# Guidelines for Transcribing Student Essays

OpenEd Solutions—4/23/2012

## Overview

The purpose of this document is to provide some guidelines when transcribing student essays. Because the students have handwritten their essays, it is sometimes difficult to know how to interpret their handwriting.

The goal of the transcribing is to have the digital copies be as close to the handwritten originals as possible. We want to include any errors the student may have made without contributing any additional ones.

## Guidelines

The following table provides some guidelines on some of the most frequently seen issues.

**NOTE:** We absolutely want to transcribe any misspelled words exactly as they’re misspelled. We also want any grammatical errors to be transcribed exactly as they occur in the original.

| **Issue** | **Example** | **Guideline** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Up to three illegible words | I think the way Norm Abram learns is good for him but maybe not for *<illegible word>*. He may be a visual learner. I have learned that some *<illegible word>* can mock what people are doing but others need to be taught in gradual steps and have things explained to *<illegible word>*. | If the words can be inferred, then go ahead and enter the words spelled correctly.  If the words cannot be inferred, then skip over the word, and flag the essay. |
| More than five illegible words | <Not applicable> | Skip the essay, and flag it. |
| Capitalization of letters mid-sentence | When They Come back, Saeng vowed SileNTly To herself iN The Spring wheN The Snow Melts And The geese returNs and This hibiscus iS budding, Then I will Take The Test AgAiN. | If it is handwriting style (all of a particular letter appears as upper case), then type the capitalized letters as lower case.  If a single words is capitalized for emphasis, i.e., “I fell down AGAIN.” then capitalize the letters when typing them. |
| Misplaced punctuation | Often the PDFs contain smudge marks that may be interpreted as punctuation. | If there is a smudge where a punctuation mark would likely be, enter the appropriate punctuation.  If no punctuation is appropriate at the smudge mark, do not enter any punctuation. |
| Odd spacing | “ and in the spring” OR  “…and try again. The hibiscus doesn’t stop…” | No need to enter extra spaces. |
| Paragraph Marks | I think the way Norm Abram learns is good for him but maybe not for others. He may be a visual learner. I have learned that some peoplecan mock what people are doing but others need to be taught in gradual steps and have things explained to them.  I am a visual learner, too. I need to have pictures to go along with any steps when I am learning something new. | If an essay contains paragraph marks, please insert “^p” where the paragraph mark should be.  For this example:  “…and have things explained to them. ^p I am a visual learner…” |
| Personally identifiable information | A student’s name, an address, the name of a school, a phone number, an e-mail address | Enter the information in the essay, and flag the essay. |