

ICW vs Triangulation

ICW and Triangulation. ICW simply means you and a match share others as matches. It does not specify on which chromosomes or segments you share DNA, only that all of you share DNA, somewhere, with each other.

Triangulation means that you have identified 2 or more people as sharing a segment of DNA on the same chromosome in a chromosomal pair, indicating that all of you are descended from a common ancestor who "passed" that segment to each of you.

Triangulation means many things depending on context. Again, in the context of genetic genealogy: triangulation occurs when A matches B and C on the same segment, AND B matches C on that same segment, too. Same segment refers to the same overlapping area, which I recommend to be at least 7cM.

At 23andMe and GEDmatch, you can compare B directly to C to verify their match on the same segment. You cannot compare two others at FTDNA, unless you can open one of their Family Finder kits. So at FTDNA you have two options:

1. Contact B or C and ask them to compare with the other and see if they match the other one on the same segment.
2. Determine if C is ICW with you and B (or vice versa) - this appears to work as a substitute for true segment triangulation virtually every time. If you get a fourth person to also meet this criteria, then it is pretty locked in.

I urge folks to try this with everyone in an ICW list, so they grasp the knowledge that not every ICW is on the same segment. ICW by itself is not triangulation. Only by actually looking at several cases, will anyone appreciate how DNA matching and ICW works. It helps one to gain experience and understanding with genealogy DNA.