

Transcribing Instructions

Douglass Day 2025 | DouglassDay.org



How To Get Started

1. Access the site: <https://crowd.loc.gov/campaigns/truly-douglass/>
2. **Optional:** Create an account by clicking “register” in the top right corner. You do not need an account in order to transcribe; however, you do need an account if you wish to review transcriptions or add tags.
3. Click on the “**Not Started**” or “**In Progress**” filters to show documents that still need to be transcribed. Click “**Needs Review**” to show documents that need reviewing.

Good to Know:

- Since the collection contains Frederick Douglass’s 19th and early 20th century personal correspondence, many of the letters were written in cursive script. Review resources for help on [transcription help](#) for handwritten cursive documents.
- Information on [documenting volunteer hours](#)

How To Transcribe

1. Click on the <**Not Started**> or <**In Progress**> filters to show documents that still need to be transcribed.
2. Click on an image to open a group of documents.
3. Click on a document to select a page and open the transcription interface.
4. Transcribe what you can into the box on the right.
5. Click “Save” periodically to save your work in progress.
6. Click “Submit for Review” when you finish transcribing.
7. Click “Transcribe Another” to receive a new document.

Good to Know:

- It is okay to make a best guess if you’re unsure about something. It is also okay to partially transcribe a page. Every contribution helps!
- Change your mind about a page? Use your browser’s back button and select a different group of pages. But first, click “Save” so that others can pick up where you left off!
- While transcribing work from left to right, top to bottom.
- Preserve original spelling, abbreviations, capitals, and line breaks. Include all titles and page numbers.
- Ignore formatting (such as italics, bold, underlining, indents).
- Access detailed instructions by clicking the “[How To](#)” dropdown at the top of any page. Find abbreviated instructions by clicking “Quick Tips” below the transcription box.

How to Review

1. If not already registered, create an account by clicking “register” in the top right corner.
2. Click the <Needs Review> filter to show documents that need reviewing.
3. Click on an image to open a group of documents.
4. Click on a document to select a page and open the transcription interface.
5. Compare the page carefully to the transcription.
 - a. If the transcription is accurate and you do not need to make any changes, click the "Accept" button to mark the page as complete.
 - b. If it is not correct, click "Edit." Correct any mistakes made by the transcriber or complete any words they could not read, which you can.
 - c. Be sure to click “Save” periodically, and then click “Submit” when you are done. (The page will be reviewed and approved by another volunteer.)

Good to Know:

- You cannot review your own work.
- Change your mind about a page? Use your browser’s back button and select a different group of pages. But first, click “Save” so that others can pick up where you left off!
- Access detailed instructions at any time by clicking the [“How To”](#) dropdown at the top of any page. You can also see abbreviated instructions while transcribing by clicking “Quick Tips” below the transcription box.

Additional Features

Tagging

Tagging is a way to help people search for items within By the People by providing additional information about a page.

1. If not already registered, create an account by clicking “register” in the top right corner.
2. To enter tags, simply type a word or words in the Tags box, separating them with a comma or clicking “Add” after each tag.
3. Make sure you click “Save tags” before leaving a page you have tagged.

Good to Know:

You might use tags to

- Provide a correct spelling for a misspelling in the original document. For example, if someone wrote Fredrick Douglass in the original document. Transcribe as ‘Frederick Douglass,’ and tag ‘Frederick Douglass.’
- To identify nicknames or code words. If you recognize someone using a nickname for Frederick Douglass, you might tag the document with “Frederick Douglass” to signal that that is who the nickname is referencing.

- To tag documents that mention the same things. If you're interested in letters from Frederick Douglass's son, you could tag any documents that reference him with the tag "son."
- Remember to keep tags as short as possible and use whole words instead of abbreviations. This will make it easier for other people to understand your tags and to reuse them elsewhere in the collection.
- Access detailed instructions at any time by clicking the ["How To"](#) dropdown at the top of any page.

OCR

Optical Text Recognition is used to recognize text in scanned documents and images and convert it to machine readable text. For various reasons, OCR may not successfully convert documents in this collection. You are welcome to try OCR, but be sure to check the outcome and correct any errors.

How to Get Additional Help

If you have a question or comment about how By the People works, or about a Campaign, item or page, connect with the By the People team and other volunteers on [History Hub](#), a public online forum where everyone can join in the discussion. Anyone can view existing posts on History Hub, however, in order to communicate with other volunteers or ask questions to By the People, you will need to create an account, which you can do by clicking "Register" in the upper right hand corner of the site. Note that this account is completely separate from your By the People account.

If you would prefer to email a Community Manager, send By the People a message on their [Contact Us](#) page. You can also tweet questions or interesting finds to [@Crowd_LOC](#).

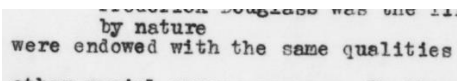
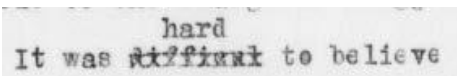
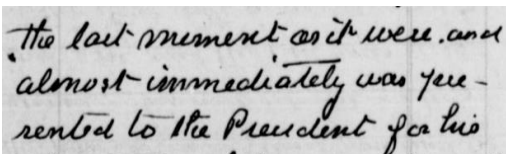
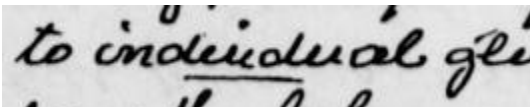
If you want to contact the Douglass Day team with questions or interesting finds, tweet to [@DouglassDayorg](#) or use [#DouglassDay](#).

You may also view tutorial videos made to help new users. The following videos are available on the Douglass Day YouTube channel:

- [What is transcription? What is reviewing?](#)
- [Getting started: Transcribing & Reviewing](#)
- [Additional Features \[Tagging and communicating with *By the People*\]](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

FAQs

The chart below addresses some common questions you may have while transcribing.

Issue	Instruction	Example
Misspellings	Type what you see. Do not edit or correct. Keep the author's original spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Do not expand abbreviations. To leave notes, use the TAG function.	
Illegible or unreadable text	Use [?] for unreadable words If you can read some letters in the word, transcribe those in the brackets.	I have [?] loved coffee ice cream I have [a?????] loved coffee ice cream
Insertions	For text inserted or added later: Type it in the order you would read it aloud. If it's part of a sentence, bring it down into the line.	 were endowed by nature with the same qualities
Deletions	Use brackets around deleted text If you can read crossed out or otherwise deleted text, transcribe the deleted words inside a pair of brackets.	 It was [difficult] hard to believe
Line breaks	Match the line breaks; do not hyphenate words Hit "enter" at the end of a line of text to preserve original line breaks. If there is more than one page in an image, you can use two hard returns [hit "enter" twice] to leave space between pages. When words are broken across lines, keep the word together on the first line. See example.	 the last moment as it were and almost immediately was presented to the President for his
Emphasis	Do not style Even when you see bold, italic, underlined or superscript text, transcribe it without any styling.	 to individual glory

Text in Margins	Use square brackets and asterisks [* *] around marginalia text and order it within the transcription where it makes the most sense (or at the end of the transcription if it appears unrelated).	I have always loved coffee ice cream. Last summer I made my own. [*In 2017, Brazil was the largest coffee producing country*]
Images	Don't describe images or other visual elements within the transcription box. If you would like to describe images, watermarks, stamps, or any other non-text features, use the tagging function.	
Blank Pages and Images	Use the " Nothing to Transcribe " box for blank pages, images or printed templates	

Instructions by Library of Congress. Modified by Lauren Cooper & Summer L. Hamilton.