



AI and the Old German Handwriting: Will It Work?

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1. The Old German Script

- a. Kurrentschrift (the old German handwriting)
- b. Sütterlin (a subset of Kurrentschrift, began in 1915)
- c. Fraktur (German typeface in German newspapers, on signs, etc.)

2. ChatGPT

- a. ChatGPT: <https://chat.openai.com/>
- b. Free and Paid Plans
- c. How to Use:
 - i. Click on the “plus” button on the leftside of the chatbox
 - ii. Click “Add Photos and Files”
 - iii. Write a prompt, such as “Transcribe from Kurrentschrift to German and then translate to English”
- d. Upgrade for More Consistent Experience
- e. Help ChatGPT Remember Your Research
 - i. “Remember that ‘erkannt’ means ‘recognized’”
 - ii. “Remember that I’m researching the Nitz family in Zettin.”
 - iii. “Forget that...”
- f. More Information: [Why You Should Not Be Using ChatGPT to Decipher the Old German Script](#)
- g. Not to be trusted for the handwriting – yet!

3. Transkribus

- a. Website: <https://www.transkribus.org/>
- b. How to Use:
 - i. General Tutorial: <https://www.youtube.com/@transkribus>
 - ii. Free Version:
 1. Click “For Family History” at top
 2. Choose “German Kurrent and Sütterlin”
 3. Drag and drop your document or browse files and upload

iii. Logged In:

1. Scroll down to “Quick Text Recognition” box
2. Choose your language model, such as “The German Giant I”
3. Drag and drop your document or browse files and upload
4. Click on the typed text on the right to see its equivalent in the handwritten text on the left

c. Free and Paid Plans

- i. Scholar Plan = better transcription

d. Cannot Do Columns (as in Column Church Records)

4. Archion

a. Uses Transkribus

- b. When searching, you can choose “Show hits with transcription only” (not recommended – you’ll miss out on records).

d. To Transcribe:

- i. Click the paper icon next to the link icon at the top of the screen.
 1. If necessary, click “Request/order text recognition”
- ii. Click the “txt” icon and then click on a line in the record to show transcription in record itself.

- e. USE WITH CAUTION – there are still many mistakes in this, and you need to be able to read the handwriting to verify what is correct and what is incorrect.

5. MyHeritage ScribeAI

a. How to Use

- i. Go to Photos > ScribeAI.
- ii. Upload an image.

b. Can Do Table Columns Correctly

c. Provides Historical Context

d. Current Best Choice (although still makes mistakes)

6. Where Do Humans Fit In?

a. Still necessary for 100% accurate transcription

- i. Knowledge of Old-Fashioned Words
- ii. Abbreviations Exist with Multiple Meanings

1. For example, “s” can be an abbreviation of a variety of things depending entirely on the context:

- “Sohn” (“son”)
- “seine” (“his”)
- “siehe” (“see”)
- “starb” (“died”)

- “selig” (“deceased”/“the late”)
- “Seite” (“page”)
- A surname (listed elsewhere in the same document_

iii. Can make Educated Guesses Based on Context and Prior Knowledge

7. What Can You Do?

- Using AI Transcription as Starting Point
- Fraktur
 - Fraktur Key: https://bit.ly/fraktur_key
- Questions on Meaning
 - “What does ‘Landwirth’ mean in German genealogy?”
 - “What does the abbreviation “weil.” mean in an 18th-century church record?”
- Translations of Printed Text
 - “Translate the following into English.”
- Writing to German Organizations
 - “Translate the following into German.”

8. Specific Handwriting Tools

- Script Generator Website: <https://www.deutsche-handschrift.de/adsschreiben.php#schriftfeld>
- WordMine Fill in the Blank: <https://www.wordmine.info/>
- Woerterbuchnetz.de Fill in the Blank: <https://woerterbuchnetz.de/>

**Let AI be your assistant, but you (or a professional) must be the final editor!
Have fun!**