

Manuscript Read Guidelines

Goal: To check for accuracy and consistency of transcribed Text(s) and T-Notes against the base MS. **You are only responsible for collating the edited Text against the base MS, not any other textual witnesses.**

Items you need:

- Text(s) in Microsoft Word
- T-notes in Microsoft Word
- Abbreviations List
- Editorial Practice section of the Introduction
- List of special characters:
- Base MS. Managing Editor will inform you which of these formats it's in: either a published facsimile, a digitized MS, or HQ scans/photos taken by the Volume Editor.
 - If the volume has multiple texts, check in the MS Scans folder for a Word doc, detailing base MSS for each text.
- Manuscript Read Comments template (includes tables and sample entries); download and fill out one **per text**.

Text Instructions:

1. Refamiliarize yourself with METS [Transcription Practices](#) in our Style Guide. In the volume's Introduction, read through the Editorial Practice section, noting the scribal hand (Anglicana, Gothic cursive, Secretary, etc.). Knowing the hand will help, if you need to reference any external sources to figure out letter forms or abbreviations. Note also any additional patterns of transcription, emendation, or features included in T-Notes that are specific to your Text(s). Both these docs will help you figure out what features to accept silently, and what to comment on.
2. Using the List of special characters, run a search for these characters in the Text and T-Notes. ME characters like thorns (þ) and yoghs (ȝ) should NOT appear in the Text, but can appear in the T-Notes. If there are any deviations from this general rule or from the locations indicated in the list, indicate it in the Comments template.
3. Grab the edited Text and the base MS and lay them out side-by-side. Start the read: Choose a small unit of text (20 lines, one stanza, a paragraph, etc.). Read the text and MS for a line-by-line comparison. Note any letters or letter-forms that do not match what you see in the MS, and document them in the MS Read Comments template. Delete the sample comments.

- o Make sure that folio breaks are accurately marked in the Text, and that they are sequential, with recto pages appearing before verso pages (unless otherwise noted in the T-Notes). In Prose texts, the folio numbers should appear in the Text itself, inside square brackets: [fol. 1r]. (If a folio break happens within a word, there should be a | in the word where the break occurs and the folio number should follow the word: breth|ren [fol. 1v].) If foliation is inaccurate, note in the Comments template AND insert a comment in the Text itself, to mark the correct location.
 - o Check that the edited Text silently expands abbreviations, instead of reproducing abbreviated forms. It may be helpful to you to keep a running list of abbreviations and their expansions. For help deciphering abbreviations, see the **Paleography Resources**, below. If there are abbreviated forms, insert a comment telling VEs they need to expand all of them.
 - o If the text doesn't follow the MS, check the T-notes first before documenting anything in the Comments template. A T-note should indicate why there is an emendation, either indicating a mistake in the base MS, giving a variant reading from another witness, or providing the VE's rationale for emending. If there is no T-Note, document the discrepancy and suggest the VE add one in the Comments template.
 - o You may generally assume that punctuation has been added by VEs to modernize the text. If the punctuation differs substantially in the MS, note this in the Comments template, and suggest the VE address punctuation in the Editorial Practices section of the Intro.
 - o Extra-textual features like enlarged or rubricated capitals, catchwords, paragraph marks, marginalia, illustrations, etc. should not be visually indicated in the Text. Instead, if the VE wants to note them, it should be done in T-Notes.
4. Check the T-notes corresponding to your unit of Text for these items:
- o Correct line/paragraph number and accurate catchword/phrase.
 - Make sure the spelling between Text and catchphrase match exactly, and that the catchphrase is italicized.
 - In Prose texts, T-Note catchphrases are highlighted **blue**. Check that the corresponding T-Note's book, chapter, and/or paragraph numbers are accurate. They should be placed **above** the relevant notes, as section headers.
 - If the catchphrase spans multiple lines, there should be a line range, not just a single line. Line ranges should use an en-dash.
 - Catchphrases that span multiple lines should have a three-dot ellipsis between the first and last phrase.

- Ex: *that every thyng . . . unto the instytucyons.*
 - If there are discrepancies between the Text and catchphrases, make them queries for the VEs. NB: The Text is usually correct, but since we're dealing with lots of variant readings, it's good to double-check.
 - o For Verse: If there are multiple instances of the catchword in a single line, the relevant appearance should be indicated by a subscripted number: *the*₃. This count includes capitalized instances of the word. For Prose: since it can be difficult to spot every instance of *the* in a chonky paragraph, we prefer a longer, distinctive catchphrase (*in the grand castel*) to subscripted numbers.
 - o Every T-Note should include the base MS reading. Usually this means that the base MS matches the catchword, which we indicate with "So."
 - Ex: (If R is base MS) *catchword*. So R. K: *variant*.
 - o The following items **require** a T-Note; if there isn't a note, indicate in the Comments template that the VE must add one:
 - damage affecting the Text, esp. if it makes it unreadable. Make sure the Text includes a (see t-note) tag.
 - skipped or rebound folios/pages (this should also be indicated in the Text's foliation). Make sure the Text includes a (see t-note) tag; for prose texts, include the (see t-note) tag at the end of the relevant footnoted gloss
 - different scribal hands or inks
 - o Observe how the VE handles extra-textual features in the T-Notes. (You may want to refer back to their Editorial Practice.) If they note things like enlarged/rubricated capitals, strikeouts, or marginalia, they must do so consistently. If they note one instance, they need to note them all. An exception: if there is a predictable pattern, such as an enlarged capital at the beginning of every stanza or paragraph, the VE can opt to note it in a headnote, rather than noting every instance.
5. Continue reading the Text and T-Notes against the base MS in your chosen increments until you've completed the Text. If there are multiple texts in the volume, repeat this process for all texts. Make sure your file names reflect the relevant Text titles.

T-Note Instructions:

1. Read through each T-Note. If necessary, review the [T-Notes section](#) of the Style Guide, for standard formatting. Document problems in the Textual Notes Comments template. For each note, ensure that:
 - o line/paragraph numbers are listed sequentially.

- all textual witnesses appear in abbreviated form. Check the abbreviations against the Abbreviations List. If some are missing from the Abbreviations List, note it on the Comments template.
 - if the catchword/phrase differs from the base MS reading, a justification for the emendation is provided. Note any places where such justification is missing.
 - if a note contains variant readings from witnesses other than the base MS, they actually are variants and not the same spelling of the word in the Text. If other variants are identical to the Text, that's a problem. Query it in the Comments template, asking the VE to double-check the spelling of the variant. If the VE confirms identical spelling, those witnesses should be included in the "So" list.
 - the note's content is appropriate for T-Notes. If the note is primarily about the Text's plot or characters rather than the appearance of the textual witness, it should be an E-note. Say so in the Comments.
2. After you're done filling out the Comments sheet for both Text and T-Notes, scroll back to the top and write a brief General Comments headnote, indicating major problems or patterns of error. This will give the VE a sense of what kinds of revisions need to be made.

Paleography Resources: If needed, you can check these out to the METS office for the duration of the MS Read

Brown, Michelle P. *A Guide to Western Historical Scripts from Antiquity to 1600*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990. [Our go-to for common abbreviations! Good for beginners: offers a series of plates and transcriptions. Covers Roman hands through Humanist hands.]

Cappelli, Adriano. *Dizionario Di Abbreviature Latine Ed Italiane*. 6th ed. Milan: Editore Ulrico Hoepli, 1961. [Best dictionary for Latin abbreviations! Extremely comprehensive and includes examples in various hands, so you can look up an unfamiliar abbreviation and learn how to expand it.]

Parkes, M. B. *English Cursive Book Hands: 1250–1500*. Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1969. [Includes detailed discussion of later book hands and a wide variety of plates and transcriptions.]

Hill Museum and Manuscript Library School (vHMML). Created by Saint John's University. <https://www.vhmmlschool.org/> [Great refresher for practicing paleography basics. Includes quick lessons on terminology, identifying various hands, and transcription exercises. Latin paleography covers Roman to Humanist hands.]

Late Medieval English Scribes. Created by The University of York, The University of Oxford, and The University of Sheffield. <http://www.medievalscribes.com/index.php?nav=off> [Useful for

comparing variations of letter shapes! Offers a database to study specific medieval hands. It focuses on Chaucer, Gower, Trevisa, Langland, and Hoccleve.]