

PMVB Transcription Guidelines
(Last revised: June 2016)

All transcriptions should be Courier, 12-pt. font, double-spaced, with 1.5” margins on all sides. Note any issues that the editor needs to resolve on the transcript itself.

Recipient/Sender: Regardless of their placement in a document, the name(s) of the recipient/sender will always appear at the very top of the transcription. Use “To PERSON” to indicate a letter sent by MVB; use “From PERSON” to indicate a letter sent to MVB. If multiple authors, place the names in the order of signatures. If MVB is neither sender nor recipient, include names for both, e.g., “SENDER to RECIPIENT.” If you are unclear about either the sender or the recipient in a particular document, mark it for an editor with either Sender? or Recipient? For speeches, addresses, and other non-correspondence, indicate the form of the document and the audience, e.g., Address to the citizens of Schenectady, N.Y.

Place of writing/sending: Regardless of its position in a document, the place of writing/sending (if indicated) will always appear at the beginning of the transcription, two hard returns below the recipient/sender line and directly above the date line. Place of writing/sending will be flush right. If you are unclear about the place of writing/sending in a particular document, mark it for an editor with Place?

Date line: Regardless of its placement in a document, the date line will always appear at the beginning of the transcription, one hard return underneath the recipient/sender. Dates will be flush right. If you are unclear about the date line in a particular document, mark it for an editor with Date?

Greeting: Regardless of its placement in a document, the greeting will always appear at the beginning of the transcription, two hard returns underneath the date line. Greetings will be flush left.

Body: The body of the letter will always begin one hard return underneath the greeting. Each paragraphs should be indented one tab. Paragraphs will be flush left. If you are unclear about paragraph breaks in a particular document, mark it for an editor with ¶?

Closing: Regardless of their placement in a document, closing lines will always appear one hard return under the body. Closings will be flush left. If you are unclear about closing lines in a particular document, mark it for an editor with Closing?

Signature: Regardless of their placement in a document, signature lines will always appear at the end of the letter, one hard return under the closing. Signatures will be flush left. If you are unclear about the signature in a particular document, mark it for an editor with Signature?

Postscripts: Postscripts should be included underneath the signature. They should be flush left

Marginalia: Any marginalia that does not appear to fit the main text of a document should be included underneath the signature (or postscript, if applicable) and should be headed Marginalia. It should be flush left.

Envelopes: Any information on a letter's envelope should be noted below the signature line or, if applicable, after the marginalia. It should be headed Envelope and should be flush left.

Additional elements: Authors sometimes add labels such as "Confidential," "No. 2," etc., to letters. In those cases, place the additional element flush right above the place of writing/sending, with two hard returns separating it from the sender/recipient line and one hard return separating it from the place of writing/sending line.

EXAMPLE
To PERSON

Confidential
PLACE
DATE

GREETING

BODY PARAGRAPH

BODY PARAGRAPH

BODY PARAGRAPH

CLOSING
SIGNATURE

MARGINALIA
ENVELOPE

Transcription Basics

Ampersands: Retain as written; do not change to "and"

Blank spaces, intentional by author: Indicate with [*intentionally blank*]

Brackets: Only editorial insertions/corrections should be in square brackets. Anything in an original document within square brackets should be changed to parentheses.

Capitalization: Retain as written without correcting. If uncertain, follow modern usage.

Crossed-out words: Indicate with ~~strikethroughs~~.

Interlineations: Indicate with ^carets^.

Italicized words: Handwritten words are italicized by underlining the word. In the case of printed documents (e.g., newspaper articles), use either *italics* or underlining as employed in the original.

Missing letters: If misspelled, see below. If missing because of mutilation or faintness, supply, if possible, the logical letter(s) in brackets, e.g., m[is]sing. Otherwise, render the legible letters of the word and indicate missing letter(s) with a bracketed question mark, e.g., m[?]sing.

Missing words: Indicate in bracketed ellipses, e.g., [. . .].

Misspelled words: Render as written without correcting.

Punctuation, end: Dashes at the end of sentences should be changed to the logical end punctuation, e.g., periods, exclamation points, question marks, etc. Dashes following end punctuation should be omitted.

Repeated words: Authors sometimes repeat words, especially when moving from one page to the next. In all cases, do not transcribe the repetition.

Superscript and subscript: Make flush with the line, e.g., M^r becomes Mr (but without the period that commonly follows titles, e.g., Mr instead of Mr.).

Unclear words: If possible, indicate probable word in italics in angle brackets, e.g., <word>. If word is completely unclear, indicate thusly in angled brackets, e.g., <unclear word>. If multiple successive words are unclear, indicate thusly in angled brackets, e.g., <unclear words>.

Underlining: Retain underlining made by the author, but use single underlining in all cases, even if the author underlined two or more times.