

Palaeography (study of old writing) and textual criticism:

Manuscripts:

There are currently three major series of text editions: OCT = Oxford Classical Texts (English), Budé (French), and Teubner (German). In addition there is the Loeb series with its text and facing translation. Here we find less emphasis on a full critical apparatus than in the other three. Major commentaries on individual works will also contain information about the transmission of the text and authors will state in their introductions at which points they have adopted a reading different from those in one of the three standard text editions. In the OCT series it is customary to give the information about the manuscripts in Latin.

Dealing with textual problems:

Although corruptions can be either accidental or deliberate, the majority are made involuntarily. Many mistakes are the result of scribal errors and the large number of glosses and variants found in the manuscripts often also caused extra problems for the copyist. It is helpful to try to identify each time which type of corruption we find in the text, even though this will not always be easy (and sometimes impossible). Please be careful when it comes to emendations and keep in mind that not all textual problems are soluble. Textual criticism often involves manoeuvring between Scylla and Charybdis: as an editor you need to do justice to the manuscript tradition and be careful not to change readings too readily, but you also need to avoid being so conservative that you will not accept that the manuscripts could be wrong and that a conjecture is necessary.

Reading the apparatus criticus:

Reading an apparatus criticus (i.e. what is printed at the bottom of a text edition) successfully is a task that can at first seem very daunting. The list of abbreviations should, however, help you. Remember that this is a skill which you will have to try to acquire gradually.

Abbreviations in the apparatus criticus

Some general rules

- Important MSS are given in capitals (in case of the very important mss the editor will even mention minor mistakes).
- The lower case is used for minor MSS (and not all the mistakes are mentioned).
- □ + number is used for papyri
- Often one letter is used to signify the consensus of a group or families of manuscripts in order to avoid having to mention all the manuscripts separately
- Trivial mistakes are usually left out by the editor in order not to overwhelm the reader with information.

A list of common abbreviations is given below. Editors will also often give you a key to the abbreviations they have used in their apparatus criticus.

coni. coniecit, coniecerat

suppl. supplevit

secl. seclusit

del. deleuit

rest. restituit

vid. videtur

om. omisit, omiserunt

add. addidit

fort. fortasse

SIGLA important mss

codd. codices also used for the consensus codicum

rell. reliqui

ms/mss. manuscript(s)
p./pap papyrus/papyri
cett. ceteri codices
ς one or more of the later mss, also cited as recc.
recc. recentiores
sch. scholion/scholia (sometimes indicated with 1)
ed.pr. editio princeps (first edition)
s.v sub voce: quotations from ancient or medieval dictionaries
Suda dictionary
Hesychius dictionary
edd. editores
M^{sl} supra lineam
M^{mg} in margine
M^{ac} ante correctionem
M^{pc} post correctionem
M² corrections and emendations made by a second (often later) hand
gl glosses (variant readings which can be interlinear or marginal); explains rare words, inserted in the text
lm/l. lemma word or words from the text
v.l. varia lectio, alternative readings
vel/al (alias)
< > omitted by mss, supplied by scholars
[...] spurious later additions (although in all or at least the great majority of texts)
†...† corruption, text printed is a conjecture

1. *codices manuscripti ponderandi non numerandi.*
2. *utrum in alterum abiturum erat?*
3. *impossibilis lectio uerae propior.*
4. *difficilior lectio potior.*
5. *facilior lectio potior.*
6. *lectio melior potior* [see Kenney, *The Classical Text* 142 n.2]
7. *ratio et res ipsa.*

Cf. Ov. ex P.2.4.27-8 *nec .../ caltha ... Paestanas uincet odore rosas*; Mart.12.31.3 *nec bifero cessura rosaria Paesto*; for the source of the error, Verg.geo.4.119 *biferi ... Paesti*; Ov.met.15.708 *tepidi ... rosaria Paesti*.