

[Foreign Language Handwriting Assistance: Yes! You Can Read That Handwriting!](#)

Now that you have over 30 countries posted with prime resources in doing original research for your ancestors on five continents, you will inadvertently be challenged to read important documents or records which will lead you to more family history information. Is there a short course of instruction that can translate foreign languages into meaning for you? I don't profess that you can immediately solve all of your needs in learning foreign language handwriting skills when seeking your ancestors, but there are systematic ways to go about it plus *FamilySearch* is loaded with specific training tools that you need to be aware of. Below is an outline of how to approach this matter when encountering foreign documents especially in cursive. Hint in FamilySearch, search in the **Research Wiki** pull-down menu for handwriting tips which can be found in the Help pull-down menu in the upper right corner of the opening of this web site.

Here Are Some Tips/Tricks to Organize Your Efforts: (Just try!)

Start from what you know – a name, a place, numerals.

- Find your name in a document – your own name, or a parent's name – a name you are familiar with.
- Where and when was the document created?

Compare a variety of documents/handwriting of the same people. Look for older records (begin with the census), work back to become familiar with the handwriting changes. See how different your name appears in different documents with different handwriting.

Trace the handwriting: Trace on plastic sheet to feel the flow used by the original author.

Look and Write: Write on paper. Can you make the letters look the same as in the document?

Study the handwriting - Search "handwriting", "script", "handwriting guides"

- Handwriting guides, alphabet samples from the time period, language, and location of your document from FamilySearch Wiki, Google, etc.
- Online Hand Writing Tutorials (see below)
- Use foreign word lists to help decipher difficult words
- FamilySearch > Search > Wiki > [language] word list > Ctrl+F to search for the group of letters you have been able to identify. Move through the hits to compare to the typed foreign word with the handwritten foreign word

Indexing and Handwriting Helps:

[https://www.familysearch.org/indexing/help/handwriting#!/lang=en&title=Alphabet%20\(Secretary%20Hand\)#%2Flang=en&title=Alphabet%20\(Secretary%20Hand\)](https://www.familysearch.org/indexing/help/handwriting#!/lang=en&title=Alphabet%20(Secretary%20Hand)#%2Flang=en&title=Alphabet%20(Secretary%20Hand))

Consider the context of the word you cannot read – does it make sense? – watch the structure for a template/Boilerplate

- Grammar – what helps our words make sense and sentences have correct meaning Example: Lula's Mexican birth record <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-95H3-WWB?cc=1922462>

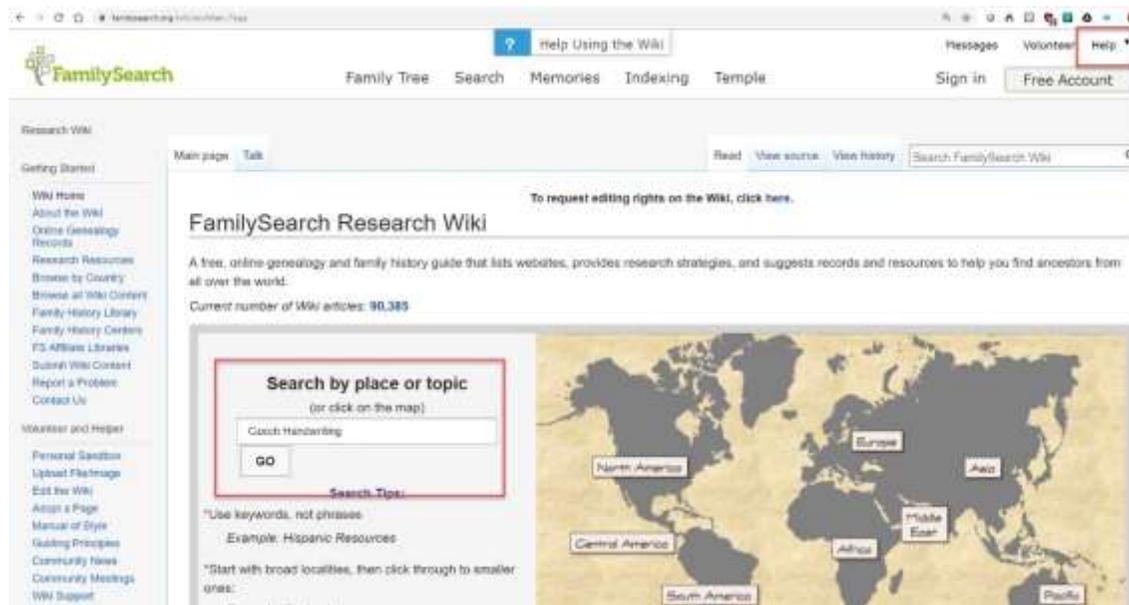
Template – documents were written in certain formats even before forms were created. A template may also be called a boilerplate – watch for specific terminology associated with each type of document. Example: "In the Name of God Amen" to begin a will.

- William Gillam's will (images 1059-1063) <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QSQ-G9G4-9FT1?mode=g&cat=456845>

Initial Steps In Assisting A Brother With Foreign A Foreign Language Handwriting Challenge!

Recently a brother in my ward approached me on how to learn Czech for his family history pursuits in Slovakia and in the Czech Republic. To better assist him, the first thing I did was to search for Czech and Slovak handwriting tools and tips on *FamilySearch*. Under the opening Help pull-down bar on the right

side, there's a search option to view *FamilySearch's* **Research Wiki**. See screen capture below for initiating this search within the two red boxes for **Help** and **Search by place or topic**.



One of the first things I learned was that *FamilySearch* already has handwriting Wiki's for individual countries with extensive training tools. Type in the search box for topic by typing in the country handwriting: **Czech Handwriting**. *FamilySearch* has a handwriting web site for nearly every country (see https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Browse_by_Country) for a complete list of counties covered in *FamilySearch*. The URL for learning Czech is https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Czech_Republic_Handwriting. Every link below provides unique opportunities to progress in becoming more knowledgeable about your foreign language needs when confronted with handwriting.

Czech Republic Handwriting

[Czech Republic Topics](#)

Beginning Research

- [Research Strategies](#)
- [Record Finder](#)

Record Types

- [Cemeteries](#)
- [Census](#)
- [Church Records](#)
- [Civil Registration](#)
- [Court Records](#)
- [Directories](#)
- [Emigration & Immigration](#)
- [Genealogies](#)
- [Military Records](#)
- [Nobility](#)
- [Obituaries](#)
- [Occupations](#)
- [Online Records](#)
- [Parishes](#)
- [Periodicals](#)
- [Population](#)
- [Religious Records](#)

- [Heraldry](#)
- [School Records](#)
- [Jewish Records](#)
- [Taxation](#)
- [Land & Property](#)
- [Town Records](#)

Czech Republic Background

- [Biography](#)
- [Languages](#)
- [Czech Word List](#)
- [Maps](#)
- [Gazetteers](#)
- [Names, Geographical](#)
- Handwriting
- [Names, Personal](#)
- [History](#)
- [For Further Reading](#)
- [Jewish History](#)

Ethnicity

- [Minorities](#)

Local Research Resources

- [Archives & Libraries](#)
- [Societies](#)
- [Family History Centers](#)

Moderator

The FamilySearch [moderator](#) for Czech Republic is [Pysnaks](#)

[Czech Republic](#)

Handwriting

Vocabularium

Here are some On-line Czech and German Handwriting Guides:

- [Czech handwriting examples from 1600-1935, letters A-M](#)
- [Czech handwriting examples from 1600-1935, letters N-Ž](#)
- [Old German Script Generator Website](#)
 - Type in a name or word in the white field on this website.
 - Click on the 8 different old German scripts to see what the name or word would look like to help you read old Czech records.

Helpful publications at the Family History Library are:

- *Učebnice čtení starých textů*. (Textbook on how to read old script). Praha: Česká genealogická a heraldická společnost v Praze, 2003. (Family History Library book INTL 943.71 G37u).
An excellent publication to teach you how to read old script found in Czech records. Includes various types of alphabet and handwriting examples in Czech, German and Latin with their transliteration.
- Šedivý, Juraj/Pátková, Hana. *Vocabularium parvum scripturae latinae*. Bratislava: Latin Palaeography Network - Central and Eastern Europe, 2008. (Family History Library book INTL 413 Se28v).
This is a Latin Paleography Dictionary of scholarly terminology. Each word is given in German, Czech, Slovak, Polish, Hungarian, Latvian and Russian. Includes English introduction.

FamilySearch has many other key web sites for handwriting assistance and training. Here's a good page to use from FamilySearch: <https://www.familysearch.org/indexing/help/handwriting>

Here are cursive handwriting examples of A to Z: URL

is https://www.google.com/search?q=Polish+historic+handwriting+examples+N+-+Z&tbm=isch&source=iu&ictx=1&fir=hLJ8aRJQPwrUgM%253A%252CXxf2-rtVeZhqIM%252C &vet=1&usq=AI4 -kSXfQTUJiaVIUmCHFo_vgkzYzzjzA&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjys9DVs-_gAhVHyYMKHYeFAaUQ9QEwAHoECAEQBA#imgrc=hLJ8aRJQPwrUgM:

Here's another good example page with letters A to

M. URL: https://docs.google.com/file/d/10ismuFCUHzSx70S834_nyT6wQTApSdMRBEQzufMdKpegFIKV/S73NJ3YYhwxj/edit

Since many Czech priests were probably educated in Germany, you might want to check out Germany handwriting tips. See https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Germany_Handwriting for a great introduction.

Closing Comments

Never hesitate to learn new skills, especially with resources of consultants at our stake Family History Centers world-wide as well in other stakes in your local area. There are consultants there who may be more experienced with your foreign language needs. Networking is the key ingredient in solving your family history needs far beyond the handwriting challenges that you may have. Networking is indeed "The Fountain of Youth!" for all genealogists.