



Transcribe Bentham is a new eLearning resource hosted by the Bentham Project in the Faculty of Laws, UCL, in collaboration with UCL's Centre for Digital Humanities, UCL Library Services and the University of London Computer Centre. It is funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council.

The website (<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/transcribe-bentham/>) offers a number of new opportunities to academic staff to engage their students with the works of Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and to develop skills in primary research and palaeography. Moreover, users are able to actively participate in a modern digitisation effort regardless of their current geographic location or initial digital acumen. The site itself provides educators and students with helpful guidance on integrating Transcribe Bentham in [secondary education](#) as well as examples of its current use by teachers.

The project, at its core, is a wiki-based effort to transcribe the voluminous papers left by Bentham. According to the researchers: "There are 60,000 papers written by Bentham in UCL's library but several thousands of these papers, potentially of immense historical and philosophical importance, have yet to be transcribed and studied. By transcribing this material for the first time, you will be making Bentham's thought accessible to the world at large, as well as helping UCL's [Bentham Project](#) in its task of producing a new authoritative edition of the [Collected Works of Jeremy Bentham](#)."

"By participating in Transcribe Bentham you will be helping to preserve national heritage. Your contributions will be stored and will eventually form part of a fully searchable online database. You will be helping to widen access to Bentham manuscripts and to encourage engagement with his works. You will also help to sustain the study of [palaeography and manuscripts](#). Your contributions will form the basis of future scholarship including printed editions of the [Collected Works of Jeremy Bentham](#). You may discover profound ideas which will help shape modern thinking."

In terms of usability, the website provides accessible text and video tutorials, as well as regular updates from researchers. When you first enter the site, you are presented with the project blog, which brings you up-to-date with any recent changes to the site as well as updates on participant use. Venturing over to the left hand menu, **About Us** will provide you with a rounded view of the project, collection and opportunities for involvement. The top option, however, is **Transcription Desk**.

Here is where the participatory aspect of the project really takes off.

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Transcribe Bentham project. At the top left is the project logo featuring a portrait of Jeremy Bentham and the text 'Transcribe Bentham A Participatory Initiative'. To the right is the UCL logo. Below the header is a navigation menu with links like 'Transcription Desk', 'Guidelines', and 'Blog'. A central banner reads 'Welcome to the Transcription Desk' and provides an overview of the project. On the right, there are two yellow boxes: 'Transcribe Bentham Right Now!' showing statistics like 306 articles and 527 pages, and 'Discussion Forum Info' listing recent forum posts. A search bar is located on the left side of the page.

Having decided to take part in the project, either as in individual or as part of a module, users begin by creating an individual account. After creation, this account can be personalised to provide additional information about participants in much the same way as other Web 2.0 sites.

This screenshot shows the 'Log in / create account' page. The main heading is 'Log in / create account' with a sub-heading 'Create account'. It includes a CAPTCHA challenge with the words 'pledge' and 'romantic' and a reCAPTCHA verification box. Below the CAPTCHA are input fields for 'Username' (filled with 'MHBeals'), 'Password', 'Retype password', and 'E-mail' (filled with 'm.beals@warwick.ac.uk'). A message states: 'A message will be sent to your email account immediately. This will contain a link which must be clicked in order to verify your account before you begin transcribing.' At the bottom, there is a 'Real name' field (filled with 'Melodee Beals') and a note: 'Real name is optional. If you choose to provide it, this will be used for giving you attribution for your work.'

Once the individual has registered, they are directed to the **Getting Started** page, which offers a simple video tutorial of the transcribing process, alongside a text-based one.

Getting Started

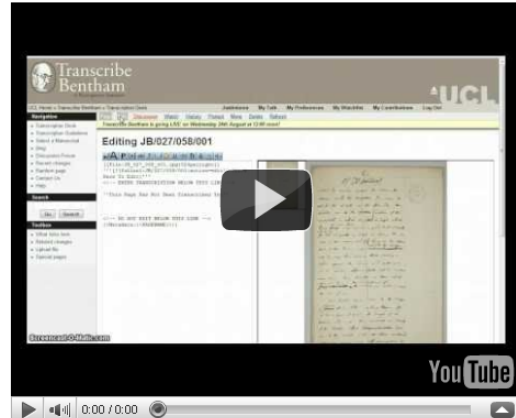
This page is intended to give users a very brief introduction to using Transcribe Bentham, and is not a comprehensive guide. Once you are more familiar with using the site, you should use the more detailed [Transcription Guidelines](#) as a reference resource for your transcriptions.

Getting Started: video tutorial

This page provides advice on some of the basic skills that are required in order to use Transcribe Bentham. To begin, please watch the the short video opposite, which demonstrates the major features of the transcription process.

To view a full-screen version of the video, click on the video while it is playing to open it in YouTube, and then click the 'Full Screen' button at the bottom right of the video window.

If the video does not load, [reset the cache](#).



Using Transcribe Bentham: Step-by-Step

1. You will first need to [create an account](#) in order to transcribe manuscripts.
2. Choose a manuscript to transcribe from [this page](#). There are a number of categories from which to choose, though beginners may wish to start with an easy manuscript.
3. Click 'Edit' in the toolbar of the chosen manuscript to begin transcribing.
4. Use the magnifier to view the manuscript more clearly. Magnification can be increased and decreased by using the slider at the bottom of the image; drag the image within the image window to re-position it.
5. Type your transcription in the transcription box opposite.
6. Use the toolbar above the transcription box to add markup to your transcription: there are tips on using this toolbar in the video above.
7. Preview your transcription by clicking 'Show Preview' below the transcription box. If your transcription is incomplete, save it by clicking 'Save Page' below the transcription box.
8. If your transcription is complete and ready for review, click the 'send a message to the Editors' link. This will open an email form in a **new window**: hit 'Send' at the bottom of the email, then return to your **original window** and save your transcript, as normal, by clicking 'Save Page'.

Before delving directly into the transcription process, however, the reviewer suggests you view the additional guidance that researchers have provided on [palaeography](#), especially Bentham's individual handwriting, and the more advanced features of the transcription wiki.

Neologisms

Bentham also coined many new words. Some of these, like 'international', we still use today, but many words are unusual and particular to Bentham. Try to represent the word as faithfully as possible. See a list of Bentham's [neologisms](#).

Flourishes

Letters were often represented with certain flourishes we do not use today. For example, Bentham usually wrote the letter 'd' with a swirl to the left:



reduced

A double 's', as in the word 'necessary', was represented as follows:



necessary

Once comfortable with the basic functions of the transcription wiki and the peculiarities of Bentham's handwriting, participants can get into the middle of action and start transcribing. First, visit the **Manuscripts** page under **Transcription Desk**. Then, choose a subject, date range or difficulty level. If working with undergraduates, the reviewer highly suggests *easy*, as these will certainly be challenging enough for most first-time transcribers.

Manuscripts

Select a manuscript to transcribe by clicking on one of the options listed below. Manuscripts are arranged by **Subject**, **Chronology**, **Difficulty Level**, **Box Number** and **Folio Number**. You can select a document from a subject area or time period of interest to you or of particular relevance to the course you are studying. Beginners with little experience of manuscript transcription may wish to start with a paper from the *Easy* category. If you would like to transcribe a page at random choose any manuscript from the *Folio Number* category.

To check the progress of transcription and to see a list of folios already started or completed, consult the *Benthamometer* page.

Subjects

- [Law](#)
- [Political Economy](#)
- [Moral Philosophy](#)
- [Crime & Punishment](#)
- [Religion](#)

Chronology

- [1770-1789](#)
- [1790-1809](#)
- [1810-1832](#)

View a [time-line](#) of Bentham's life.

Difficulty Level

Generally speaking, Bentham's handwriting deteriorated as he got older. Thus, the earliest manuscripts are the most easy to read; the middle period is moderate; while the later period is the most challenging (and therefore the most rewarding!) By clicking *Easy*, *Moderate* or *Difficult* below you will be directed to the corresponding chronological categories.

- [Easy](#)
- [Moderate](#)
- [Difficult](#)

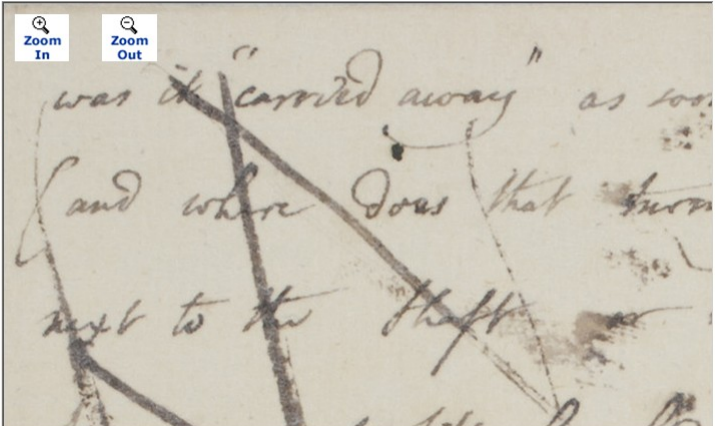
Once you choose a subsection, pick a document and begin work! Don't let your students be discouraged if the first few they choose already have part or full transcriptions. In fact, reading partially completed entries is a good way for them to familiarise themselves with the handwriting and transcription conventions of the project.

★ **GUIDELINES UPDATE: How to encode catchwords and superscript**

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[Click Here To Edit](#)

was is "carried away" as soon as he had carried it out of that turning in which he took it (and where does that turning end) or not till he had gotten it out of the last turning next to the shaft or not till after he had gotten out of the shaft into the open [...] or not till he had gotten out of the [...] of the owner of the [...] above (& so on as is the [...] supposition) who may or may not be the same person as the owner of the [...]?



Once the transcription is completed (by one or more individuals) it can be submitted to the project team for final approval.

Despite some minor technical issues, your browser must have an up-to-date version of Flash or JavaScript to properly view the collection, the Transcribe Bentham project offers lecturers and tutors of early modern history an incredible opportunity to offer their students hands-on research experience as well as developing greater technical competencies.

Use of the project website could easily be integrated into modules on British or intellectual history, as well as skills-based modules on research, palaeography or digital humanities. As the project is available world-wide without subscription, it offers undergraduates a new and exciting way to connect with fellow students around the world, as well as seeing the value of their efforts in “real” historical research.

Suggestions for integration with undergraduate modules:

- Link to a relevant image / transcription of Bentham’s writings as preparation for a seminar discussion [Content]
- Project an image of one of Bentham’s writings to students within a seminar, allowing them to transcribe it as a group – remember to upload their transcription afterwards! [Palaeography skills]
- Hold a seminar within a computer-lab environment and have students work in small groups to transcribe select passages [Palaeography skills / Digital literacy]
- Having students use the Bentham archive to answer specific questions about a historical period or theme [Content / Palaeography skills / Digital literacy]
- Use Transcribe Bentham in a seminar environment to assist students in developing palaeography skills. Then, have students integrate manuscript material (within or beyond the Transcribe Bentham Project) into a written research assignment. [Palaeography skills / Research Skills]

Reviewed October 2010 by Dr Melodee Beals, Academic Coordinator, History at the Higher Education Academy