

GEDitCOM TECHNICAL NOTE #3

ADDING CUSTOM EVENTS AND ATTRIBUTES TO THE DEFAULT GEDitCOM FORMAT

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■ Introduction

An important feature of GEDCOM is its standard tags for documenting individual events, individual attributes, and family events such as birth, death, christening, social security number, marriage, divorce, and more. Most types of events you can imagine are already available in GEDCOM and therefore available when using GEDitCOM. But, perhaps you have special needs for documenting other types of events. GEDCOM does provide a *generic event* tag ([EVEN](#) tag) to handle such special events, but maybe you prefer a specific event tag instead of using a generic event type. GEDitCOM allows you to define such custom data simply by writing templates for all tags associated with your custom event or attribute (for more information see on-line help topic on **Updating or Extending GEDOM**).

Most likely, however, your custom events and attributes will follow the model of standard GEDCOM events and attributes which have the GEDCOM formats:

Individual Event

```
n <tag> <"Y" or empty>
  +1 <Event Detail>
```

Individual Attribute

```
n <tag> <ATTRIBUTE_DESCRIPTION>
  +1 <Event Detail>
```

Family Event

```
n <tag> <"Y" or empty>
  +1 <Event Detail>
  +1 HUSB
    +2 AGE <AGE AT EVENT>
  +1 WIFE
    +2 AGE <AGE AT EVENT>
```

Here `<tag>` is a tag for the event or attribute. In events, the `<tag>` is followed by "Y" to indicate the event has occurred or is empty if other data is present. In attributes, the `<tag>` is followed by a text description of the attribute. `<Event Detail>` includes many other tags for entering things like sources, notes, and multimedia links (for more information see GEDitCOM on-line help). Finally the extra tags in family events are used to separately enter the husband's and/or wife's age at the time of the event.

If you are using the **Default GEDitCOM Format** and you will be following the above model for events and, you can make use of already-existing templates to greatly simplify the customization process. This technical note gives the step—by-step process for adding custom events or attributes to the **Default GEDitCOM Format** (and also the French version **Format GEDitCOM par défaut**). Before you create such custom events or

attributes, you should read the **Warning** section below and decide if you want custom events or can make use of generic GEDCOM events instead.

This technical note is based on versions of the **Default GEDitCOM Format** posted on or after April 20, 2000. If you have an older version, you will need to visit the GEDitCOM web site (see title page for address) and download the latest version of the format. You can tell if your **Default GEDitCOM Format** is acceptable by opening the Template Editor and looking for the "evnt Editing" template. If it is there, you can continue; if it is not there, download the current version on the web site. (*Note: if you have the current version of GEDitCOM, you only need to download the **Default GEDitCOM Format**; you do not need to download the entire GEDitCOM package again).*

Technical Note #3 History

1. May 4, 2000: Initial release
2. May 27, 2000: Added comments about a simpler way to support custom events in GEDitCOM 2.8 or newer.

■ Custom Individual Events

If you are using the **Default GEDitCOM Format** and your special individual event is similar to standard GEDCOM events, you can customize GEDitCOM to handle such events by doing the following steps:

1. Pick a 3 or 4 letter name for your event or use a long name (see on-line help on **Defining Long Custom Tags** if you want a long tag name). For example, GEDCOM does not have a Deed event. In this example process, we will create a new Deed event for individuals. A good name for the event might be `_DED` (remember that custom GEDCOM tags must begin with an underscore).
2. Create a new template in the Template Editor and enter the following single line"

`use evnt Editing`

Save this new template using the name you selected for the custom tag. In this example, the template will be saved as the "`_DED`" template for "Tag Editing".

3. Open the [GEDCOM Tag Names](#) template in the Template editor, and give the new tag a common name. In this example, the `_DED` tag would probably be called "Deed"; thus, enter "`_DED Deed`" on a new line in the tag name template. Save that template.

4. Use the methods explained in the on-line help topic **Customizing Attachable Events and Attributes** to define the new `_DED` tag as an attachable deed event by editing the [Individual Events](#) template.
5. Open the [INDI Record Editing](#) template in the Template editor and scroll down to locate the table of events. The table is the section below the line

```
! ----- Events -----
```

Decide where to display your new event among the [ShowAll](#) commands and enter a new line for your new event. In this example, enter a [ShowAll _DED](#) line.

The new event is now ready to use; you should open a file and test it. You can attach your new event to any INDIVIDUAL Record by using standard methods for Attaching Data to Records for individual events (see **Attaching Data To Records** on-line help). Whenever the new event is present in a record, it will appear in the table of events.

A similar process can also be used to add custom individual events to the French **Format GEDitCOM par défaut** except step 3 needs to be modified to translate the event name into French. Step three now needs two parts:

- 3a. Open the [GEDCOM Tag Names](#) template in the Template editor, and give the new tag a common name in French. In this example, the `_DED` tag would probably be called "Acte"; thus, enter "`_DED Acte`" on a new line in the tag name template. Save that template.
- 3a. Open the [GEDCOM Tag Phrases](#) template in the Template editor, and enter a lower-case version of the name with an article. In this example, you would probably enter "`_DED l'acte`" on a new line in the phrase template. Save that template.

■ Custom Individual Attributes

The process for creating a new individual attribute is identical to the process of adding an individual event except for the following changes:

2. When you create the new template, use the single line

```
use attr Editing
```

instead of the line used above.

5. Instead of looking for the event table, look for the table of attributes below the line

```
! ----- Attributes -----
```

Enter the new `ShowAll` command among the other attributes in that table.

The only difference when adding an individual attribute to the French **Format GEDitCOM par défaut**, is the same difference described in the previous section. To correctly translate the attribute into French, you need to edit both the `GEDCOM Tag Names` and the `GEDCOM Tag Phrases` templates (see steps 3a and 3b in previous section).

■ Custom Family Events

The process for creating a new family event is identical to the process of adding an individual event except for the following changes:

4. Make the event attachable by editing the `Family Events` template instead of the `Individual Events` template.
5. Open the `FAM Record Editing` template in the Template editor and scroll down to locate the table of events. The table is the section below the line

```
! ----- Events -----
```

Decide where to display your new event among the `ShowAll` commands and enter a new line for your new event.

The only difference when adding a family event to the French **Format GEDitCOM par défaut**, is the same difference described in the individual event section. To correctly translate the event into French, you need to edit both the `GEDCOM Tag Names` and the `GEDCOM Tag Phrases` templates (see steps 3a and 3b in individual event section).

■ Warning

User-defined events and attributes will not be recognized by other genealogy applications and some sub-standard applications may even get confused if they try to import a GEDCOM file with user-defined tags. If you plan on sharing your GEDCOM files with other people, it is probably better to avoid creating user-defined events and attributes.

An alternative to defining custom tags is to use the generic event or `EVEN` tag in GEDCOM. A subordinate `TYPE` tag in this structure can be used to define the type of event. Other genealogy applications should be able to import generic event data. Starting with GEDitCOM 2.8, you can create custom events with generic events that work almost the same as standard GEDCOM events. The methods are described in the on-line help topic "Customizing Attachable Events and Attributes". The **Default GEDitCOM**

Format (and **Format GEDitCOM par défaut**) will recognize the use of generic events and display the `TYPE` tag as a label.

■ Updating to New Version of GEDitCOM

When you update to a new version of GEDitCOM, it may come with new versions of the **Default GEDitCOM Format** and **Format GEDitCOM par défaut**. Those new versions will not include your changes. To incorporate your changes into the new versions, repeat the processes in the previous three sections for any custom events or attributes. If there are any problems, check the GEDitCOM web site (address on first page) to see if there is a new version of this technical note. If there is a new version, it may describe some new things to do when creating custom events and attributes.