



## Endogamy

Endogamy is the custom or practice of marrying within the same social or ethnic group, local community, or religious tradition. In addition, endogamous groups tend to require this practice, either by law or tradition, and discourage marriage between members of their group and outsiders.

In addition, sometimes there are limited partners to choose from, and so endogamy occurs because there simply are no outsiders. This would have been the case in Northern Ireland in previous generations, particularly in rural communities, when people didn't travel much outside their own area and meeting potential partners often occurred in church.

For example, think of a place that is geographically isolated with a small founding population. Even if the original founding population is not closely related, after several generations, most people will be distantly related to each other.

In many parts of the world, endogamy is no longer fashionable, especially in societies where people have seemingly unlimited access to unrelated (or very distantly related) partners. This is why many people tend to be surprised when they find evidence of endogamy in their family tree. Historically, however, it just wasn't a big deal.

When we use the term endogamy we are usually referring to marriages between closer family relationships, such as second, third, and fourth cousins. These cousins may not know exactly how they are related, but they likely do know that they have some sort of family connection – even if it is distant.

There are many examples of endogamy around the world. Well-known examples include the Ashkenazi Jewish communities of Eastern Europe, descendants of early European immigrants to North America, French Canadians, and those with indigenous North and South American ancestry, including many people with Mexican ancestry.

While endogamy is the practice of marrying within the same group over the course of many generations, pedigree collapse is when it happens just once, or a few times. In Northern Ireland, first cousins often married, and two brothers might marry two sisters, and this, of course, will affect DNA results. If this sort of event happened just once or twice in a family, then it's pedigree collapse.

Endogamy can affect our DNA and relationship with our genetic matches because of the way that DNA is inherited. While we do not inherit DNA from all of our ancestors, we do inherit it from some of them, and even after several generations, we are likely to have at least one small segment that was passed down from any given ancestor from several generations ago.

If we share several ancestors within the past 6-8 generations with a DNA match, we might have multiple DNA segments in common with the match, since we both might have inherited the same segment passed down from all, or most, shared ancestors.

Endogamy can often skew the total amount of DNA that we share with a distantly-related DNA relative because of the multiple shared segments. A higher amount of shared DNA can lead us to mistakenly believe that our most recent common ancestor is more recent than it actually is, and the genealogical relationship closer than it really is.

Here's two Family History Fanatics Videos on Endogamy: <https://youtu.be/ppiYzFVYH40>  
[https://youtu.be/Wlq\\_a-gdf9k](https://youtu.be/Wlq_a-gdf9k)