

Different Ways to Gather Information from Documents

There are 3 main ways to manually gather information for research purposes.

Firstly, you need to determine what information you are looking for.

1. Do you want just a couple of points from the document?
2. Is it a very large document of which only parts are relevant to the research?
3. Do you just need a brief summary of the contents?
4. Do you want the whole document, warts and all?

The 3 methods for recording information are:

- Transcribing
- Abstracting
- Extracting

TRANSCRIBING

This involves copying the contents of a document *exactly* as it is written. This includes:

- ✓ Punctuation
- ✓ Spelling errors
- ✓ Variations in spelling
- ✓ No interpretation of the contents

An example of this might be a *full* transcription of a Will as written with all details or the *complete* contents of a letter.

ABSTRACTING

This involves summarising the document to highlight/represent the main points to include:

- ✓ Punctuation
- ✓ Spelling errors
- ✓ Variations in spelling

E.g.: names of beneficiaries and relationship to the deceased, but not the full content or certain points of interest in a letter.

EXTRACTING

Extracting means to cull pieces of information from the original, relevant to the extractor's needs.

E.g.: paragraphs or sentences from a letter or only relevant beneficiaries from a will.

Some Tips to Remember

- ✓ Take your time
- ✓ Decide which copy method is best for your needs
- ✓ Err on the side of too much information
- ✓ Proofread your work
- ✓ Review the original document yourself – errors do happen
- ✓ Photocopy or print the original document for future reference
- ✓ Be aware that an abstract or an extract does not contain the entire article