attached to their page. (Asking for Clarence Bainbridge without this option clicked gets five names, but clicking this option reduces the list to two.)

Hunting A Cemetery

The next most common use of findagrave is hunting cemeteries. There are three ways to find a cemetery:

- On the main menu click "cemeteries" and type a <u>name</u> in the box provided. (This is an auto-fill box. Use it as above.) Click "search". A hit list appears. Click the name of the cemetery you want. That cemetery's page of information appears.

- On the main menu click "cemeteries" and type a <u>place</u> in the other box. (This also is auto-fill.) Click "search". A hit list appears. Click the name of the cemetery you want. That cemetery's page appears.

- On the main menu click "cemeteries" and type a <u>place</u> in the appropriate box. (This is an auto-fill box. Use it as above.) Don't click "search" or press the "return/enter" button. Instead, look at the map. If the map doesn't show any location markers, click the '+' button near its lower right corner. Zoom in or out and pan in any direction until you see the area you want. Click any marker to see the name of that cemetery, then click the name to see its information page.

Favorite Cemeteries

If you registered as a member, you can create a list of your favorite cemeteries. Go to the information page of the cemetery you want to put on your list. Near the top right corner of that page, click "add favorite" and proceed.

You can create virtual cemeteries by linking interesting individuals to a collection that you create. (For examples, you might link all of your Blankenship relatives' information pages to a group called "My-Blankenships", or you could gather all your relatives who served in the Civil War.) Go to the page of a person you want to add to a virtual cemetery. Near the top right corner of that page, click "save to", click "virtual cemetery", and then proceed. At this location you can create a new v.c. or add this person to an existing v.c.

Other Features

The main menu at the top of findagrave's home page includes an item called "famous", which allows a search for a famous person, as was described above. That menu also has an item called "contribute", which people use to add information to findagrave's database.

Between the home page's background photograph and the button for tutorials is a large white space that offers links for these items:

- read about a random person
- famous graves
- newly added graves
- most popular graves
- add a memorial
- upload photos
- transcribe photos
- forums
- search cemeteries
- browse cemeteries

- search grave records
- browse grave records
- famous people
- log in
- memorials
- cemeteries
- contribute
- famous
- help
- about

- forums
- store
- facebook
- twitter
- language
- mobile apps
- privacy statement
- terms of service
- end feedback

Most people probably can ignore most or all of those items, but feel free to explore and experiment as you like.