# Contributing to the Chamberlain Letters Project

A Step-by-Step Guide for Encoding and Editorial Work

## 1. Getting Set Up

You’ll need a plain text editor that can read XML. Recommended free options:

- VS Code with the “XML Language Support” extension  
- oXygen XML Editor (free trial, or institutional license)  
- Sublime Text or Atom, with XML plugin

## 2. Opening the File

You will receive a file named like:  
  
chamberlain-letter42.xml  
  
Open it in your XML editor. The file is preformatted using TEI (Text Encoding Initiative) standards and includes comments and placeholders to guide your edits.

## 3. Editing Metadata

Inside the <teiHeader> and <front> sections, fill in:  
- Your name under <respStmt> → <name>  
- The date of the letter:  
<date when="1601-02-28">28 February 1601</date>  
- The place it was written from:  
<placeName>London</placeName>  
- The sender and recipient:  
<persName ref="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\_Chamberlain\_(letter\_writer)">John Chamberlain</persName>  
<persName ref="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dudley\_Carleton,\_1st\_Viscount\_Dorchester">Dudley Carleton</persName>

## 4. Tagging the Text

Paste the OCR-cleaned letter text into the <body> section and begin identifying key entities.  
  
Common TEI Tags (with examples):

<persName ref="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert\_Devereux,\_2nd\_Earl\_of\_Essex">Robert Devereux</persName>  
<placeName ref="https://www.britannica.com/place/London">London</placeName>  
<title ref="https://shakespeare.folger.edu/shakespeares-works/hamlet/">Hamlet</title>  
<orgName>Privy Council</orgName>  
  
Important: All tags must be opened and closed.  
<persName>John Chamberlain</persName> ✅ correct  
<persName>John Chamberlain ❌ missing closing tag

## 5. Linking to External Reference Sources

Use the ref="" attribute to link to authoritative sources. Make sure the link is specific to the correct person or place—double-check for birth/death dates and disambiguation.

Reputable sources:  
- https://www.wikipedia.org/  
- https://www.britannica.com/  
- https://viaf.org/  
- https://www.oxforddnb.com/ (may require access)  
- https://www.wikidata.org/  
- https://archive.org/  
- https://shakespeare.folger.edu/

## 6. Adding a Footnote

Use the <note> element to provide short explanations, clarifications, or historical context.  
Examples:  
<note>This letter was written shortly after the execution of Essex.</note>  
<persName>Essex</persName><note>The 2nd Earl of Essex, executed for treason in 1601.</note>

## 7. Writing a Note to the Project Editor

If you encounter something you're unsure about, you can leave a note for Brandon Taylor directly in the XML.  
<note type="editorial" resp="Brandon Taylor">  
 Unsure if this reference to "Lady S." is Lady Suffolk or Lady Salisbury—needs verification.  
</note>

## 8. Writing the Editor’s Note

Scroll to the <back> section and locate the <div type="editor-note">.  
Here, write a 1–3 paragraph summary explaining:  
- What the letter is about  
- Who the correspondents are  
- What makes this letter historically significant or interesting  
  
Example:  
<back>  
 <div type="editor-note">  
 <head>Editor's Note</head>  
 <p>This letter was written just weeks after the execution of Essex. Chamberlain reflects on tensions in court and news from abroad. It shows his typically cautious tone but also hints at underlying anxieties about political instability.</p>  
 </div>  
</back>

## 9. Submitting Your Work

When you're finished:  
1. Save the file with its original name (e.g., chamberlain-letter42.xml)  
2. Email the file to: [your email address here] or submit via GitHub  
Your contribution will be reviewed and—once approved—published at https://earlymodernletters.org

## Quick Reminders

- Always close your tags  
- Use ref="" when referencing external sources  
- Use <note type="editorial"> to leave questions  
- Keep editor notes reader-friendly  
- Save and submit the file exactly as named