TRANSCRIPTION TIPS

State Archives staff are available if you have any questions during this event. Please send your completed projects to statearchives@sos.ri.gov.

TYPE WHAT YOU SEE

All documents are unique and may contain various aspects such as stamps, tables, or charts. Type what you see and follow the order and layout as best you can. Type words exactly as they are written in the document. This includes capitalization, abbreviations, names, dates, and even misspelled words.

FORMATTING

The goal of transcription is to enhance accessibility and searchability. Every word you transcribe helps improve access to that document. You can indicate a word has been crossed out by including "[crossed out]" before or after the word to indicate its format, as it may provide useful information. Include punctuation exactly as noted in the document, even if it is incorrect.

SAVE FREQUENTLY

Transcription can be hard work, so make sure you save frequently.

IF YOU FIND A WORD YOU CAN'T QUITE READ

Handwriting can be difficult to read!

If you can't make out a word, use "[illegible]" OR "[?]." If you'd like to make a notation about something you see in the record, do so in brackets. For example: [stamp in blue ink]. Do your best and use your best judgement.

IS THAT "F" OR "S"

Since the two letters look very similar in historical handwriting, in certain periods the "f" was an "s", try to use as many context clues as you can. Ask yourself if the words or phrases make more sense with an "f" or an "s."

LOOK FOR CLUES FROM THE WRITER

This is a useful part of the letter to use to get your bearings, because "Dear Sir" is used in a lot of letters and doesn't often have any spelling surprises. We can see that the lowercase "e" in this word looks like a mirror-image "3", sometimes called a "Greek e". Knowing that the writer of this letter makes his "e"s like this can help us to puzzle out some words that might not be very clear. We can also see that the "a" in "dear" is open at the top. Maybe the writer leaves a lot of his round letters open. Clues like these can help you decipher the text as you go.