

FREE Trial Memberships to Subscription-Based Genealogy Websites -- Six steps to ensure that they are, in fact, free for you!

Those free trial memberships are so tempting. It takes just a few moments to sign up. You supply the personal and credit card information, as requested. Then you get distracted by other goings-on in your life, and all of a sudden you have paid for an annual subscription to the service, whether you wanted to or not, whether you have had time to use the service – or not.

Before subscribing to a subscription-based genealogy website or service, follow these 6 steps:

1. Read the Terms of Use!
2. Note subscription terms: Does it say something to the effect that “for your convenience” your subscription will be renewed automatically? This means that after the free trial period, you will be billed, based on the membership plan you have chosen (or that was part of the “Free Trial Membership” offer), unless you cancel by *following explicit instructions*.
3. Pay attention to the cancellation policy. It must be followed exactly.
4. Make sure you have time to explore the website and make use of its information and/or services before the “free trial” period ends.
5. Put a note on your calendar on a date just before the trial period ends – a reminder to evaluate the value of the genealogy website to your personal research. Decide at that time whether you want to continue or cancel.
6. As an alternative, check into the possibility of purchasing a one-month subscription that doesn’t renew automatically, to give yourself time to use the services and evaluate their usefulness to you.

If not, you may end up paying for that free trial membership.