

## TRANSCRIBING GUIDELINES

Pick any letter you want to start with, but once you start a letter or document, don't transcribe another until you are finished. (read anything you want!) *This avoids confusion in figuring out what is done and not done.*

When you start transcribing or reviewing a document go to the "Transcription Tracking Guide" and enter your name under "Transcriber" or "Reviewer". When you finish, go back and change your name to all capital letters so those interested in doing the next step knows which documents are ready, whether transcribing or reviewing. NOTE: when the second reviewer put in his/her name, they can enter "Done" in the "Done" column to notate that the letter is finished, *but if you don't feel all questions are resolved, don't enter "Done". Communicate with the others your concerns or contact Karen (info at bottom of page).*

- TYPE WHAT YOU SEE: Our main goal is to create text that mirrors the document. Write down words and paragraphs as you see them. Keep words in their original spelling, even if it is technically "wrong." Find a way to include any notes the author may have written on the top, bottom or sidebar. Use brackets (to the right of the "p" key) to specify where the note was from.
  - When the writer reaches the edge of the page, use the return/enter button so you can do the same.
  - Use the Tab key to show indents.
- The SQUARE BRACKETS are located to the right of the "p" key on the keyboard and signal that the transcriber is notating something, most often that legibility is an issue. *They are a standard in transcription technique.* Remember, the writer may use regular parenthesis, and we want to keep separate what they wrote and what we notate. If part of a word, or a whole word or a phrase is illegible, use square brackets to enclose the difficult part. Question marks can be used if you have doubt about a word. With a phrase or longer passage, indicate how long it is. All the following are appropriate solutions:
  - Ex: North by northwest measuring sixteen [?] chains to the next marker ...
  - Ex: North by northwest measuring [sixteen?] chains to the next marker ...
  - Ex: North by northwest measuring s[---]en chains to the next marker ...
  - Ex: Written signed sealed [\_\_3 words\_\_] by the said testator in our pre[sence?] at his request ...
  - NO guessing, use the last suggestion above for what you don't know.
- Add the page number of the original letter for ease of reference in referring back to the letter. Most of the letters are more than one page, but the page numbers are not written in, so you will need to track them. Only a few letters are as long as 8 pages. Note, however that the page number you put in WILL NOT match the page you are currently typing on in your transcription, as more words typically fit on a typed page than a handwritten page.

- Ex: Aunt Mary came to visit us on [orig. page 2] Thanksgiving bringing pie.
- Many of the letters came in an envelope. All information with a document is important. In brackets notate [Envelope], and below it put the information on the envelope with appropriate notes in brackets.

Sample letter entry with envelope:

[Envelope]  
[Post Mark] Albany NY Mar 18

Mrs. M. L. Thornton  
Frewsburg N.Y.

[Lower left hand corner]  
Care of Mr. A. M. Thornton

[Letter: page 1]  
[on right side of page] Albany, New York March 16, 1865  
My Dear Maria

*I have so missed . . .*

- When you see a sketch or picture on the page, please use the word “image” placed in brackets along with a description of the image: [image – bird with long beak and blue chest]. There are several water mark type images in the upper left hand corner of these letters, please note these.
- If text has a symbol for the word “and”, always use the ampersand (&). Use (+) only in mathematical equations.
- Use square brackets to indicate any general comments you add to the text.
  - Example: [page torn]
  - Example: [page is written in pencil, faded beyond legibility]
- Type unreadable letters as [-]. Type unreadable lines as [illegible line]. Use no more than three dashes per word, even if there are more than three letters in the word.
  - Example: Mrs. Greene said [illegible part of line] at the Sunday School . . .
  - Example: word could be either "Conestoga" or "Chattanooga" = type C[---]oga
- Type words inserted by the writer above or below the line of text in <angle brackets>. They are found below the “k” and “l” keys, accessed with the shift keys.
  - Example: George drove an old <blue> car.
  - Example: February 15 <1913>

- **CROSSED OUT WORDS:** use the strike through format that is unique to Google Drive/Google Docs.
  - Find and click on the 5<sup>th</sup> tab from the left, “Format”
  - Find and click on the 4<sup>th</sup> item down, “Strikethrough”
  - Everything you type will now have a line through it.
  - When you’ve finished the crossed out word or words, find and click on “Strikethrough” to be able to type in words normally.
- Use **COMMON-SENSE** to create a basic, readable transcription of the text.
- Above all, **BE ACCURATE**. Speed is good, but accuracy is best! *Simplicity is always the best rule.* Collaboration with others will aid in your decisions, this is easily done using the “Comment” option in Google Drive/Google Docs explained above.
- **NOTE:** usually you want to save often to not lose your work. By using Google Drive/Google Docs, everything is immediately saved, so we don’t need to worry about this step!

MAIN SOURCES (others used to corroborate information):

Alexis Davis: L. Tom Perry Special Collections Transcription Program Director, BYU, interview and written material.

<https://www.archives.gov/citizen-archivist/transcribe/tips.html>

Gary Martin: researcher and instructor with U of O Music Doctoral Program, U of O doctoral students, emeritus, interview and written material.

[https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Transcribing\\_Historic\\_Documents\\_\(National\\_Institute\).](https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Transcribing_Historic_Documents_(National_Institute))

<https://transcription.si.edu/instructions#basic>