

Genealogy 201: Reading the Norwegian Churchbooks

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If you have chosen your parents wisely ☺, your genealogical research will include Norwegian records. Norway has one of the most readily accessible bodies of genealogical data of any country outside the United States; the 'Kirkeboker', or churchbooks, are an important part of those data. They are the primary repository of data on births, marriages, and deaths for roughly the period 1670 to 1930, and, best of all, they are online and accessible without cost. Their only real downside is that they can be a challenge to read. This paper will help you meet that challenge.

To start - Reference material needed:

- A map of Norway showing the counties (Fylke). Learn the former county names (e.g., Vest Agder used to be Lister og Mandal)
- A map showing the communities and parishes in the county you are researching - available on line
- If possible - a detailed map showing the farms in the community(ies) you are researching
- Digitized Norwegian churchbooks (Kirkeboker) and censuses, found at:
<http://www.digitalarkivet.no/cgi-win/WebFront.exe?slag=vis&tekst=meldingar&spraak=e>
- Calendar showing church feast days, Sundays, and other days by year for 1501 to 1900; many - especially older - churchbooks show dates using the church calendar, not the civil calendar. This calendar gives the dates in both Latin and Norwegian, as both are used in various churchbooks. The church calendar is found at:
https://www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Moveable_Feast_Day_Calendar_for_Norway
- LDS FamilySearch website: <https://familysearch.org/search>
 - *Bookmark the previous 3 items and keep them open in tabs in your browser for easy access*
- If you have access to the 'farm books' (Bygdeboker) for the communities you are researching, they will be helpful, but they are not readily available outside a few libraries (the LDS Family History Library in Salt Lake City, and the University Libraries of North Dakota, Minnesota, and Wisconsin have the best collections in the U.S.), or are expensive to purchase. Farm books are written in Norwegian, and exist for most - but not all - rural areas; some are in multiple volumes - check to see which volume includes the farms in a community that you are researching.
- The guidance below assumes that you do not know the Norwegian language. Knowing some of it is helpful, but not at all essential. A Norwegian - English dictionary is sometimes helpful, but many words in the older records are archaic and no longer in use, or their spelling has changed enough that finding them in a modern dictionary is almost impossible.
- The guidance in this paper is focussed on the churchbooks. More general discussions of tracing ancestors in Norway are at:
<http://www.digitalarkivet.no/sab/howto.html> and <https://www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Norway>

The basics of names and name records:

Names and naming patterns - Until the late 19th Century, Norwegian names followed the patronymic model in which a child's last name was based on its father's first name, followed by 'sen' (male) or 'datter' (female), as follows:

If the father's name was 'Jens Knudsen', a son Ole's name would be 'Ole Jensen'; a daughter Anna's name 'Anna Jensdatter'. When the father's name ended in an S, such as Jens, Hans, Nils, or Mons, the final S was usually dropped so the child's name would be Nilsen, not Nilssen; however that was not always the case and you will sometimes see a double S. Some persons spelled a man's name with 'son' at the end rather than 'sen'. Genealogists do not worry about that minor difference. In much of the older handwriting, a lower case e and o look pretty much the same anyway and you often cannot be sure which is which.

Persons living on a farm added the farm name after their name: Jens Olsen living on farm Aastvedt was 'Jens Olsen Aastvedt'. A woman's name did not change with marriage. But if she moved to a different farm, her farm name would change - see below. 'Madame', 'Monsieur', or 'Mand' preceding a name indicates a higher social status in the community.

Until the mid-19th Century, there were fairly rigid rules for children's first names: For example, assume Niels Aanonsen, son of Aanon Olsen and Kari Hansdatter, marries Anna Larsdatter, daughter of Lars Monsen and Inger Knudsdatter.

- Niels and Anna's first son would be named for the father's father - Aanon Nielsen
- Their second son for the mother's father - Lars Nielsen
- Their first daughter for the father's mother - Kari Nielsdatter
- Their second daughter for the mother's mother - Inger Nielsdatter

After that, names were often taken from the parents' grandparents, and the parents themselves, and would likely be chosen from among: Ole Nielsen, Hans Nielsen, Mons Nielsen, Knud Nielsen, Anna Nielsdatter, and Niels and Anna's other grandmothers.

If a child died young, the next child born (of that gender) would often be given the name of the dead child.

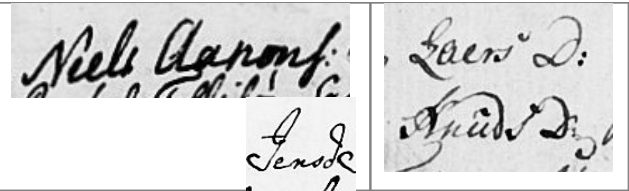
If a person was widowed and later remarried, the first girl born to the second marriage would often be given the first name of the deceased first wife, and vice versa.

However in major seaports such as Oslo (formerly Christiania), Kristiansand, and Bergen, there were numbers of non-Norwegian families, whose naming practices would not necessarily follow the Norwegian patterns.

Writing names:

Niels Aanonsen's name will often be abbreviated as 'Niels Aanons.', as shown at right.

Anna Jensdatter's name will often be abbreviated as 'Anna Jensdtr.', 'Anna Jensd.', or 'Anna Jens D.' with the D completely separated from the first part of the name as shown in the examples at far right.



In older records, and especially in rural areas, the name of Ole Jensen living on the farm Aastvedt may be written as just 'Ole Aastvedt'. A few families - mostly in larger cities - also kept a family name through generations. E.g., Peder Halling was the son of Andreas Halling; he was Peder Andreasen Halling; his daughter Josephine would be written as Josephine Pedersdatter Halling.

'Middle' names as we know them today were mostly unknown until the early 19th Century, after which they were common.

A man's name is often preceded by his occupation. Ole Jensen, a sailor, will appear as Matros Ole Jensen. Military ranks, or the word 'Soldat', are often seen. Women did not have 'occupations'; they were described as 'pige' (girl), 'jomfru' (unmarried woman), 'hustru' (housewife), or 'enke' (widow) as appropriate. (Of course they worked - hard, but at home and on the farm.)

If a man is a widower, his name will appear as 'Enkemand Ole Jensen'; a widow as 'Enke Anna Jensdtr.'. Occasionally the format will be reversed as 'Ole Jensen, Enke' (but look carefully, as that might actually be 'Ole Jensen's enke' - i.e. Ole's widow).

Thus a man's name can have up to five parts, plus 'og' (and) between the first two, e.g.: Enkemand og Matros Ole Jensen Aastvedt. The 'farm' part of a person's name changed if (s)he moved to a different farm (after marriage, later in life to live with adult children, or for some other reason). So Ole may be found in his birth record as Ole Jensen Aastvedt, in his marriage record as Ole Jensen Loland, and in his death record as Ole Jensen Svenevig - all the same Ole Jensen. If he was enumerated in a census along the way, there might be yet another farm name. All men and women living on the same farm ('gård' or 'gaard') used the same farm name while living there. Many, but by no means all, farm names end in 'land'; another frequent ending is 'stad'. Other endings are seen, but a word at the end of a person's name ending in land or stad is most likely a farm name. Records of second marriages where one or both are widow or widower will show Enkemand or Enke before the name(s). See below for discussions of names in different types of records.

Most birth records show only the first name of the child and do not include the patronymic which would identify its gender. The gender is revealed by the name itself - see Table 1, below. Be careful with certain names that look similar. For example, 'Ole' is a male name so later appearances of his name will be as Ole Jensen. But 'Olu' is a female name, so later she will be Olu Jensdatter. (And many writers wrote lower-case e's and u's as to be virtually indistinguishable.) Similarly, Gunder and Ingebret are male, but Gunvor and Ingeborg are female. Given the style of much early handwriting, and the poor quality of some record copies, making these distinctions can sometimes be a challenge. In marriage records this is not a problem as the husband is always listed first. These are not all the names you will see, but they are the great majority in the earlier churchbooks.

Table 1: Gender of first names: (the most common names are bolded; spelling is as more commonly found in the 18th Century)
(In names, K is always interchangeable with Ch; I with J; T with Th; V with W; and Aa with Å - pronounced 'aw' as in raw.)

<u>Male names</u>	<u>Female names</u>		
Aanon	Anna; Anne	Mads	Louise; Lovise
Aasmund; Ommund; Osmund	Aasille; Aase		Mari (Mary); Maren
Anders (Andrew); Endres			Marthe
			Mette
	Asbor	Michel; Mikkel	
Baard		Mons; Mogns	
Bent; Berndt		Nicolai	
Bjørn		Nils; Niels	
	Brigitte; Birgitte; Brita; Berte	Odd	
Carl; Karl		Ole ; Olaus; Olav; Olaf	Olu; Olaug
Christian; Kristen	Kirsten ; Christine	Osmund, Ommund	
Christopher		Oukild	
Claus; Klaus		Peder (Peter); Per	
Clement			Ranni; Randi
Colbent		Rasmus	Rassmine
	Dorthe; Dorte		
	Elizabeth; Lisbet	Rejer	
Elling	Ellen	Salve	Sara; Siri
Erich; Erik		Sigbjørn	Sigri; Sigrid
	Gjertrud		
Gunder	Gundvor; Gunvor	Siver; Siur	
	Guri		Sophie

Guttorm			Synneve
Halvor		Tallak; Tollak	
Hans			Targier
Ingebret	Inger; Ingeborg; Ingrid; Inga	Terkel; Torkild	
Iver			
Jens	Jenny	Thor; Tore; Tord	
Jon; John; Johan; Johannes	Joan; Johanne	Thorvald	
Jørgen	Jørgine; Joran		Tobine; Tomine
Joseph	Josephine		
Karl; Carl	Kari; Karen		
	Katrine		
Kristen	Kirsten	Tonnes	Tone
Knud; Knut		Torbjörn	Torborg; Torbor
Lars	Larsine		Trine (Katrine)
Lauritz (Lawrence)			

Some other male Biblical names are also found - David, Isaac, Jacob (Jakob), Paul (Povel), Samuel, Zacharias
Some other male 'English' names are found, especially later - Edvard, Rikard, Thomas, Villum

Some names were very popular in certain areas, but almost unknown in others; similarly, popularity changed over time. For example, Synneve is common in western Norway in the 18th Century, but unknown in southern Norway in the 19th.

Many minor spelling variations will be found. Inga and Inger are probably the same name, as are Anne and Anna, Knud and Knut, Jon and John, Gunvor and Gundvor, but Inger and Ingeborg are two completely different names.

Some immigrants to the U.S. took their farm name as a surname.

Identifying the specific records to search

Churchbooks you will be using almost all date from about 1670 to about 1930. Books before 1670 either were never created, or have not survived. Records after 1930 are still protected by privacy laws. The dates of the oldest books available vary for different communities and parishes; for example Kristiansand churchbooks were all destroyed in a fire in 1734, so none from before then are available (certain other records are available). For some places, there are gaps in the body of books available. The entire body of extant churchbooks has been scanned and made available on the Internet; it is browsable, but is not searchable by name or farm. It is searchable by county, parish, and generally short ranges of dates, then by year within a range. So the first challenge is to identify the churchbooks that may include records of the ancestors you are researching. The data from several national censuses is on line and is searchable by first and last name, age, and location, but that will usually not be very efficient unless you already know where your ancestor lived, or your ancestor had a very unusual name. For example, of the approximately 879,000 people enumerated in the 1801 census, over 57,000 were named Ole, and of those, over 8,300 were named Ole Olsen. Even a much less common first name like Mikkel is found 334 times.

There are three ways to start: - First and best is to scour your own family records: certificates, Bibles, letters, diaries, and the like, and to inquire of elderly living relatives for clues as to where in Norway your ancestors came from.

- Second is to look on Rootsweb (www.rootsweb.ancestry.com) to see if someone else has been researching your family and has posted their family tree data there. Rootsweb also hosts a number of bulletin boards where people post messages.

- Third is to use the FamilySearch website (URL above), but this may or may not be very helpful without at least some other clues. For example, this search lists over 137,000 people named Ole Olsen born in Norway between 1650 and 1930. Two ways to narrow this search are first by date of birth (or other known or closely estimated date); second is by location - at least at the county level. But even narrowing the search to Vest Agder County, and birth years 1800 to 1830 still gives 692 Ole Olsens.

Death records in the United States sometimes identify a birth location in Norway; a farm name may give a clue (but a given farm name will likely be found in multiple communities and counties). This writer found a clue to identifying an entire major branch of his family tree through a mother's farm name on an immigrant's New York death certificate. U.S. census records give only a country of birth for immigrants, but some do give immigration dates (or number of years in the U.S.), which in turn may be helpful in locating immigration records from Ellis Island or ship passenger lists showing the Norwegian port of embarkation; the latter may help narrow the search.

Once you have identified a Norwegian county to search in, use the drop-down menus to locate churchbooks for the communities in the county, and for the periods to search in. Some communities have just one set of churchbooks, normally called 'Ministerialbok' (kept by the priest), in date sequence. Some will have several sets with overlapping dates; in those cases, for a given year, typically one book will have births, another will have marriages, and another will have deaths. You have to open a book to see the index of its contents. Some of the larger communities may have two parallel sets of books - one called Ministerialbok and the other called 'Klokkerbok', which was kept by the church sexton. Usually these two sets of books contain the same records, but it never hurts to check both since one may be easier to read or contain certain data not included in the other one.

Reading the churchbook

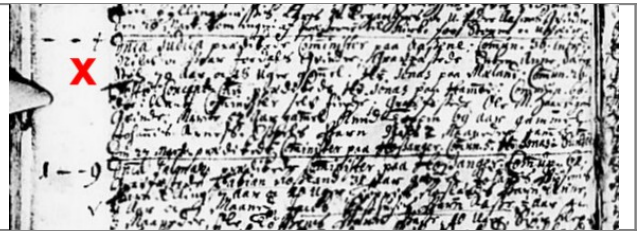
Before searching a churchbook, it is desirable to become generally familiar with the list of names (Table 1) and the lists of common words and abbreviations (Tables 2 and 2a) so you have a sense of what you will be looking at. (If you do know some Norwegian, then you may already know some of the words.) In the early years, churchbooks were kept in numerous different formats. Later books generally follow a common format.

For navigating through a book, you can use forward and back arrows that are found at both the top and bottom of a page; also by clicking once on the center part of an image you will be taken to the next page in the book. Clicking on the very far left edge of the image will take you to the previous page, or you can use the back button on your browser.

Now locate a churchbook with the type of record you want - birth, marriage, death. In books with only a single type of record, or with an index that locates records by page number, this is easy. However many of the older books are formatted with all types of records jumbled together in date sequence - called a 'Kronologisk liste'. With these it can be a challenge even to identify what type of record you are looking at; this is aggravated by the use of Gothic script, archaic terms in a mixture of Norwegian and Latin, less than clear handwriting, and less than good quality of some images. The writing in some books is very small and crowded together, and the writers are not always consistent - even within a single page - as to format and terminology. In other words - expect anything.

Fig. 1 - Here is an example of a small part of a page of a Kronologisk liste from 1706 (the writer of this paper has added red X's to the images next to records identified as his relatives):

You can magnify the images on your computer screen, but if you magnify them too much, they get blurry. Experiment with each record to find the optimal magnification for ease of reading.



That page looks formidable, but with some diligence can usually be read - at least enough for genealogical purposes. You are not likely to be simply browsing through pages like this one, but if you already know certain information such as a name, an approximate date, a set of parents, etc., using the guidance discussed later in this paper, you can usually identify a record of the person you are searching for.

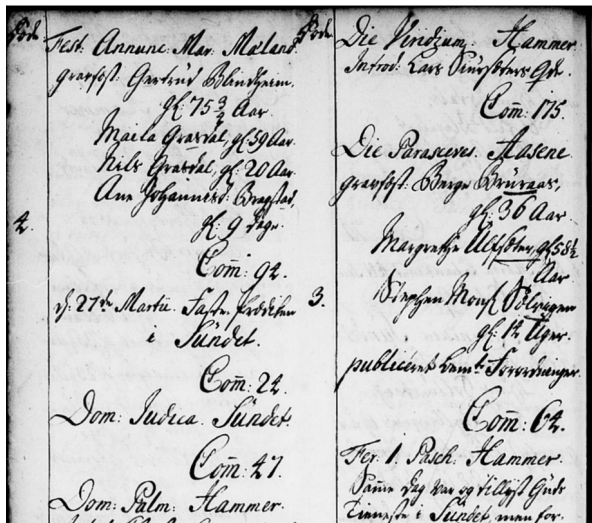
Many (and all modern) churchbooks number the records of each type sequentially through a year; the number appears in the left margin, or at the very beginning of a record. Appendix A below tells how to save images from the online churchbooks to your computer.

This writer strongly suggests that you spend some time upfront simply looking through a churchbook and getting familiar with the handwriting of a particular writer, and with the formats used in that book.

You presumably know from the index what year you are looking in. (One caution here: some churchbook writers start records for a new year as of the beginning of the church year - the first Sunday in Advent; others use the civil calendar year, so be careful about dates in very late November and all of December, which may be in one year for civil purposes, but in the following church year.)

Some churchbooks in Kronologisk format do separate types of records within, say, a month; some do not. The books for some communities with several parishes list records separately for each parish. Some communities appear to have had only one priest who rotated his visits - one parish this week, a different one next week, etc. Once you have identified which parish you want to search, you can ignore records in the book identified with the other parishes. Parish names are often underlined or otherwise identified - in Fig. 2 below, Meland and Hammer at the top right of the two columns are parish names; 3 lines below Hammer is Aasene, another parish.

Some books have columns for the different types of records - one column for births, one for engagements, one for marriages, one for deaths, etc. - Fig. 4, below. In Fig. 2 the columns are simply continuations of the chronological list, not different types of records.



Aar 1778		E. Ds		de		
1	2	3	4	5	7	
Mandag.	Dat.	Navn	Den Døde Skde Navn og kongelige Stilling (Hveringsort) med Tillidende for Navnet Indkommet af Opdræt, om den skdes var gift, Bøstemand (Bude) eller Prebitt.	Ved gifte Kener: Mandens, ved Døds: Føderens Navn og Stilling		
	Datum.	begyndt.	ført.	Åar	Føderens	
	32			1778	April 25	Kristianslund
	33	25 ^{de}	27 ^{de}	1778	Juli 23	Ø
	34	25 ^{de}	27 ^{de}	1778	Oktober 26	Ø
	35	27 ^{de}	27 ^{de}	1778		Ø
	36	4 ^{de}	4 ^{de}	1778		Ø
	37	6 ^{de}	11 ^{de}	1778		Ø
	38	9 ^{de}	14 ^{de}	1778		Ø

Fig. 3 - Above: Example of newer churchbook with printed headings and columns for each element of the record

Fig. 2 - Left: Example of an older churchbook (relatively easy to read). The numbers after 'Com' are the number of communicants at church that Sunday.



Fig. 4 - Example of an older churchbook with separate columns for different types of records. Since birth records are usually longer, they take up two columns in this book.

Letters:

This is the most challenging part of reading these books. The books were written in a form of Gothic script - much like the pre-WW-I German 'Fraktur' writing, over a 250-year period by hundreds of different writers - each with his own different handwriting peculiarities. Later books still used that script for printed headings, but the writing largely evolved into something more like modern script. Some letters are quite similar to modern English letters; others are completely different. Some letters are written in several different ways - even within the same word or name (!). For example an initial capital S is often very different from an S in the middle or end of a word or name. However, there are clues for identifying some letters; for example a lower-case 'u' is almost always written with a short arc above it, and the 'o' usually has two parallel diagonal lines above it. These are discussed further and illustrated below.

The Norwegian alphabet contains 3 letters not used in English: Æ / æ, Ø / ø, and Å / å. Alphabetically they come at the end. Å / å is often written as Aa / aa.

A suggestion for deciphering a letter that looks unfamiliar is to look elsewhere on the page for what looks like the same letter in other words or names written by the same writer about the same time, where you can understand the letter from the context of the other word/name. For example, if you are trying to read an unfamiliar name and cannot decide whether the initial letter is a C or an E (those two as initial capitals often look similar), look for a name that you know starts with one of those letters and would not be starting with the other, such as Christian or Erich, and see how the writer wrote the letter in that name. Then you will likely be able to decide which letter it is in the name you want to read.

Be careful when reading words on line that are close together. Writers often wrote certain letters with long loops or tails that intrude on the next line above or below (or both). C, d, E, f, G, g, h, k, p, S, s, and y are particularly troublesome this way. Thus when you are trying to decipher a letter on one line, it may appear to have extra pieces to it, but they are really parts of letters above or below. This is seen in several places in the excerpt on the right; an extreme example is the C in the heading on the right page of Fig. 5, below.

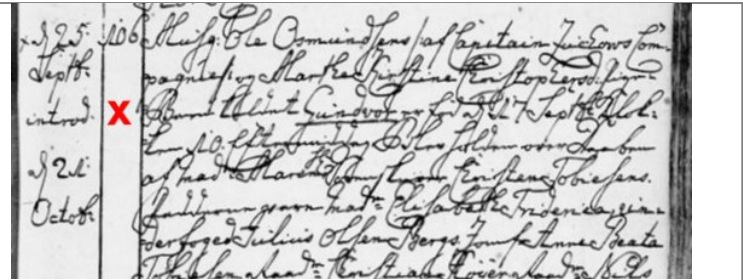
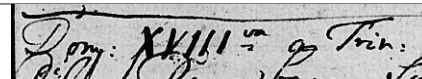


Table 3 at the end of this paper shows examples of many of the various forms of upper and lower case letters, and numbers typically found in older churchbooks. Letters and numbers in the table without examples most often look enough like modern English letters and numbers that you will have no problem identifying them.

Dates:

Next you need to identify the date of a record; this is where the church calendar website is essential, as the majority of older records are dated in the churchbooks only by the church calendar. If you already know the civil date of a record you want to find, then use the website to translate that date into the church calendar - e.g., 7 July 1715 is the third Sunday after Trinity, which is what you will search for in the churchbook; it will appear as 'Dom. 3 p. Trinit.' or some variant of that. Conversely if you have located a record in the churchbook dated on the third Sunday after Trinity and need to learn its civil date to enter in your own genealogy database, the website will give you the civil date. More recent churchbooks use civil dates, and a few show both. Be careful to distinguish between, for example, the first *day after* Easter, which is the second *day of* Easter - or 2 Pascha (in Latin), and the second *Sunday* after Easter which is 2 *p.* Pascha. When church calendar dates are given, they are most often in Latin. Months are often written in Latin also.

In a few cases you will see dates written in Roman numerals, as seen here for the 18th Sunday after Trinity:



The date will normally be the first element of a record or a group of records. If the first thing you see is 'ibid', 'ditto', Do., or 'Eod Die', that means the record is dated the same as the previous record in the book, so look backwards until you find a real date. Examples of this are records 3 and 4 in Fig. 8, below (the days are different, but the month (Nov.) is the same as that of the 2nd record).

Sometimes what appears to be the date is illegible. In that case look for the first legible dates before and after the date you want. At least you now know your date is between those two dates, and maybe the church calendar will help you decipher the date.

In the later books, the record of a birth will include both the actual birth date, and the date of the baptism - usually within about a month after the birth, although sometimes later. Similarly a later death record will show both the date of death and date of burial - usually within a very few days after death. However the early books generally only give one date, which is always going to be the date of baptism or burial; no record was made of the actual birth or death date. Sometimes the birth date will be added in the middle of a record, identified by the word 'Født', or just the letter F (see Fig. 8, below). Marriage records always show the date of engagement or reading of the banns; then sometimes the marriage itself will be noted next to the engagement date (see Fig. 5, below); sometimes the marriage is listed in its normal chronological sequence, or not recorded at all. Sometimes the third reading of the banns is considered to be the marriage. Where there is only one date shown, genealogists will use that as the birth, marriage, or death date - lacking anything better. Birth records were recorded in sequence as of the baptism date, not the birth date - even when both are shown (see Fig. 9, below). Similarly, death records are sequenced by burial, not death, date. Marriage records are normally reported as of the engagement date.

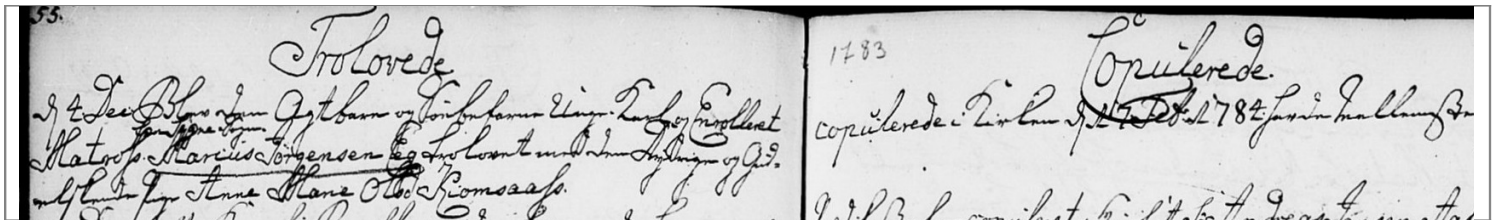


Fig. 5 - Example of an engagement (Troløvede) record, with the marriage (Copulerede) record added nearby. Marcus Jørgensen (name underlined) and Anne Hansdtr. were engaged on 4 Dec. 1783 (left page), and married on 17 Feb. 1784 (right page).

If you know a child's birth date, it is usual to assume the parents' marriage date precedes that date - not necessarily by a full nine months however. ☺ (But if the child's birth record is identified as 'uægte', that means the parents were not married.) It is also safe to assume that a parent's birth date precedes the child's birth date by at least 15 years - for biological reasons. Parents' birth dates will also precede their marriage date by at least 15 (and probably 20) years - for cultural reasons. It is also normally safe to assume that a child's birth date will not be later than about 50 years after the mother's birth date - again for biological reasons, and the converse - a mother's birth date is unlikely to be more than 50 years before the birth of her youngest child. (Men, of course, have a longer window here.)

When you know a child's birth date, (s)he may not have been the oldest child. If there were older siblings, that pushes the parents' marriage and birth dates back accordingly. Older siblings can often be identified using the FamilySearch website, or, if you are feeling adventuresome and the number of records is not too large, scroll backwards through the churchbook looking for the parents' marriage or other children of the same parents. If you don't find them, that may mean the family lived in a different parish earlier.

Types of records:

Most of the following discussion is aimed at helping you to read the older churchbooks (Fig. 1, 2, and 4, above) and those in pure chronological order, where headings and titles are often not used, records often do not include some elements, and the handwriting can be especially challenging to read. The more modern churchbooks (Fig. 3 above) - generally about 1850 and later - have headings, more complete records separated by type, generally more legible handwriting, and better quality images.

Birth/Baptism: There can be a lot of words and names here, and they come in many different formats - not always consistently, even within the same churchbook. After identifying the date (see above), start by considering the players involved. (The name of the priest is never seen except sometimes on the title page or last page of a churchbook.)

Of course there is the child, whose name (as noted earlier, usually only the first name) will often be underlined (Figs. 6 and 8, below), or set apart in the margin (Fig. 7, below) or otherwise. If the child is one of a pair of twins, the word 'twilling' (or some variant spelling) may be noted somewhere nearby, often next to a bracket encompassing the two children's names, or the two names may simply be written in sequence. The writers of some later churchbooks followed the practice of writing boys' names justified to the left in the column for the child's name, and girls' names justified to the right in the column; some writers underlined boys' names but not girls' names (Fig. 9, below). Some churchbooks put boys ('Mandkjon') in the top half of a page and girls ('Kvindekjon') on the bottom half (yes, sexism was rampant). Some list boys on the left page of a facing pair of pages and girls on the right page.

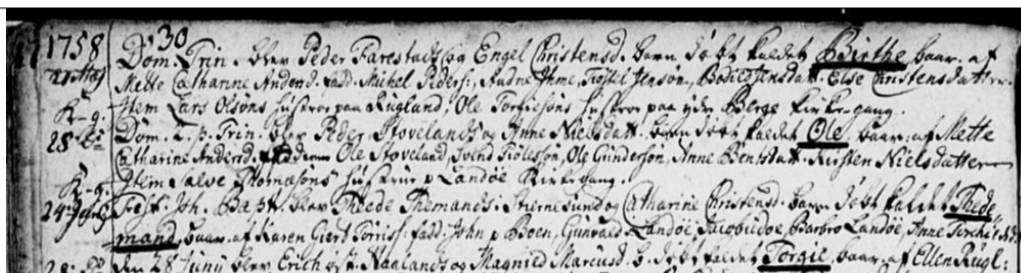


Fig. 6 - Example of a page of birth records showing the child's name underlined. Note that the third one is hyphenated onto two lines. Note also the mix of date formats - the first three in church calendar format, the 4th in civil calendar format since 28 June (bottom line) was not a Sunday that year.

(The 30 at the upper left is the page number.)

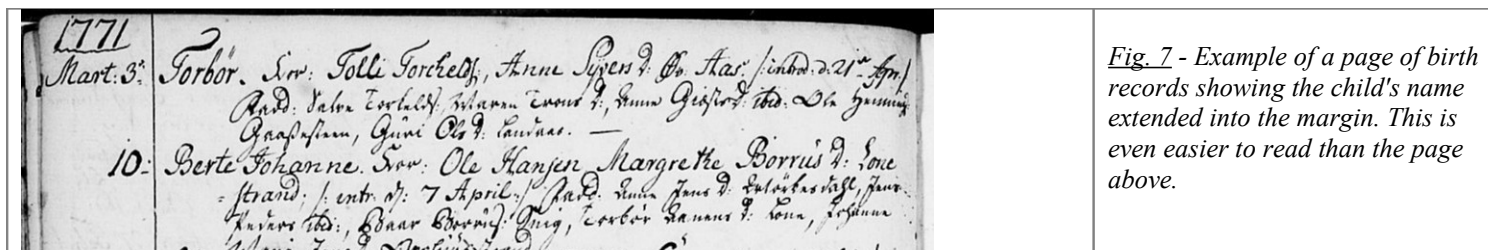


Fig. 7 - Example of a page of birth records showing the child's name extended into the margin. This is even easier to read than the page above.

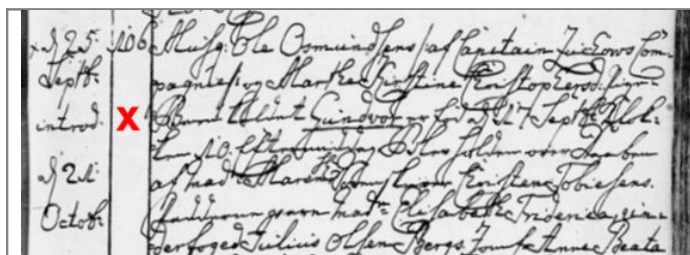


Fig. 8 - Example of a birth record with the actual date of birth shown in the middle of the record: 17 Sept. - on the 3rd line, after Gundvor's name (underlined). The baptism date was 25 Sept. and the Introduction date was 21 Oct.

Nr	Den op- gikne Dø- dets Dato	Døds- dato	Barnets fulde Navn	Om ægte eller uægte født	Dets Førelæres fulde Navn, borgerlige Ejendomsforhold
251	Sept. 6	Sept. 29	Johannes Christen	ægt.	Konung Johan Justus Christen Christen Christen
252	- 4	- 29	Peter Laurin		Peter Ole Christen Ede Bjørnstr.
253	- 17	- 29	Morten Einar		Peter Justus Christen Ede Niels
254	- 16	- 29	Jørgen Lovis		Konung Ole Christen Christen Christen
255	- 22	- 29	Alfred Einar		Konung Peter Christen Christen Christen
256	- 6	- 29	Alfred		Konung Peter Christen Christen Christen

Fig. 9 - Example of a page of birth records showing boys justified to the left and underlined; girls justified to the right and not underlined.

Also note the annual sequential numbering on the left, and the sequencing of the records by baptism date (3rd column), not the birth date (2nd column).

The column to the right of the child's name says whether the parents were married (ægte). Ditto marks were normally used after the first line unless an illegitimate child was listed.

Next is the father, whose name is always given. The mother's name is not always given, especially in older records. If you see what looks like four names with 'og' between the middle two, they are likely the parents, with the father's name first. An example is on the first line of Fig. 6: the parents are Peder Farestad (a farm name) og Engel Christensd. You are unlikely to see a woman's name alone; that would happen only in the uncommon case of the father having died between conception and birth, or if the parents were not married and the father was not present. Sometimes the father's or parents' name(s) will be preceded by 'Fad. or 'Par' or 'Foreldre', but more often not. A name preceded by an occupation (see above) will always be an adult - either a parent or Godparent.

Some records also list the name of the person who actually carried the child to the altar to be baptized. The word 'baar' followed by a name indicates this. On the first line of Fig. 6, after the child's name (Birthe) is 'baar', followed on the second line by the person's name. But more often the child was carried by one of the parents or Godparents, and 'baar' is not seen.

Finally there are the Godparents - identified usually as 'Fadd' - be careful not to confuse Fad (father) with Fadd. 'Test' is also found. There can be anywhere from two to a dozen of these - usually about six, usually evenly divided by gender, but not always. They are often aunts, uncles, and grandparents, and also other family members and friends. Godparents' names can sometimes be clues to identifying other family relationships. At least some of them will often be from the same farm as the parents, and their farm names are often replaced by 'ibid', meaning from the same farm as the preceding person (e.g., Ole Nilsen Aastvedt, Anna Hansdtr. ibid). This can be seen on Line 2 of Fig. 7 - third word from the end. If a parent's farm name is illegible, look to see if there is a Godparent with what appears to be the same farm name written more legibly.

Deciphering the sequence within a record can be tricky as there was no pattern. The Godparents are usually last, but before that, anything goes. Sometimes the child's name is first, as in Fig. 7; sometimes the parents' name(s), as in Fig. 6. Often it is possible to identify the child's name by underlining, and/or by one or more of the words 'Barn' (child), 'døbt' (baptized), 'kaldet' (called), or 'Nøm' (named) immediately preceding it. Again, on the first line of Fig. 6, after the parents' names are the words 'Barn døbt kaldet Birthe'. Often the child's name appears immediately before the identifier 'Fadd', so try looking for that and going back one word. In this case, Birthe was borne to the altar by Mette Catharine Andersdtr (2nd line), and the identifier 'Fadd' appears immediately after her name.

Stillbirths: In chronological records, these will appear when the event occurred, identified by the word 'dødfødt'. There may or may not be a child's name; if not, there may just be the word 'Barn'. There may still be Godparents listed. In records separated by type, stillbirths will normally be listed with other deaths. Of course these have no genealogical significance as far as possible progeny, but may help establish the parents' marriage or birth dates, and, if named, a grandparent's first name.

Engagement/Marriage: These are usually easier to identify as there will always be two names - either immediately next to each other, separated by the word 'og' or 'med', or one directly under the other. In Fig. 5, above, the 'og' is the next to last word on Line 2, and in Fig. 10 the next to last word on the first line. Following the names of the engaged couple will usually be the names of (normally two) witnesses - sometimes identified as 'Test', or 'Spons'. So if you see the word 'og' (and) or 'med' (with) as part of a record, that often means it is an engagement or marriage record. (As noted above, 'og' can appear within a person's name if it includes both a status such as Enkemand and an occupation. Less often in the older churchbooks, it is seen between the names of the parents in a birth record. It does not seem to be used in lists of Godparents.) More recent churchbooks often also give the ages or years of birth of the couple. This is helpful in tracing the family and separating one 'Ole Olsen' from others with the same name.

Fig. 10 - Engagement record on 31 Oct. [1737] of Niels Larsen Hommestad Ungkarl [unmarried] ... Soldat [soldier] og Enke Caren Olsdatter Stockeland.

The names of the witnesses are at the bottom, followed by their marks (most rural people could not read or write). Interestingly, the couple being married did not sign or mark the record. Note the different spellings of farm Hommestad - Two M's in the groom's name, one M in the witness' name.

Death/Burial: (see above regarding stillbirths) These records are generally the shortest and usually identifiable as such that way. If you are lucky, they will include the decedent's age - usually at or near the end of the record. But don't always assume the given age is correct. First, the age will usually have been rounded to the nearest full year, which can introduce a 1-year difference depending on the relationship of the months of birth and death. Second, many people did not know their own age very accurately - much less that of a deceased family member. If a person had lived in the same parish his/her whole life, the church record of birth would be used to calculate the age at death. As long as the given age is consistent with other information (known birth date, census record) within a couple of years, that would be considered normal. Beyond that, you want to be sure you have the correct 'Ole Olsen'.

If you see a record with a number in it - other than the date of the record or a sequence number, that is most often a death record. The age of an adult is normally given in years - sometimes with an added fraction. Ages of children up to about a year old will be given in months, weeks, days, or some combination of those. The age is sometimes given alone, but more often with the identifier 'Gamel' (often abbreviated 'Gl' or 'gl') and/or 'Aar' either preceding or following it, or at the top of a column. See examples in Fig. 11, below.

Even in churchbooks kept in pure chronological order, some writers would group all the deaths for a period into one list for, say, a month. So if you see a group of names followed by numbers, that is probably a list of deaths. (Another type of list of names and numbers is a list of those being confirmed, with their ages. These lists are usually preceded by the word 'Confirm.', or some variation, and the ages will all be in the teens.)

Death records of women - especially in older records and in rural areas - often appear as '[husband's first name plus farm name] [Hustru' or 'Enke', as the case may be]', without her last name. So the death record of Anna, Ole's widow, might read, 'Anna, Ole Jens. Enke', 'Anna, Ole Aastvedt's Enke', or just 'Ole Jensen's Enke' or 'Ole Aastvedt's Enke' without her first name (an example of this is the 4th record in Fig. 11). If Ole were still alive, Anna's death record might read, 'Anna, Ole Jensen's hustru'. If Anna had died before Ole, his death record will likely be just 'Enkemand Ole Jensen' or 'Enkemand Ole Aastvedt'. Similarly, death records of children are often written as, '[Father's name]'s Barn Nøm [Child's name]'; examples are the 2nd and 3rd records in the top part of Fig. 10.

Fig. 11 - Examples of death records showing ages. The first (Oslu) is of a single woman age 58. The 2nd (record starts 'Jacob') is of a young child (Barn, abbreviated B.) named (N.) Didrich, age 1/2 year. The 4th is of a woman whose identification is only as Clemet Klevs Enke (widow), age 78; her own name is not given. (After further research, she turned out to be his second wife, and not the mother of his children.) The 5th died age 12 weeks (ug.)

<i>gamel 65 Aar;</i>	<i>66. Aar gamel;</i>	<i>28 aar gl</i>	<i>Aanen Erseids Enke, Ragnil NielsD. 78 aar</i>	<i>widow's name given</i>
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Happy hunting!

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Table 2: Words commonly seen in records related to: (spellings vary)

Birth:

Fød; Født (born)
Dødfødt (stillborn)
Døbt; Døbte (baptized) - be careful to distinguish from Døde
Baptized; Bap; Bapt
Barn (child)
Pige or Pigebarn (girl)
Søn
Kaldet (called)
Nøm; Navn (name)
Twilling (twins)
Foreldre; Par; Parents
Mor (mother) - rarely seen
Fad (father) - be careful to distinguish from Fadd.
Fadd (Godparents - of both genders)
Test (Godparents)
ægte (means the parents were married)
uægte (means the parents were not married)

Marriage:

Trolovede (engaged)
1 gang (1st reading of the marriage banns) (sometimes the readings of the banns were notated simply by 3 dates a week apart)
2 gang (2nd reading of the marriage banns)
3 gang (3rd reading of the marriage banns) (this sometimes constituted the official marriage)
Viede; Ekteviede (married)
Copulerede; Copul; Cop; Nupt (married)
Jomfru (literally, virgin); (unmarried woman)
Ungkarl; Ungk (unmarried man)
Spons (sponsors)
Test (witnesses)

Death:

Døde; Død (died; death) - be careful to distinguish from Døbt
Dødfødt (stillborn)
Fun; Funer; Funeral
Gift (married)
Grav; Begravede; Begrav; Sepultry (buried)
Kastet Jord (literally - 'Cast Earth' [on the coffin])
Aar; År (year - referring to a person's age)
Gamel; Gl; Alder; Ald (old or age)

Other words frequently found:

ibid; item (same) - used in names and places to indicate that an element of the record repeats that element of the previous item
ditto; ditto, Do. (repeat part of the previous entry)
Anno; Aar (year); Nyt Kirke Aar (new church year - i.e., the beginning of Advent)
Monat (month) [The names of, and abbreviations for, the months are almost the same as in English.]
Uke; uge (week)
Days of the week are rarely used, except for Sunday - usually abbreviated 'Dom'
og (and)
med (with)
i; in (in)
fra (from)
Enke (widow); Enkemand - sometimes shortened to Emand (widower)
Sogn; Sogn (parish)
Gård or Gaard (farm)
Fest (Feast) (a special church day such as Easter)
Trin; Trinit (Trinity); e.g., 17 Dom. p. Trin. (17th Sunday after [post] Trinity) (see church calendar for other church date terms)

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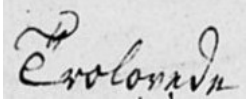
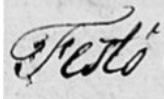
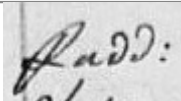
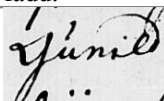
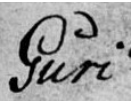
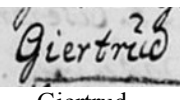
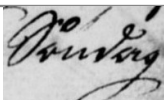
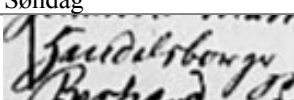

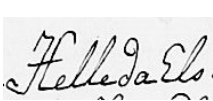
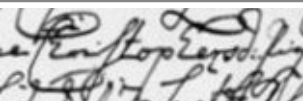
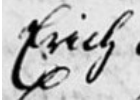
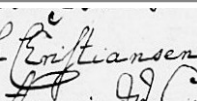

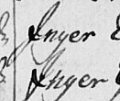
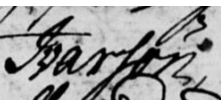
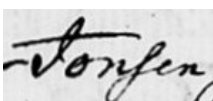
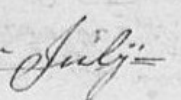

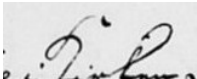
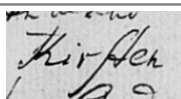
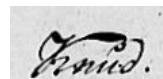
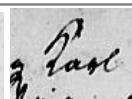
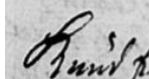
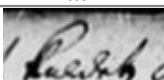
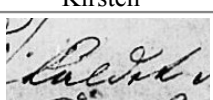
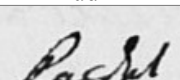
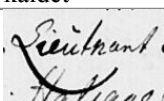
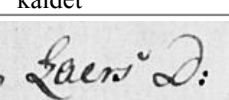
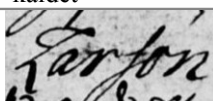
Table 2a: Common abbreviations

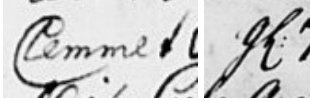
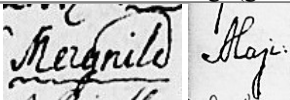
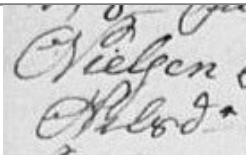
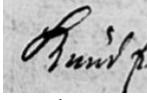
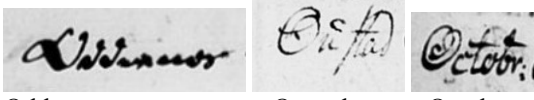
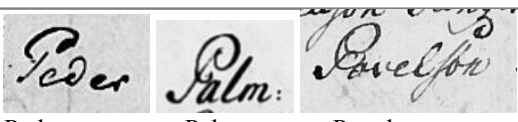
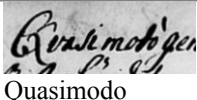
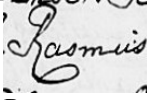
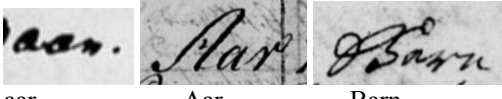
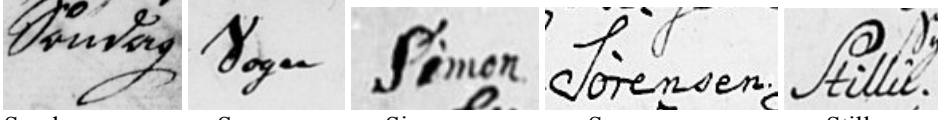
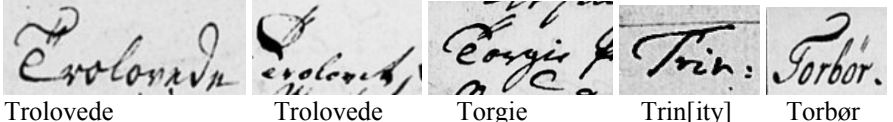
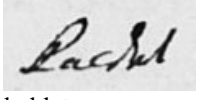
Abbreviation	Stands for	Translation
B. d. k. (or any 2 of them)	Barn døbt kaldet (in birth records)	Child baptized called
Chrsand.	Christiansand (the city)	Kristiansand (modern spelling)
Com.	Communicants	Number in church that Sunday
Cop.	Copulerede	Married
Dom.; Domin.	Dominus ([Day of] the Lord)	Sunday
dtr., d., D.	datter (at end of a woman's last name)	daughter of
Eod die; Ead die	Eodem die; Eadem die	Same day
f.	født	born
Fadd.	Fadder	Godparents
gl	gamel	old (meaning age)
h	hustru	housewife
Introd.	Introduced	Introduced (a newborn at church)
[names of months]	[names of months]	[almost the same as in English]
N.	Nøm	name(d)
n.	nedre (as part of a farm name)	lower
Nat.	Nativit	Christmas
ø.	øvre (as part of a farm name)	upper
p.	post	after (dates in church calendar)
sen; s., S	sen (at end of a man's last name)	son of
Trin.; Trinit.	Trinity	Trinity Sunday
Ungk.	Ungkarl	unmarried man
y.	yttre (as part of a farm name)	outer

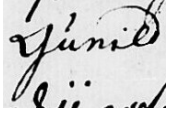
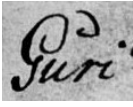
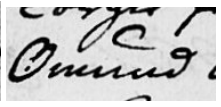
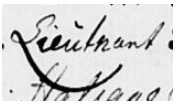

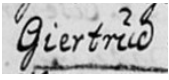
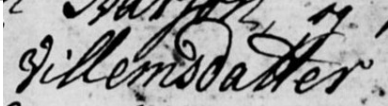
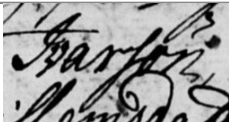
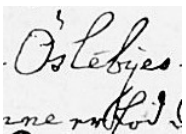
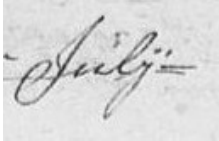
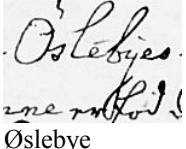
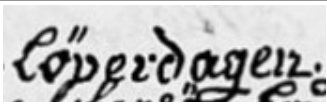
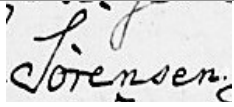

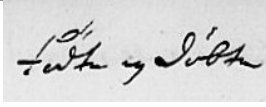

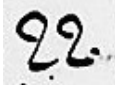
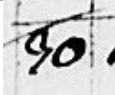

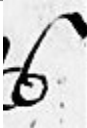
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Table 3: Letters and Numbers

Letter	Comments	Examples - illustrating Norwegian Gothic script
A		 Aar Aae
a		
B		 Berte Barn
b		
C	- When used, often looks similar to E - Note 1	 Caroline; Copulerede Copulerede Capitain; Com-; Christophersd. Christiansen
c	Note 1	
D		 Døde Døbt Døde Døbt Døde Daniel
d	The stem may curl far to the left over the preceding letters (e.g., Magnild at right).	 Magnild Gunild Søndag Trolovede Døde
E	Often looks similar to C, but has a crossbar in the middle	 Enkemand; Enke Erich Ellings. Enke

e	Often indistinguishable from n and u		Trolovede
F	Often similar to T		Festø
f			fadd:
G		  	Gunild Guri Giertrud
g	Lower case g, j, and y often have very long tails		Søndag
H		 	Handelsborger Helledahls
h	Often looks more like an upper case E	   	Helledahls Christophersd. Erich Christiansen
I	Often similar to J	  	Inger Jensd. Inger Ivarson
i			
J	Often similar to I. The loop may be crossed by a horizontal line (but so is I, sometimes - see above).	 	Jonsen July
j	Lower case g, j, and y often have very long tails		Maji
K		    	i Kirk... Kirsten Knud Karl Knud
k		  	kaldet kaldet kaldet
L		  	Lieutnant Laers D. Larson

l	When preceded by C, is often easy to overlook	 Clemmet gl (gamel)
M		 Magnild Maji
m		
N		 Nielsen; Nilsdr.
n	Often indistinguishable from e and u, and similar to some r's	 Knud
O		 Oddernes Oustad Octobr.
o		
P		 Peder Palm Povelson
p		
Q / q	K is usually used	 Quasimodo
R		 Rasmus
r	A final r may look similar to n	 aar Aar Barn
S		 Søndag Sogn Simon Sørensen Stillu
s	Often has a very long loop at the bottom.	 Jonsen Povelson Kirsten Nielsen; Nilsdr. Ivarson
T	-Crossbar is often crossed by two parallel diagonal lines. -Often similar to F	 Trolovede Trolovede Torgie Trin[ity] Torbør
t	Sometimes the crossbar is barely noticeable.	 kaldet
U		

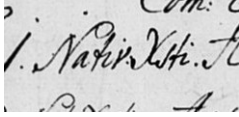
u	May be indistinguishable from e and n, but usually has a short arc above	 Gunild	 Guri	 Omund	 Lieutenant	 Stillu	 Giertrud
V		 Villemisdatter					
v		 Ivarson					
W / w	V is usually used						
X, x	Not normally used ²						
Y							
y	- Lower case g, j, and y often have very long tails - y often has two dots or a line above it	 Øslebye	 July				
Z / z	S / s is usually used						
Æ *							
æ *							
Ø	Often has two parallel diagonal lines or other mark above	 Øslebye					
ø	Often has two parallel diagonal lines or other mark above	 Løverdagen	 Sørensen	 Torbør	 født og døbt		
Å	Often written Aa						
å	Often written aa						
0							
1							
2	Top often curls back almost to the stem						
3	Left end of top is often curled over to look almost like a 9						
4	Often has a short horizontal line at the bottom						
5							
6	Tail often curls far around to the upper right						
7							
8							

9	Tail often curls far around to the lower left	
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* - letters are uncommon

Note 1 - While C is uncommon in modern Norwegian, it is found fairly often in the older churchbooks. 'Copulerede' is a frequent use, as are names such as Christian, Christopher, Carl, and Claus.

Note 2 - But occasionally an X is used in place of 'Chri' in 'Christian' or 'Christ', as in 'Nativ (birth) [of] Christi', below



Additional examples of Gothic letters are at <http://www.hist.uib.no/gotisk/>

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Appendix A - How to download an image from the scanned churchbooks and create a document that you can edit on your computer.

Go to <http://www.digitalarkivet.no/cgi-win/WebFront.exe?slag=vis&tekst=meldingar&spraak=e>

Click on Digitised parish registers

Click on Read the digitised parish registers

(Switch to English if you wish)

Choose the Fylke (county) you wish to search

Choose the location and the years you wish to search (you may have to open more than one book to locate the one that has the type of record - birth, marriage, death - you want)

Locate the page with the record in the online scanned churchbook

When the page is located, click once on the PDF-1 button at the upper right of the image

In the box that will come up, choose the folder into which to save the pdf image

Name the document and click Save

Open Windows explorer, and locate the saved pdf document

Right click on the document name, and click on Open with Adobe Acrobat [current version]

When the document is open, click once on the document; first a negative image will briefly appear, then the positive image will reappear; wait for several seconds

A new image of the document will appear in a new browser tab, with a wide black frame

On the toolbar, click on 'File', then on 'Save Page As...'

Choose the folder into which to save this document (presumably the same one where the pdf is saved)

The 'Name' field will already show a long string of numbers and letters, followed by .jpg.

Rename the document, discarding all the numbers and letters, but keeping the .jpg ending

Click Save

Close this tab

You now have two versions of the image - a pdf and a jpg. The pdf is often preferred for sending to others electronically; the jpg is useful for editing.

Using ArcSoft PhotoImpression or other picture editing program, locate the jpg document, and edit it as desired.