

Be Exclusive: Suppressing Sensitive Information in TMG  
By Martha Grenzeback \*  
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Most of us have had the unpleasant experience of sharing information we later wished we hadn't. We all (or most of us...) like to help other researchers when we can, especially nice ones who show signs of basic intelligence, but eventually every genealogist learns that sharing information about living people can lead to mental anguish (or possibly legal action). We may not want to publish information about family skeletons, no matter how old. Sometimes, too, we prefer not to share information that we have not yet proven, especially with someone who is likely to splash it all over the internet. Or we simply do not want to give more than the bare bones to a researcher who is unlikely to reciprocate with information. In general, we all have different categories of people with whom we share, and we want to tailor what we share according to the recipient.

The TMG programmers are well aware of these issues, and have provided no fewer than SEVEN ways of excluding certain information from reports, GEDCOMs, or the computer screen.

Method	Suppress from preview	Suppress printing	Over-ride suppression	Getting the Best Out of TMG
Single exclusion marker	Yes	Yes	Optional	
Double exclusion marker	Always	Always	Never	
Hidden text	Always	Always	Never	
Sensitivity brackets	Always	Yes	Optional	
Source surety levels	No	Yes	Optional	
Living people	No	Yes	Optional	
Split memo manipulation	No	Yes	No	

### 1. Single exclusion marker

One way to exclude information from a report—for example, you want all the information from a death tag to show except for the cause of death—is to enter a single hyphen as the first character in a field, and it will suppress the printing of the information entered in the rest of the field. It can also be entered at the beginning of a tag's sentence structure to suppress the printing of the entire sentence. In other words, a single exclusion marker at the beginning of a sentence field in any tag, or at the beginning of the memo field in a

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\* Copied heavily from Douglas Hill (2006, June), retrieved from <http://ottawa-tmg-ug.ca/Docs/Excluding%20Information%20Jun%202006%20demo.pdf>, and from the TMG help file.

note tag, prevents the printing of that tag and the export of that entire tag to GEDCOM (if “Show excluded data” is not checked in the report options). An exclusion marker at the beginning of the memo field in any *non*-note tag prevents the printing of that tag's memo and the export of that memo to GEDCOM (again, if “Show excluded data” is not checked).

You can also use them when you have a source note but do not want a bibliography entry—just put a hyphen in the bibliography field of the source definition screen.

Accordingly, you can use the single exclusion marker in any of the following places:

- in any field of any tag (except the date field, which seems a little weird; if you put one in, the date changes from, say, 23 June 1870 to “before 23 June 1870”; the same is true for the double exclusion marker);
- in the memo field of any tag;
- in the sentence field of any tag;
- in a source citation field (full footnote, short footnote, and bibliography).
- in repository fields. When [REPOSITORY], [REPOSITORY ADDRESS], or [REPOSITORY INFO] is used in a template, any repository fields with single exclusion markers will preview with the markers showing, but will not print out unless “show excluded data” is checked. (I use this a lot, since I like to have the whole address, zip code, phone number, etc. of a courthouse or other repository available, but don't want it all to print out in my footnotes or bibliography).

When there are two principals in an event, a principal may be excluded from display in the other principal's Person View if a single exclusion marker is typed before his or her ID number. Either or both principals may be so marked. However, principals so marked will still print out in reports. I'm not sure what the point of this is.....Basically, when you use the single exclusion marker in a field, the data will still be visible in the Tag Entry screen, but the information in that field will not show up in the person view, unless you set File> Preferences> Tag Box > *Show excluded data*.

**Tag Entry**

Tag type: Census1840

Principal: 318 Charles Hall BOLTON

Principal: 0

Date: 01 Jun 1840

Place style: U.S. StandardPlace

Sort date: 01 Jun 1840

Detail: Detail

City: -Rossie

County: St. Lawrence Co.

State: New York

Memo

**Details**

Person | Family | Tree

Type	Name	Type	Value
Name	Charles Hall BOLTON (318)	Children	5
Father	Thomas BOLTON (2657)	Last edited	14 Feb 200
Mother	COMLY (2658)	Soundex	B435

Type	Date	Name/Place	Age	M	S	T
Name-Var		C.H. BOLTON				
* Birth	11 Sep 1807	Philadelphia, Jefferson Co.,	0		✓	
* Marriage		Mary BOLTON (319)			✓	
* Son-Bio	1829	James H. BOLTON (1210);	~22		✓	
* Dau-Bio	bt 1831-1832	Elvira M. BOLTON (1211);	~24		✓	
* Son-Bio	02 Aug 1837	William Thomas BOLTON	29			
* Census1840	01 Jun 1840	St. Lawrence Co., New	32	✓	✓	
* Son-Bio	1842	Edgar E. BOLTON (1212);	~35		✓	
* Dau-Bio	1842	Sarah J. BOLTON (1213);	~35		✓	
* Census1850	07 Oct 1850	Mary BOLTON (319); Town	43	✓	✓	
Witness	27 Feb 1857	Widower; Death: Mary	49		✓	
* Census1860	15 Jun 1860	Rossie, St. Lawrence Co.,	52	✓	✓	
* Death	14 Jul 1868	Oxbow, Jefferson Co., New	60		✓	

**The Master Genealogist Preferences**

General | Startup and Exit | Data Entry | Item Tips | Slideshow | Lists | Prompts | Warnings | Project Explorer | **Tag Box** | Custom Styles | Reports | Colors | New Project | Defaults | Other

Number of rows per tag : 1

Undated tags sorted : Top

Name tags sorted : By sort date

Identify Primary Event with : ☐ Bold ☒ Asterisk

☐ Show Witness column  
☐ Show Exhibits column  
☒ Show Tasks column  
☒ Show Age column  
☐ Show Surety column

☐ Show only basic events  
☒ Show children  
☒ Show witnessed events  
☒ Show non-primary events  
☐ Show excluded data  
☒ Show Date instead of Sort Date  
☐ Show History events for unlinked people  
☐ Show timelines with color

This data will not print in a report or chart unless you set Report Options > Miscellaneous tab > *Show excluded data* or Chart Options > Other tab > *Show excluded data*.

A single exclusion marker before the source number on the Citation screen will prevent a source from printing unless *Show excluded data* is checked in the report options. (Of course, you can also prevent the citation detail field from printing by checking Report Options > Sources > *Suppress citation details*.) A rather cool feature is that exclusion marks can be added to or removed from citations on the Tag Entry screen without opening the citations window. To exclude a citation, just right-click on the citation in the citation window and select “Exclude this citation.” To remove the exclusion marker, right-click on the citation in the citation window again—you will note that “Exclude this citation” in the menu has a check mark next to it. Click on it, and the check mark and the exclusion marker will disappear.

## 2. Double exclusion marker

The double exclusion marker is much like the single exclusion marker except that it is a DOUBLE hyphen and it cannot be over-ridden with the “show excluded data” to show the data on the screen, in reports and charts, or in GEDCOM files. Fields marked with this symbol in name and event tags will not be included on the Person View (although they will be visible in the Tag Entry screen), in reports, charts, or GEDCOM export files. Double exclusion markers cannot be overridden by the “Show excluded data” option, either in File > Preferences > Program Options: Tag Box or in individual reports. They must be be changed in the field itself. The Full footnote, Short footnote, and Bibliography template fields on the Output form tab of the Source Definition screen also support the double exclusion marker, and so, apparently, do the repository fields. A template so marked does not show when previewed nor does it print. An interesting (or irritating) bug reported on the TMG list is that a custom source type that has a bibliography template with source elements but whose full footnote, and short footnote templates consist of only the double exclusion marker does print. You get both a footnote reference printed in the text, and you get a footnote entry printed, although the entry consists of only the reference number and a period. If this worked the way it ought to, you would be able to generate a bibliography entry without a footnote.

### 3. Sensitivity brackets { }

Placing curly brackets { } around the information you want to keep private will hide it on the computer screen and prevent it from printing in reports. These brackets work within a field to isolate specific words or phrases, and they cannot be over-ridden for onscreen viewing. Such information will not be displayed on the Person View but will be visible when you enter the Tag Entry screen. Printing suppression can be over-ridden by selecting *Show sensitive data* in the chart or report options.

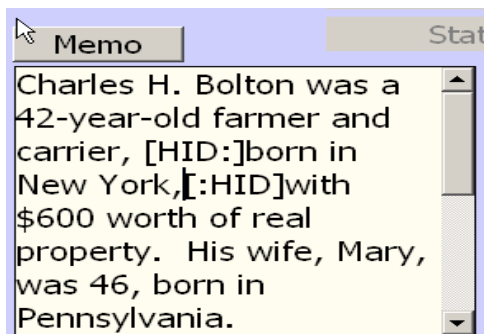
Detail	
City	{Gouverneur}
County	St. Lawrence Co.
State	New York

Nak	Marr	SHARPSTONE		
* Birth	bt 1831-1832	St. Lawrence Co., New	~0	✓
Census 1850	07 Oct 1850	Child; Charles Hall BOLTON	~19	✓ ✓
* Dau-Bio	1857	Susan A. SHARPSTONE	~26	✓
* Son-Bio	1860	Fred SHARPSTONE (2730);	~29	✓

Report Options	
General	Page Options   Fonts   Sources   Memos   Exhi
<p>Exclusion :</p> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> Show excluded data  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Show sensitive data  <input type="checkbox"/> With brackets         </div>	
Narratives	

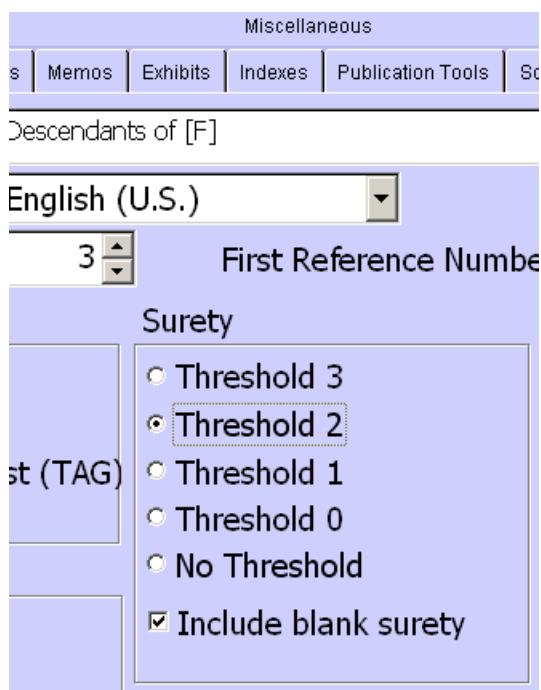
### 4. Hidden text

Hidden text may be inserted into any memo or sentence field. To insert an embedded code for hidden text into any memo type field (specifically in the tag entry screen memo field, sentence structures, or citation; and in the memo fields in the supplemental and output form tabs in source definition), highlight the relevant text, right-click, and select the code from the menu. This has the same effect as sensitivity brackets, except that it can never be over-ridden. The advantage of this is that there is no need to remember to check the appropriate options on report definitions, so you never run the risk of revealing a terrible secret by accident....(To see the text without the codes you have embedded, right-click and select "Show No Codes").



### 5. Source surety levels for printing

Another way to control what information shows in a report is by using the surety levels as a filter. This method only affects what prints out in a report or chart. Using Print Options> General > Surety, you can tell the program to print only tags with a surety of 2 or above, for example; anything below that, or with no surety checked, will not print. (You have the same option in the GEDCOM export menu.) Of course, to use this you have to have been inputting surety values. And being somewhat consistent. Oops, too late....



Interesting note: Since embedded source citations apply to an indeterminate amount of free-form text, they are not affected by any surety threshold that might be in effect for the report. That is, the event memo and the embedded citation will be printed even if the surety value in the embedded citation does not meet the surety threshold for the report. Is this getting too complicated?

## 6. Living People feature

TMG also has a “Living People” feature that will prevent any information for people whose LIVING flag is set to Y (Yes) from printing in reports or appearing in GEDCOMs. The LIVING flag is automatically set to N (No) if (1) a death or burial has been entered or (2) 110 years have passed since the birth date (the number 110 is set in Preferences > Current project > Advanced > *Assumed maximum lifespan*; you can change it to a higher or lower number). To avoid printing details for living people, select Report Options > Miscellaneous > *Suppress details for living people*; or Chart Options > Other > *Suppress details for living people*, or the miscellaneous options menu in the GEDCOM export wizard. This will suppress all tags except the primary name.

Miscellaneous

Exclusion :

☐ Show excluded data

☐ Show sensitive data

☐ With brackets

Other :

☐ Blanks for missing data

☒ Blank line before each subject

☐ Blank line before each family

☒ Suppress details for living people

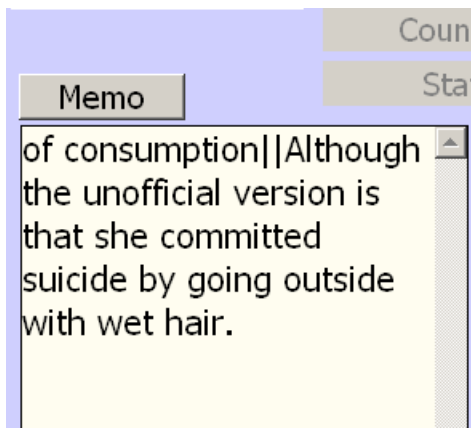
Living text

## Family Group Sheet

Subject*	<b>Joe Edward Grenzeback</b>	
Birth*	22 Jun 1922	Twin Falls, ID.
Marriage*	4 Jul 1950	Sacramento, California.
Death*	29 May 1968	Los Angeles, California.
Marriage*	— — — —	Jean Sullivan
Burial*	Veterans Memorial Cemetery, Los Angeles, California.	
Father*	James Henry Grenzeback (b. 16 Dec 1879, d. 9 Feb 1969)	
Mother*	Cora McLaren (b. 16 Mar 1890, d. 22 Apr 1975)	
Spouse*	<b>Jeanne Adeline Riley</b> is still living	
Father*	Paul Wiram Riley (b. 13 Jun 1886, d. 26 May 1963)	
Mother*	Adeline Isabel Exline (b. 18 Aug 1882, d. 16 Feb 1976)	
Three Children		
?/M	<b>Ian McLaren Grenzeback</b> is still living	
?/F	<b>Martha Isabel Grenzeback</b> is still living	
	Daughter:	Leah Hamik is still living
	Daughter:	Dana Hamik is still living
	Daughter:	Noa Hamik is still living
?/F	<b>Juliana Harclerode Grenzeback</b> is still living	

## 7. Using the split memo

Sometimes you may want to prevent only part of a tag from printing. In that case you can do a couple of different things. You can split the memo field and enter the sensitive data in a memo partition that is not included in the sentence structure. For example, you might have the sentence: `[CR:][P+] died <[M]> <[D]> <[L]> <[A]>`. Then you put TWO fields in the memo.



Exam of properties was made by your old neighbor born in New York with good worth of real property. Several enumerated with them were Susan A. (13), Fred (10), Mary (7), and Mola (1), all born in New York. Susan, F year."

Elvira M. Bolton died of consumption on 2 Feb 1877 at Brockville, Leeds Co., Ontario, Canada."

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There. No indiscreet details.

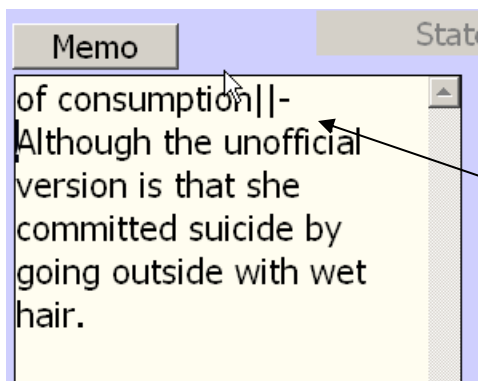
You could also just delete the memo from the sentence structure altogether, and the memo won't print at all (but keep in mind that the rest of the sentence will, so make sure it is not an integral part of the sentence).

A possibly better way to do the same thing without messing around with your sentence structure every time you have something you want to hide is simply to use the exclusion marker in the second (or other) memo field.

Here is my usual death sentence:

`[CR:][P+] died <[M]> <[D]> <[L]> <[A]>. <[M2]>`





Elmhorsted with them were Susan (18), Fred (18), Mary (17), and Viola (17), all born in New York year.<sup>8</sup>

Elvira M. Bolton died of consumption on 2 Feb 1877 at Brockville, Leeds Co., Ontario, Canada.<sup>9</sup>

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Same results! But here is what you get if you remove the exclusion marker:

Elvira M. Bolton died of consumption on 2 Feb 1877 at Brockville, Leeds Co., Ontario, Canada. Although the unofficial version is that she committed suicide by going outside with wet hair.<sup>9</sup>

As usual, there are many ways to do most things in TMG.