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/

BYU
Script Tutorial

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
  - 16th 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

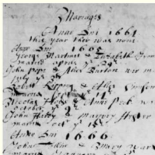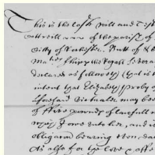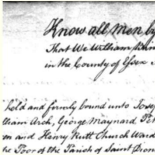: : making sense of old handwriting

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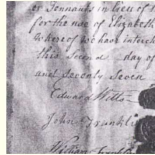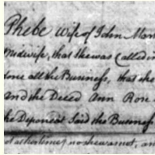
DOCUMENT COLLECTION

BYU Script Tutorial

VIEW THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS

Note:
Some links are still under construction.

You may choose a document from below, or browse by Re

Acle Parish Registers
Norfolk, England
1664-1817
TRANSCRIPTION

Manor Court
Essex, England
1652
TRANSCRIPTION

Wills and Probates
Kent, England
1635-1679
TRANSCRIPTION

Bastardy Bond
St. Dionis Parish
1775
TRANSCRIPTION

Church Pew Agreement
England
1777
TRANSCRIPTION

Coroner's Inquest
Middlesex, England
1786
TRANSCRIPTION

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)
M.J. Gesch

Respository / 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: