# Guidelines for Transcribing Student Essays

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## 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** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Illegible word | This *<illegible word>* probably one of his greatest novels. | If the word can be inferred, for example, in this case, “is” or “was,” then go ahead and enter the word spelled correctly.  If the word cannot be inferred, then skip over the word. |
| 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. |

If the handwriting in an essay is so challenging that the whole essay is indecipherable or if there are multiple words that cannot be read, please skip over these essays and make a note of them. In most cases, we have other essays that we can replace them with.

Also, if there are specific essays that you have questions about, you can refer them to Lynn Van Deventer who can make a decision about interpreting the essay or rejecting it.