

# Guideline: Transcription



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## 1. Orthography

The cursive forms taught in the German-speaking world from the beginning of the 19th century until around 1925 are recommended introductions to learning German script. Anyone who is already familiar with the "Kurrent" letters will have less problems getting to grips with newer forms such as "Sütterlin" or "Offenbacher Schrift".

All German cursives have a four line system which categorises the letters in groups with ascender, corpus and descender:

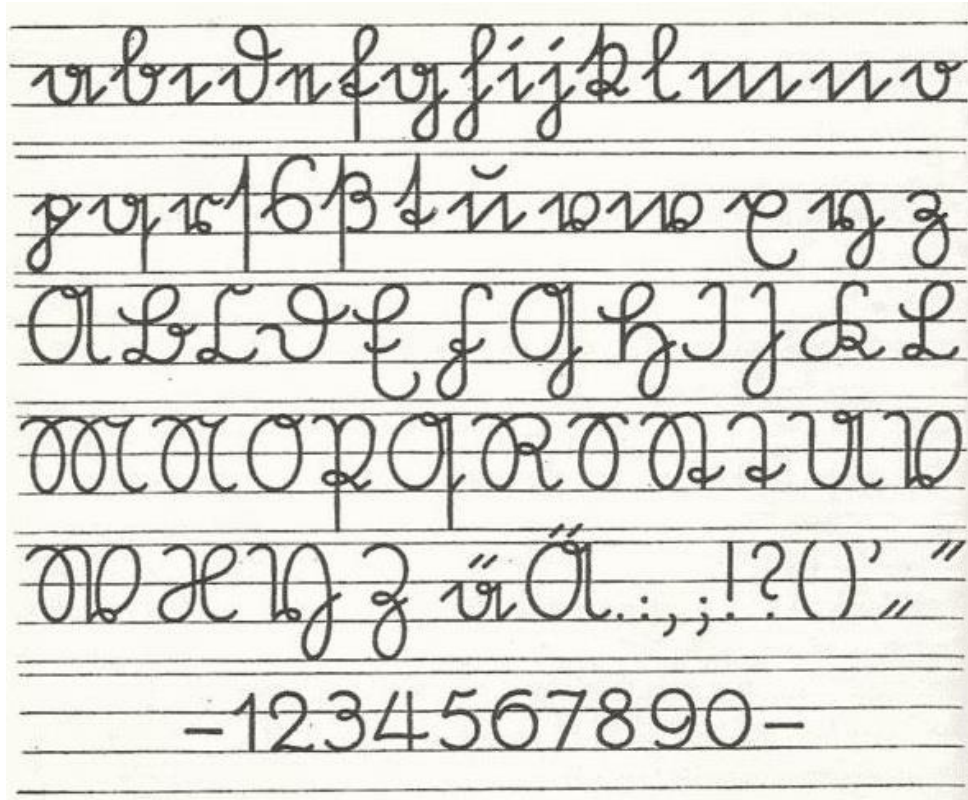


[(1) Top line (2) Centre line (3) Corpus line (4) Bottom line (a) Ascender (b) Corpus (c) Descender].

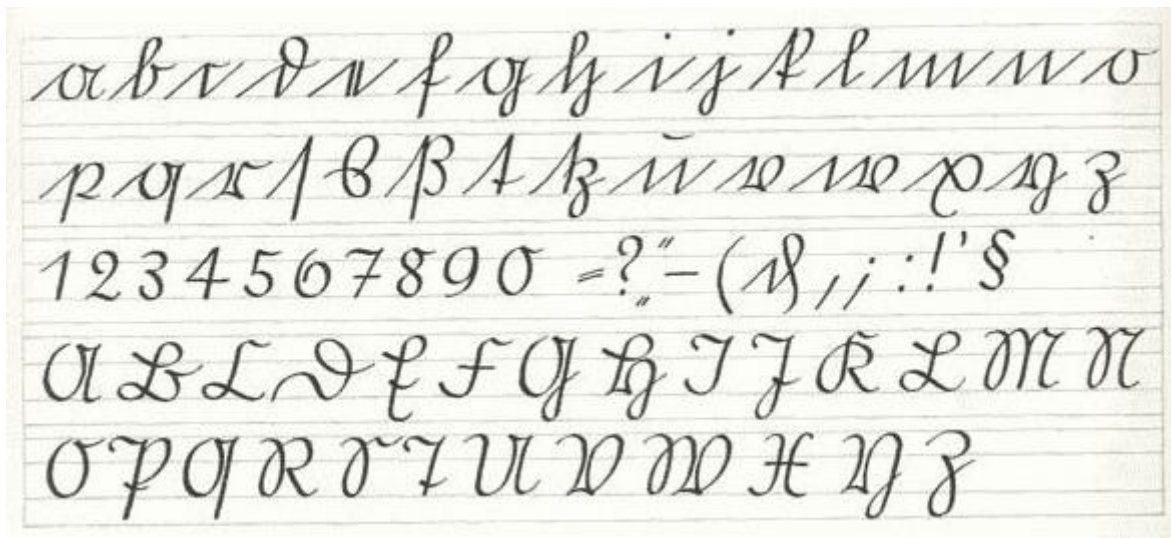
The following is a comparison of three scripts where you can quickly identify parallels.



Kurrent (around 1900)



Sütterlin (1911)



Offenbacher Schrift (1927)

## Special features

### The s forms

Two different s forms are used; the long s: *ſ* and the rounded or "final s" = *ß*. They are used as follows:

- the rounded *ß* is only found at the end of the word or syllable
- the long *ſ* is used in all other cases

In addition, there were also the *ß* and the double ss, which was often written with a combination of long s and rounded *ß*: *ßß*. This is often incorrectly transcribed as hs, e.g. the name Ehser.

### Ligatures (joining letters - two letters are merged into one character):

- ch: *ch* | ck: *ck* | ß: *ß* | St: *St*

### Potential confusions

- e: *e* and n: *n*
- g: *g* and p: *p*
- u: *u* generally differs from *n* with a small loop above the opening; this loop varies from person to person!
- d: *d* and D: *D*. The lower case d only has one pointed foot, but is otherwise not distinct and can therefore sometimes hardly be differentiated
- B: *B* and L: *L*. The B has a small loop at the bottom end.
- R: *R* and K: *K*
- N: *N* and St: *St*

## Aids

- An orientation aid for lower case letters is the categorisation of the various letters using ruling.
- **Lower case letters with descender** are g: *g*, j: *j*, p: *p*, q: *q*, x: *x*, y: *y* and z: *z*.
  - **Lower case letters with ascender** are b: *b*, d: *d*, k: *k*, l: *l* and t: *t*
  - **Lower case letters with ascender and descender** are f: *f*, h: *h* and s: *s*
- Lower case letters with no ascender or descender** are a: *a*, c: *c*, e: *e*, i: *i*, m: *m*, n: *n*, o: *o*, r: *r* and rounded s: *ſ*, u: *u*, v: *v* and w: *w*

## Learning aids:

### Literature

Harald Süß – Deutsche Schreibrschrift Lesen und Schreiben lernen, Knauer Verlag, 14.99 Euro (the 2007 edition also contains an exercise section which otherwise costs an additional € 9.99)

All standard copybooks with the four line system are suitable for practising letters; expensive exercise books are not necessary.

### Internet addresses

[www.deutsche-kurrentschrift.de](http://www.deutsche-kurrentschrift.de)

- Tablets, rules, reading exercises and a concise overview of the history including literature references etc.



## 2. Transcription

As a first step, it is advisable to **paginate the original** (number the individual pages). A soft pencil (HB, 2B) should be used to do so; the page numbers or paginations should be as small and discreet as possible at the top or bottom of the page. In diaries, recipe books and similar, all pages must be numbered, including blank pages! Only then does transcription begin. That simplifies referencing between the original and the transcription.

A short **introduction** precedes the transcription. It should include a description of the copyright holder, the texts and the content of the transcribed texts. If they are already archived it should also include a reference to the signature and the archive in which the object is stored. Furthermore, additional information regarding the provenance of the object, the copyright holder etc. can be very helpful to the reader.

Information should also be provided regarding the parentheses used, the pagination and any possible headers etc. Any special features such as photos, postcards or drawings should be mentioned in the introduction as well.

Attention should be paid to the following aspects during actual **transcription**:

Every original page in the document equals one page of transcription; the result is a copy of the original which is accurate in line and letter. The font size and line spacing may have to be adjusted in the computer programme in order to attain a line break in accordance with the original. Font size, line breaks and line spacing can therefore vary from page to page!

Pagination (incl. any headers) is adopted from the original (even in the inconvenient event that a page number is allocated twice! This should be noted in the transcription). If the original contains side notes, these should be noted in the margin at the respective height. There are two options for dealing with comments made between the lines (which were perhaps added to the original at a later stage): if the comments are noted in the text, they can (with appropriate indication) be included in the respective line of transcription. If however the comments are at the edge of the text, they are transcribed in a footnote.

## Annotations

- Errors and peculiarities in the spelling of words are retained
- Punctuation, however, is used in accordance with current grammar rules
- Proper names, e.g. of people and places, are capitalised
- Obvious spelling or grammatical errors are marked with [sic!]<sup>1</sup>
- Uncertain readings are marked with [sic?] after the word
- Abbreviations are written in full in square brackets
- Omissions, e.g. due to illegibility are labelled [...] in place of the omitted word
- Drawings, photos and postcards should, where possible, be included as scans in the transcription at the appropriate place (captions are of course also included in the transcription, e.g. [PHOTO of ...])

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<sup>1</sup> The term sic is from the Latin and means “thus” or “as so”. In full it reads sic erat scriptum, “thus was it written”.