



Deciphering *Handwriting* in Old Documents

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Since the beginning of time documents were not written with the intent to be read centuries or hundreds of years later.

1. Tools:

- Magnifier
- Alphabet chart
- Paper and pencil
- Dictionary

2. Factors

- Spelling
- Phonics
- Abbreviations
- Symbols
- Handwriting styles

3. Tips

- Become familiar with phrases used in records
- Before 1850 there were no spelling rules
- If you are unable to read a word, then read it letter by letter
- Compare word and letters in other documents

4. Handwriting alphabet charts for different time periods for comparisons of letters. Not all letters in the alphabet were in existence for all time periods. Knowing what letters were around for the period will help you decipher words.

5. Handwriting styles:

- Gothic Script
- Angelicana Script
- Secretary Script
- Elizabethan Script

CENTURY	SCRIPTS
10 th century / 11 th century / 12 th century	Gothic / Book Hand / Black Letter/ Texturea Script
13 th century	Angelica Hands / Cursive Script / Antiquior Script / Court Hand / Chancery Hand / Lateran Hand
14 th century / 15 th century / 16 th century	Secretary / Italic Hand / Free Hand / Tudor / Bastard Hands
17 th century / 18 th century	Elizabethian / Round Hand / English Hand

PRACTICE, PRACTICE AND MORE PRACTICE

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