

Help! I can't read this!

Old Handwriting in Genealogical Documents

July 11, 2018

Tips for Reading Handwriting

- o Make sure you understand the purpose of the record & information included.
- o Learn the technical or special language used in that record type (religious, legal, etc.)
- o If you can, work with high resolution digital images so you can enlarge them.
- o Look at a wide range of examples of author's handwriting, not just your ancestor's record.
- o Make notes on how s/he does lettering & compare illegible forms with letters you can read.
- o Use references or helps specific to language.
- o *Be aware of your assumptions.* Read slowly. Pay attention to details.

“You should never trust a man who has only one way to spell a word.”

~ Thomas Jefferson ~

- **Expect spelling inconsistencies**
(spelled phonetically; used abbreviations; mix of Latin & colloquial)
- **& frequent use of abbreviations**
(sped up the recording process, saved paper, ...)

Cyndi's List (genealogy links)

Right:

Page 1 of links to websites dealing with “Handwriting & Script: General Resources”



<https://www.cyndislist.com/handwriting/general/>

The screenshot shows the FamilySearch.org Help Center page. Red arrows with yellow numbers indicate a navigation path: 1 points to the 'Help Center' link, 2 points to the 'Lessons' tab, 3 points to the search bar, and 4 points to the 'Search' button. The search bar contains the text 'handwriting'. Below the search bar, the 'Lessons' section is displayed, featuring three lesson cards: 'Old Scandinavian Script' by Fritz Juengling, 'Reading Spanish Handwriting' by Brandon Lee Baird, and 'Russian Alphabet, Language and Handwriting' by Heather Stewart. Each card includes a thumbnail image and a brief description.

The screenshot shows the BYU Script Tutorial website. The header includes the BYU logo and the text 'Department of History and the Center for the Study of Old Languages'. The main heading is 'Script Tutorial: making sense of old handwriting'. Below this, there are two buttons: 'STUDENTS' and 'RESEARCH'. An orange arrow points from the 'RESEARCH' button to a list of language options on the right. The list is titled 'Click on the language you wish to study' and includes the following categories and options:

- ENGLISH DOCUMENTS
 - ENGLISH
- GERMAN DOCUMENTS
 - ENGLISH | DEUTSCH
- DUTCH DOCUMENTS
 - ENGLISH | NEDERLANDS
- ITALIAN DOCUMENTS
 - ENGLISH | ESPAÑOL
- FRENCH DOCUMENTS
 - ENGLISH | FRANÇAIS
- SPANISH DOCUMENTS
 - ENGLISH | ESPAÑOL
- PORTUGUESE DOCUMENTS
 - ENGLISH | PORTUGUÊSE

Below the screenshot, the text 'BYU Script Tutorial' is displayed, followed by a URL in a blue box: <https://script.byu.edu/Pages/home.aspx>.

English Documents

HOME

TECHNIQUES & TOOLS

- Hands
- Abbreviations
- Numbers, Calendar, Currency
- Latin

ALPHABET

DOCUMENTS

- All Documents
- Browse By Record Type
 - Church Records
 - Court
 - Military
 - Poor Law
 - Probate
 - Property
 - Miscellaneous
- Browse By Year
 - 18th Century/ 1500-1599
 - 17th Century/ 1600-1699
 - 18th Century/ 1700-1799
 - 20th Century/ 1900-1999

LAND, LEASES, & LITIGATION

INTERACTIVE EXERCISES

- Short Interactive Exercises
 - Easy
 - Intermediate
 - Hard
- Full Exercises
 - 1-1
 - 1-2
 - 1-3

Practice & Learning

- Christening Records
 - Words
- BIBLIOGRAPHY

making sense of old handwriting

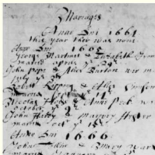

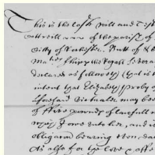
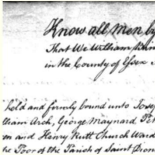
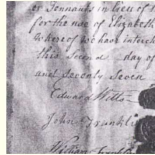
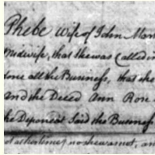
DOCUMENT COLLECTION

VIEW THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS

You may choose a document from below, or browse by Record Type

BYU Script Tutorial

*Note:
Some links are still under construction.*

 <p>Ade Parish Registers Norfolk, England 1664-1817 TRANSCRIPTION</p>	 <p>Manor Court Essex, England 1652 TRANSCRIPTION</p>	 <p>Wills and Probates Kent, England 1635-1679 TRANSCRIPTION</p>
 <p>Bastardy Bond St. Dunstons Parish England 1773 TRANSCRIPTION</p>	 <p>Church Pew Agreement England 1777 TRANSCRIPTION</p>	 <p>Coroner's Inquest Middlesex, England 1786 TRANSCRIPTION</p>

Website: *Alte Deutsche Schrift*

<https://www.deutsche-handschrift.de/>

What is it?

Presents a word or phrase that you type in as it would appear in various German handwriting styles.

Why?

To help you read old German records.

Type in:

Surnames
Place Names
Common Words

What you get are
eight choices of
fonts to view.

Deciphering
Old
Handwriting:

Make an
A-Z Chart

*Write in letters
in all ways they
are formed by
specific record-
keepers.*

(Copies of form
can be obtained
from Lyn Gesch.)

ALPHABET CHART
(for Deciphering Old Handwriting)
N. L. Gesch.

Repository / Location _____
Record Years _____ to _____

A		a	
B		b	
C		c	
D		d	
E		e	
F		f	
G		g	
H		h	
I		i	
J		j	
K		k	
L		l	
M		m	
N		n	
O		o	
P		p	
Q		q	
R		r	
S		s	
T		t	
U		u	
V		v	
W		w	
X		x	
Y		y	
Z		z	
Special characters & letter combinations:			