

Transcribing Letters

Transcriptions are done in MSWord – see the pdf “Guide to Preliminary Formatting” for instructions on how to set up the Word document prior to starting transcription, and for the formatting layout of the transcription text (the layout of your finished letter should look like the example given on page two of that guide).

The most important rule to follow is to transcribe exactly as in the original (except as noted below). **Do not change or correct** punctuation, grammar, date notation, spelling, etc. Pay attention to the details: if “dont” is written without the apostrophe don’t add one in the transcription.

Either turn “Auto-correct” off or watch it like a hawk.

Handwritten characters that have no keyboard equivalent are expanded to the word they represent – most commonly this is for the handwritten “looped-plus sign” meaning “and” which is transcribed as the word “and” not the symbol “&”.

If formatting such as underlining or superscript characters were used by the writer (e.g. “May 3rd”), then transcribe as such; otherwise make sure your auto-correct settings aren’t overriding your typing.

[?]: Anything that is unclear (e.g. words, parts of words, names, etc.) should be indicated by square parentheses containing a question mark “[?]”. If what is written is unclear, do not guess. When in doubt about anything, use the [?] format so it will be reviewed later.

Saving Files

Save each letter as a separate document, using the file naming format of the letter’s jpg/pdf files, but without the document/page numbering end bit e.g. “d01-p01”. The file format will look like this:

Lastname-Firstname_letter_YYYY-MM-DD.docx