



Brigham Young University's Script Tutorial

script.byu.edu

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- ❖ The BYU Center for Family History and Genealogy developed the Script Tutorial which offer guidance in the deciphering of documents written in handwriting styles or alphabets no longer in general use.
- ❖ Most of the language section explanations are also available in their native language.
- ❖ Script Tutorial has existed since 2005 thanks to the collaboration of BYU Family History faculty, student employees and volunteers.
- ❖ Almost half a million people, including students, researchers, historians, genealogists, and indexers have come to the Script site to learn more about old script handwriting.
- ❖ The concentration is on Western European scripts, particularly those in use between 1500 and 1800.
- ❖ It was created to help genealogical researchers decipher their old family documents.
- ❖ The site currently supports nine unique language tutorials with more languages to come.
 - These currently include [English](#), [Spanish](#), [Latin](#), [German](#), [Portuguese](#), [French](#), [Dutch](#), [Italian](#), with Russian, Catalan and Scandinavian coming in the next year.

The Paleography Tutorial

- ❖ [The Paleography Tutorial](#) has general introductory material about the history of writing and the development of different scripts (or hands), as well as extensive and interactive language-specific materials.
- ❖ This tutorial was created for the very beginner, those who have never studied archaic handwriting before, but also for those who want to become more of an expert.
- ❖ This page is designed to be a building block to the other paleography pages. Most of the language tutorial pages assume a beginner's knowledge of basic paleography.
- ❖ Not only does it help with the basics of paleography on the Reading the Documents page, but it also teaches you to write with a quill pen and ink.

Language Tutorials

- ❖ Each of our language pages has some content in common. In general, each language tries to follow the same formats as closely as possible to help the researchers who have multiple languages to read.
- ❖ The English, German & Spanish tutorials are unique, because they have special interactive exercises to help you practice what you have learned.

Practical Suggestions

- ❖ This specific page gives Practical Suggestions for reading old handwriting and is found within nearly all the language tutorials.
- ❖ Each different language has specific examples and links for the language, as well as research suggestions from an expert in that language.
- ❖ If you want to study multiple languages, this and the overview pages are the two you should read first.

Language

- ❖ Our language pages give a brief history of when and where the language originated, nuances of each language, as well as how it has changed over time.
- ❖ There are also maps showing the places where this language is used across dialect regions.

Handwriting History

- ❖ The Handwriting History pages are similar to our language pages, except they explain the history of the handwriting or script, not the language.
- ❖ Many countries or languages went through multiple scripts, different letters and forms over the centuries. It is necessary to know each different script and when they began.
- ❖ As you become more experienced with reading ancient documents, you will see that there are similarities between the different scripts, but until then, the Script site includes alphabet charts to help.

❖ Alphabet Charts

- ❖ The Alphabet Charts pages include extensive, detailed alphabet charts for every letter, both current and those that are not in use anymore.

Names

- ❖ Each Language tutorial has or will soon have a list of common given names and surnames.
- ❖ Each Name page will be different to meet the needs of each specific language.
- ❖ We include these because it is helpful to have a list to compare with the handwriting you are trying to decipher.

Genealogical Glossary

- ❖ This page has a list of common genealogical words and phrases.
- ❖ Ancient documents tend to very formulaic.

- ❖ Language and meanings of words change frequently. Having a genealogical dictionary or glossary is a must for any serious family history researcher.

Abbreviations

- ❖ All scribes in all languages used abbreviations to save time and money.
- ❖ Unfortunately, for the researcher, these are region, language and sometimes scribe specific.
- ❖ We try to show the most common abbreviations and keep them as comprehensive as possible.
- ❖ Most of the pages have grammatical explanations as well, such as explaining contractions, superpositions, hypocoristic, acronyms, and diminutives. These Abbreviation pages include typed and handwritten examples of each.

Latin Influence

- ❖ Latin has been used in official documents for centuries, both in notarial and church records.
- ❖ Latin was the official language of the Catholic Church.
- ❖ Priests and educated people were used to reading and writing in Latin, so it is common to see the influence of Latin in their writings in different languages.
- ❖ Most Latin documents were written in basic Latin, except when it came to names, which were depends on the language, but can be Latinized, and if so, were also commonly abbreviated with Latin abbreviations.

Alphabet Examples

- ❖ On the [German Alphabet page](#), we have animated examples of how the scribes would have written with their quill pens.

- ❖ By understanding the process for writing old letters, it will become easier to decipher the confusing letters on handwritten documents.
- ❖ For the German researcher, this interactive tutorial is great to use in combination with our Paleography Tutorial that I previously explained.

Other Interactive Exercises

- ❖ We also have different types of interactive exercises on the [English](#) and [Spanish](#) tutorials. Other language tutorials are planning on adding them in the future.
- ❖ This is an excellent tool to practice and become more familiar with the old handwriting.

Documents

- ❖ Another way the Script site provides practice reading old documents is by looking at them alongside a transcription and translation.
- ❖ We have tried to include the most relevant document types for each language.
- ❖ All languages will have birth, marriage and death records.
- ❖ Besides birth, marriage and death records, relevant record types can vary between countries and regions.
- ❖ Our Document pages will be some of our most unique pages on the website.
- ❖ Regional differences, as well as common information found on the different types of records are explained on each page.

Books

- ❖ On some of our language tutorials, we have genealogical books.
- ❖ These books vary and can be found on the bottom of the sidebar

Foreign Language Capabilities

- ❖ Some of our foreign language tutorials on the website includes the option to view it in their respective language.

- ❖ These tutorials have been manually translated to ensure correctness and relevance.
- ❖ By including this option, users can learn in their native language, or even learn the language for themselves.

Conclusion

- ❖ Thank you for taking the time to watch this presentation, I hope this gives you the confidence to get the most out of our website.
- ❖ Please visit the website at script.byu.edu to learn more.
- ❖ Or contact us directly
 - Email: cfhgoff@byu.edu
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