

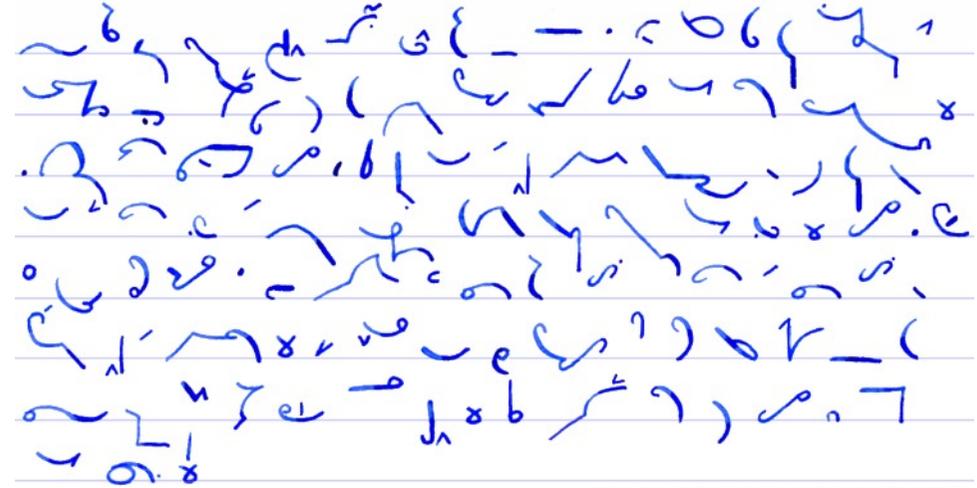


Get In The Swim

Here we have lots of contenders doing their best to keep up with the fast and furious flow. A moment or two ago they were chatting amiably, but now it's everyone for himself, putting on his best speed, taking in everything and missing nothing. Many of them are reaping the benefits of days spent practising their curves, flips and changes of direction. It is quite noticeable how some of

the participants are dropping out of the flow and then coming back in, and I think they will find that their more determined friends will be the more successful ones in the long run. There is a great sense of excitement and even after it is over, the exhilaration continues and they will be talking about it for ages.

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Get In The Swim

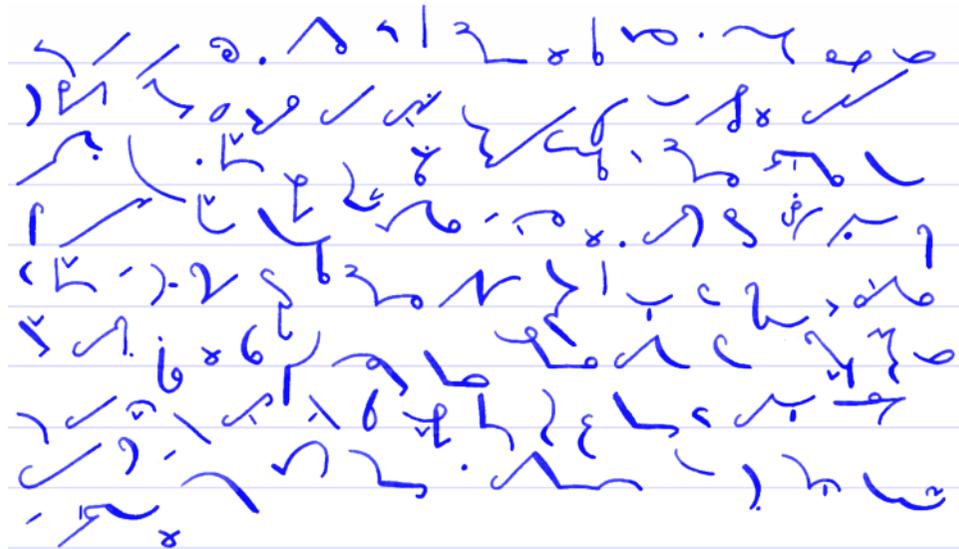
Many of those who were* previously doubtful actually found that they could go a lot faster than they had anticipated, and the encouragement gained will see them leap forward to greater achievements in the very near future. The lazier and more sluggish ones who just dipped in and out are now beginning to wish they had put in more effort and maybe next time* they will be better prepared for the event. Once the flow has finished, there is always a great relief, with some of them wanting more and

some wanting to flop out and recover. But the nice thing is that everyone tried their best and it will give them something to talk about until the sun goes down. It is really very easy once you get in the swim! (260 words)

* Omission phrases "many of those who (w)ere" "ne(k)s(t) time"

(The accompanying photo is of goldfish in pond swimming through hose water jet)

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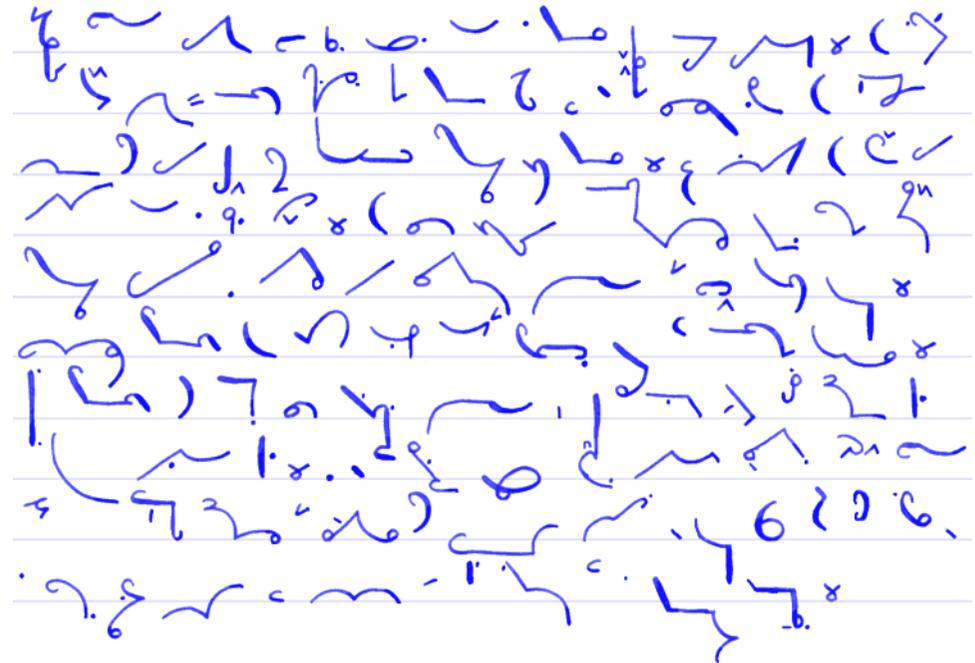
Nesting Update 6 May

Here are our friends the robins hard at work. It is almost a month since the nest was started and for the first two weeks* we wondered if they were still in residence. We were relieved after a time to start seeing endless quantities of worms and grubs being delivered, rather than the tiny bundles of leaves and moss. The weather has been constantly rainy during that time and so there are plenty of worms readily

available at no effort, driven to the surface by the watery conditions. This shed must be the biggest nestbox we have ever provided and I think that next year we might put one up just inside the door, so that when they begin building we know exactly where they are and maybe also organise a webcam for easy remote viewing and recording.

* Omission phrase "two wee(k)s"

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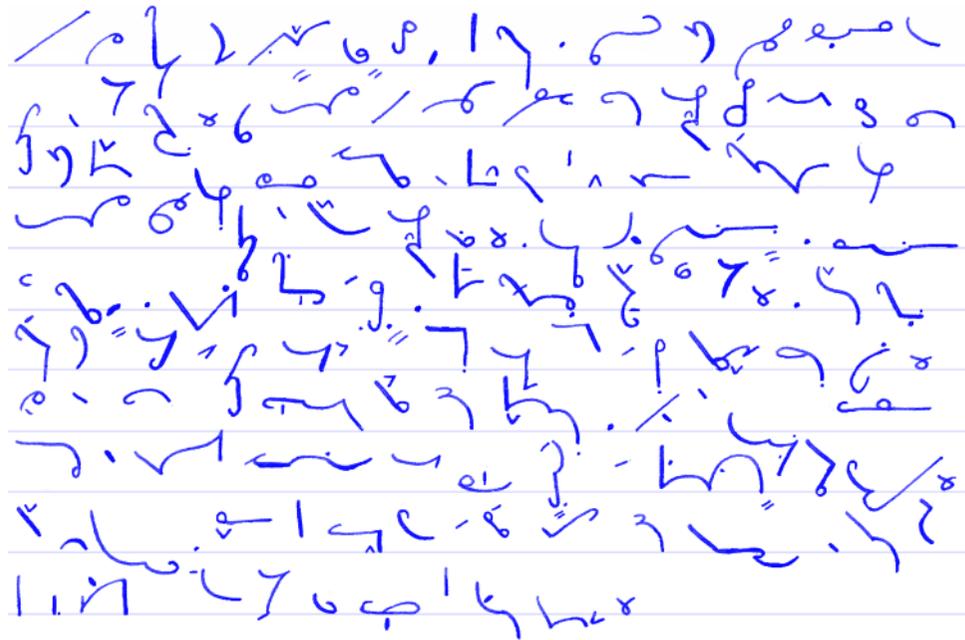
Nesting Update 6 May

On the other side of the garden we have great tits nesting in a box outside the kitchen window. They approach via the leaf-covered trellis at the back, and then, when all seems to be safe, they cautiously make their way down through the tangle of branches to their box. When they emerge they fly away rapidly in a straight line. They seem to prefer caterpillars picked from the higher branches, whereas the robins are happier looking on the ground for their food. Mr and Mrs Blackbird have also nested in the evergreen* bushes that cover the fence. Daddy Blackbird was

getting somewhat bedraggled-looking but dutifully kept up the constant work day after rainy day. The two speckled youngsters are now hopping around the garden and with the glut of worms on the surface they are quickly learning to feed themselves, although they are not averse to a free effortless meal when Mum and Dad appear with a beakful of goodies. (299 words)

* "evergreen" Helpful to insert vowel, and also in "overgrown" as these are similar in both outline and meaning

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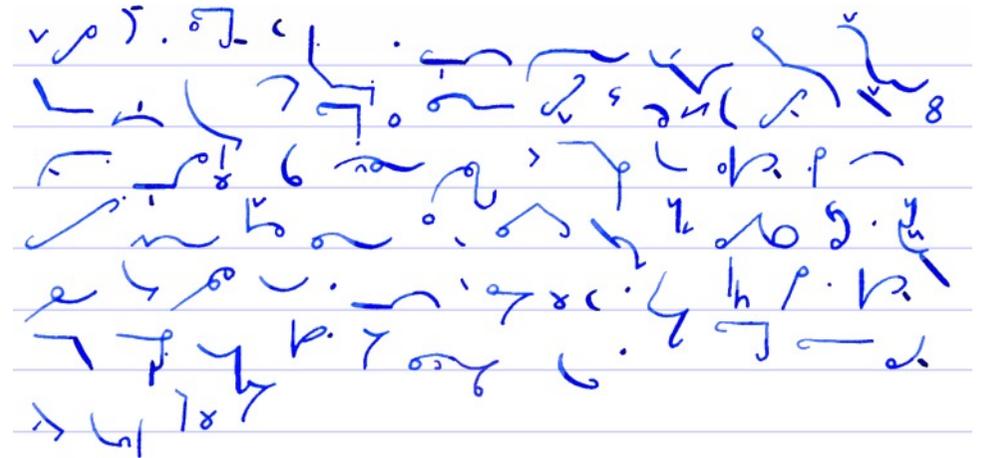
Petts Wood May Fayre

Rather less traditional was the Reptile Events stand, who had brought a selection of their lizards and snakes for children to handle briefly. These animals are mostly rescued from unsuitable circumstances, and now spend some of their time visiting schools and clubs to educate people on how to care properly* for such animals, as well as the dangers of buying unsuitable pets. The photos show Slinky the skink with Bruce the bearded dragon, and Citrine the adult Burmese python with his handler. The Fire Brigade brought their engine and the children enjoyed getting into the cab and sitting behind the steering wheel. Lots* of more grown-up boys were admiring the

row of vintage classic cars, all polished and gleaming in the sun, Austin and Daimler badges everywhere. By mid-afternoon the sky had clouded over and spots of rain were beginning to appear, although it did hold off until the event closed at 4 pm. (375 words)

- * "properly" Always insert the first vowel, and the diphone in "appropriately", and in derivatives, as these are similar in outline and meaning
- * "lots" Helpful to insert the vowel, as this could look like "masses" which has a similar meaning

Blank lined paper for writing practice.



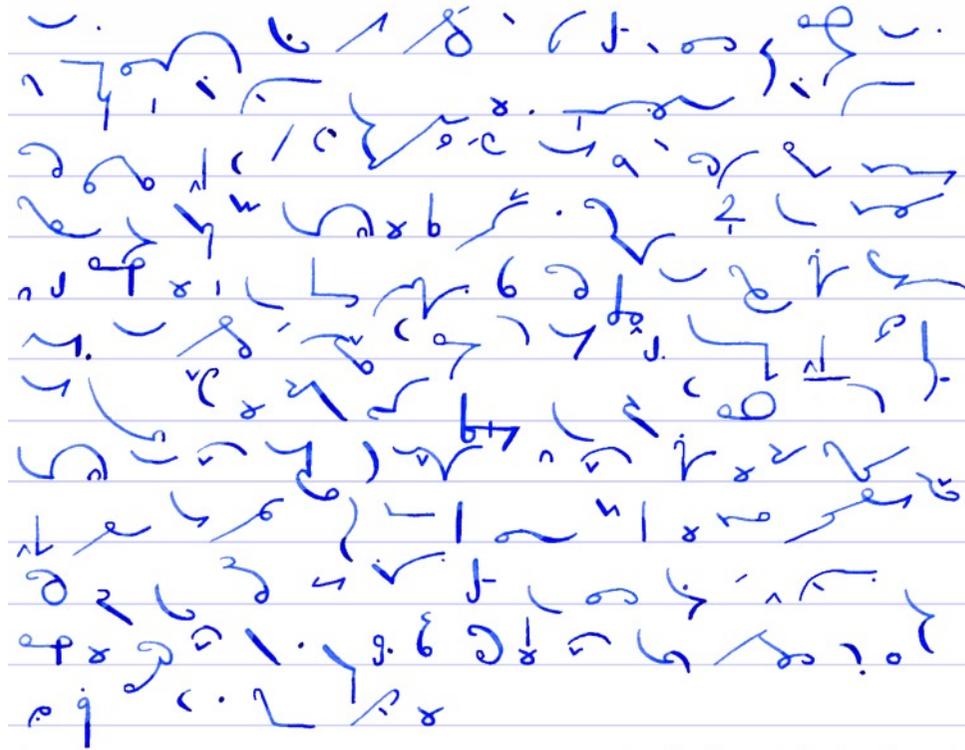
Lucky Goals

I once saw a cartoon that depicted a glum-looking football supporter arriving back home after the match, greeting his sympathetic wife with the words, "They won by eight lucky goals!" This amusing* illustration of the capacity for self-delusion set me wondering how many times something has to happen before the idea surfaces that there is an identifiable reason for the results in a game of skill. Without a

change of attitude, such a delusion can be extended* indefinitely, at least until someone else, even a cartoon character, shows up the futility of it.

- * "amusing" "amazing" Always insert the vowel
- * "extended" Ensure the T is vertical, and in "expanded" the P is well sloped, to prevent misreading

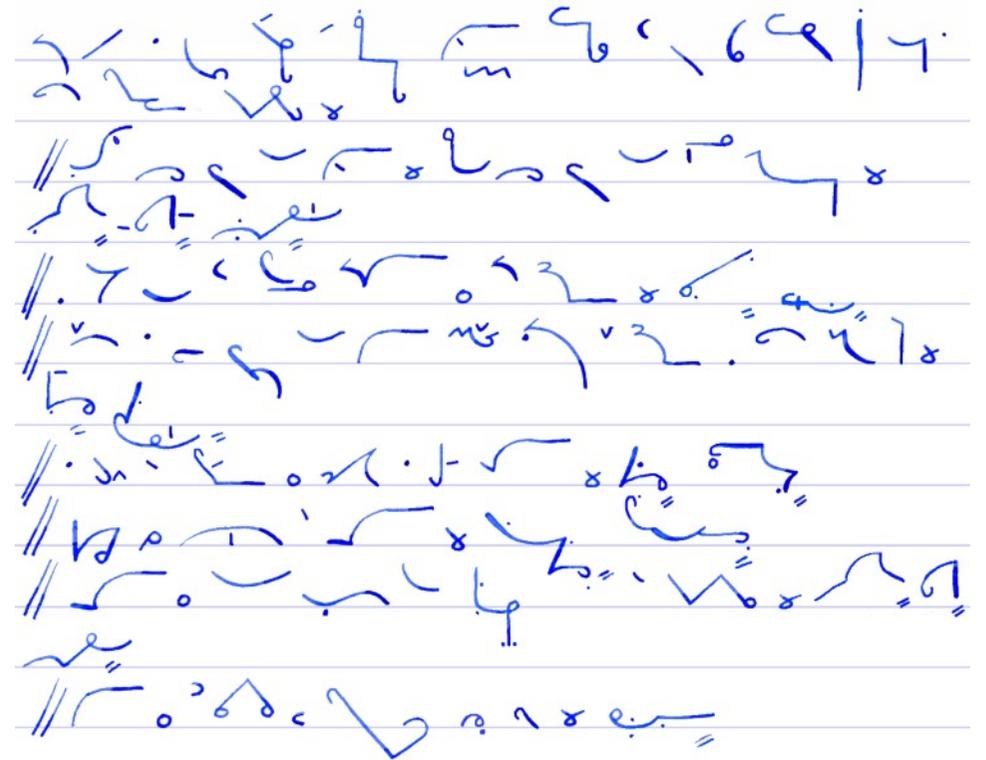
Blank lined paper for writing practice.



Lucky Goals

In a similar vein are the responses of "Well done" to someone who was successful in a particular activity, but "Bad luck" if they were not. The commiserating "Bad luck" phrase slips out without much thought and is offered in the spirit of friendly support, to make the person feel better about the failure. It is really a verbal shortcut for "I am sorry you did not succeed". But if taken literally, this phrase discounts any personal control over the matter and indeed any responsibility, and implies that skill or

knowledge did not affect the outcome, and will not do so in the future either. I would be greatly discouraged if I believed that success or failure in my endeavours was entirely beyond my control. I would prefer to find out the reason for the result, so that I can do something about it. Of course reversing the phrases would be even worse, "Badly done" if someone failed, and "How lucky" if they succeeded. Friendships might be a bit strained with those versions! My favourite replacement wording is, "Let's consider that a practice run."



Lucky Goals

Here are a few positive and constructive "luck" quotations that put this questionable commodity into a more practical perspective:

"Shallow men believe in luck. Strong men believe in cause and effect." Ralph Waldo Emerson

"The only thing that overcomes hard luck is hard work." Harry Golden*

"I'm a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work the more I have of it." Thomas Jefferson

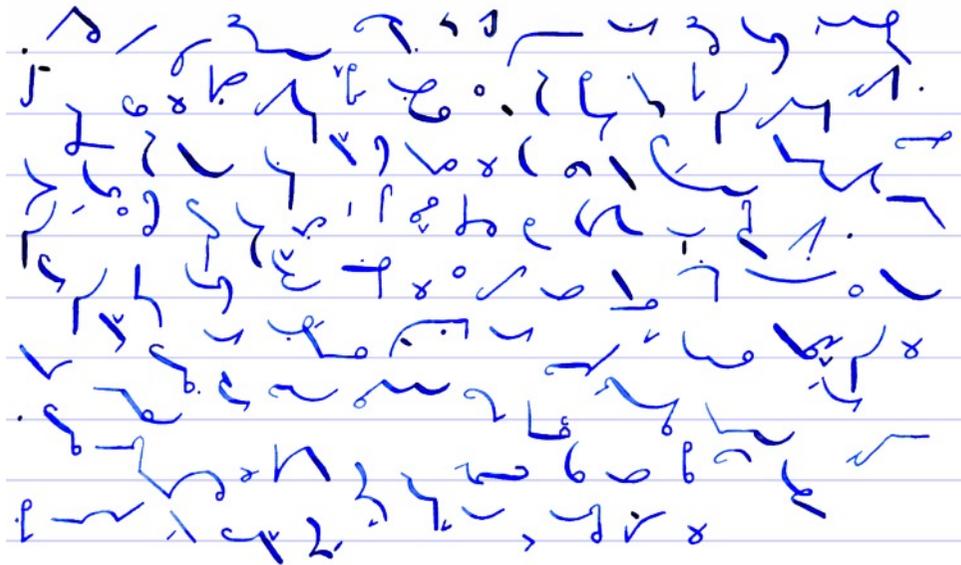
"A pound of pluck is worth a ton of luck." James Garfield

"Diligence is the mother of good luck." Benjamin Franklin

"Good luck is another name for tenacity of purpose." Ralph Waldo Emerson

"Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity." Seneca (386 words)

* "Golden" Short forms are not used for names, except for Child, Gold and Short, in which case they must be vocalised



Nesting Update 17 May

The robins are still working remarkably hard and do not look any* the worse for their non-stop dawn to dusk efforts. At last* we have had sight of the nestlings, as two of them suddenly appeared at the shed window, and we had a full view of them being fed by their parents. They seemed to be fluttering* back and forth* across the shed, and as there is plenty for them to land on at all heights, it seems as if they will have no trouble reaching the gap over the shed door for their final exit. As one nest becomes empty, another is being built by the bluetits, in the nestbox located in the greenery on the fence behind the shed. The bluetits can be seen all over the garden,

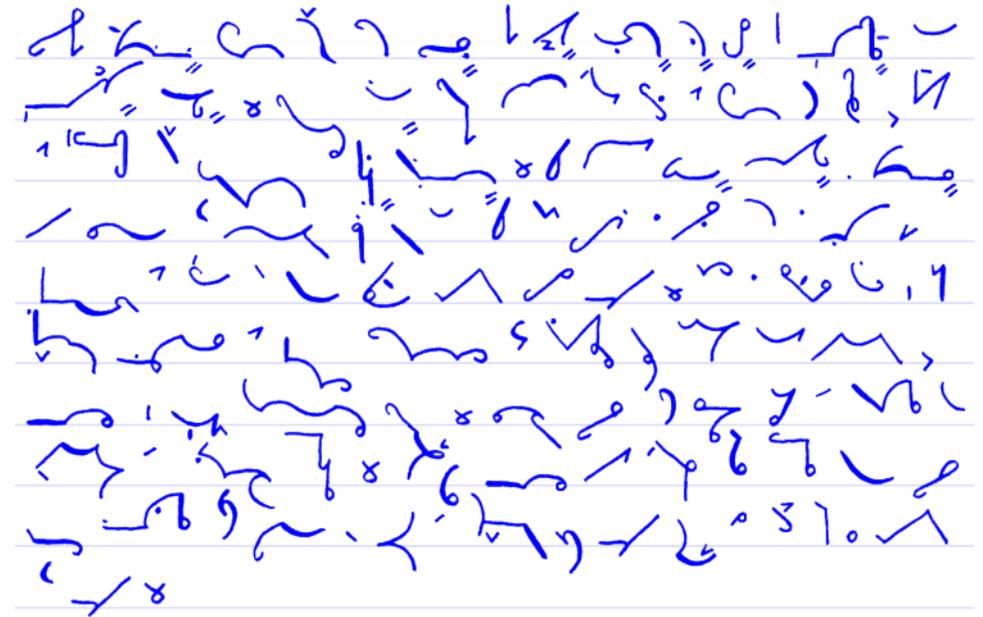
hanging from the twigs and branches, picking off the caterpillars. It will be easier to video and photograph this nest as it is more visible and we can set the camera up nearby, zoomed in to the entrance hole. (170 words)

* "any" The short form has no vowel, but it is helpful here to insert it to aid reading

* "at last" Always insert the vowel in this and in this "at least"

* "fluttering" Keep the F well doubled, so it does not look like "flying"

* Omission phrase "back (and) forth"



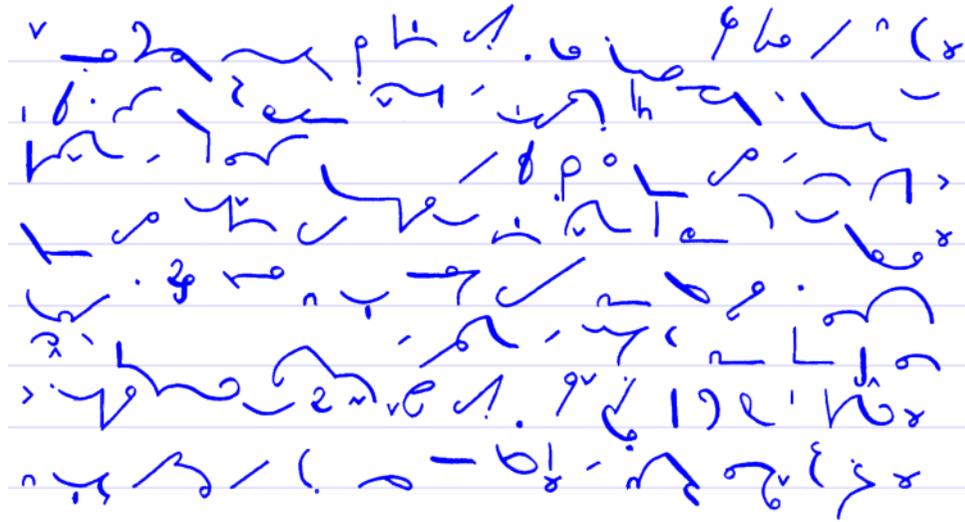
Olympic Flame

Yesterday the Olympic flame arrived from Greece at the Royal Naval Air Station at Culdrose in Cornwall, England. Princess* Anne brought the lamp off the plane, and the flame was transferred to the torch and the cauldron by footballer David Beckham. Just like the London Marathon, the Olympics are something that many people consider to be not just about winning a race or a medal, but the taking part and the honour of being chosen to represent one's country. I am not a sports fan but I do admire excellence and the determined frame of mind* that the participants possess, not only in the run-up to the

games, but no doubt for many years previously. Some people use their skills, intelligence and abilities for wrongful and harmful activities. These games are the opposite, all those qualities being used to gain accolades that they are willing to share and ascribe to their country, seeing as the point of it is to represent that country.

* "Princess" Full stroke S, not the SES circle, as it is a stressed syllable, and also to differentiate it from the plural "princes"

* Omission phrase "frame (of) mind"

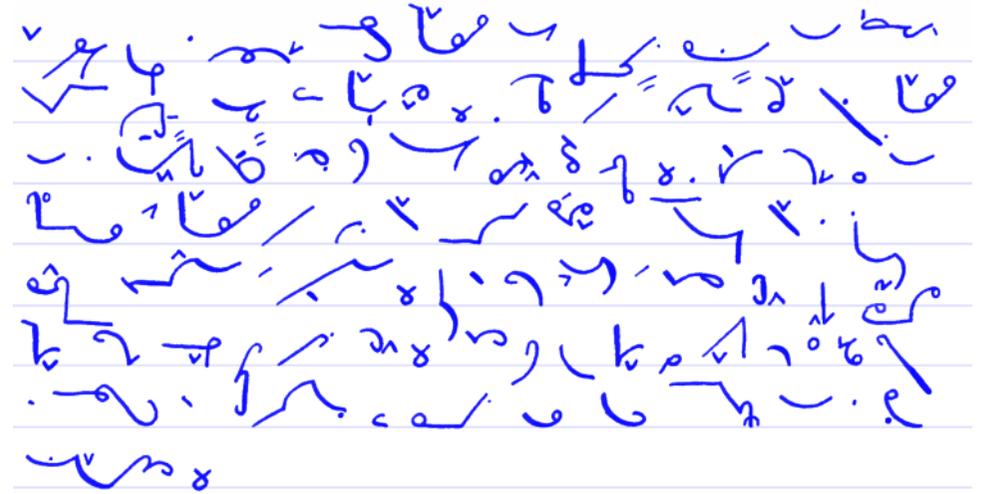


Olympic Flame

I guess there must be many people sitting at home watching the events, convinced that such achievements are beyond them. But just a little bit of that single-minded and unwavering attitude can only be* of benefit in daily life, and small victories are just as sweet as big ones, and may lead to the bigger ones in time, whether in home life, at school or in business. If you are a shorthand student, of course, you know exactly where you can best use a similar

amount of determination, will-power and resolve, and, not only that, you can take down some of the commentaries in shorthand whilst watching the high achievers do their stuff on television. You know that the runners are thinking "Must go faster!" and you will be able to sympathise with them completely. (298 words)

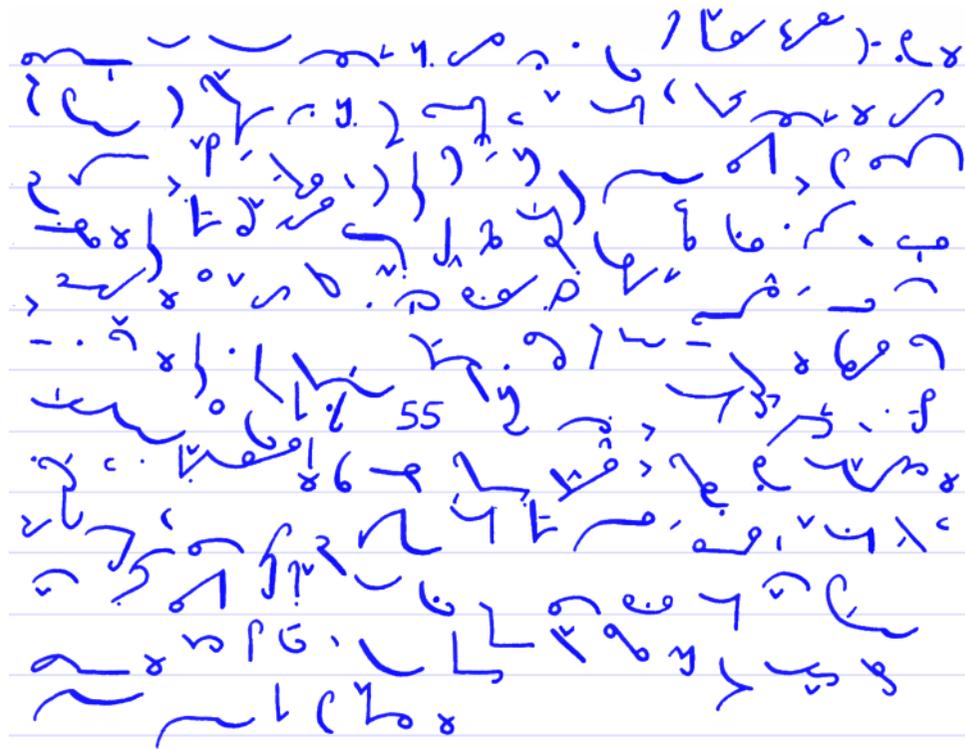
* "can only be" Stroke N with L hook can often be used in phrases for "only"



Dinosaurs

I recently visited a museum exhibition of dinosaurs in the Discovery Centre in Stockwood Park, Luton, England, called Dino-Mites. The models are life-size baby dinosaurs in a variety of poses, amidst their natural surroundings of plants and trees. The whole area is in darkness and the dinosaurs are lit by coloured spotlights,

accompanied by a continuous soundtrack of growling and roaring. It was all very noisy and almost drowned out the squeals of delight from the excited children running around. I am not sure if delight is the right word, as I think it is probably an expression of relief when scary things have been "captured" in a safe environment.



Dinosaurs

Some time ago* in another museum I did once meet an even larger dinosaur that was not so safe. Although everything was brightly lit, I did not see the creature when I entered that part of the* museum. One would have to look to the side and upwards to see it was there, and I was busy looking ahead to the other smaller exhibits. It was adult size and was glowering down towards the unsuspecting visitor, with its face a little too close to the walkway. As I went past, the motion sensor switched on the growls and gave me quite a fright. It was a deep booming rumble, the source of which I could not quite pinpoint. This was very unnerving, as even at the age of 55 I was not immune to the natural reaction to a sudden

confrontation with a tyrannosaurus! This exhibit broke the boundaries of the perceived "safe environment". I would imagine that some children would be holding onto adult legs and skirts but I ended up with my rational head trying in vain to talk some sense into my fluttering stomach. I am not at all fond of being taken by surprise and I did not feel inclined to spend longer looking at the other items.

* "Some time ago" Halving to represent the T of "time"

* Omission phrase "part (of) the" This keeps this phrase distinct from phrases containing "number of the"



Dinosaurs

The photo shows deinonychus, the one with the tearing toe-claws. This fellow is one to avoid having in your neighbourhood, as I am sure he could* outrun us without much effort. It is possible that* he was one of the feathered dinosaurs. Elsewhere in Stockwood Park are some dinosaur relatives in the Dig For Victory Wartime Garden, namely four beautifully* coloured chickens, obviously chosen for their smart plumage. They were very inquisitive and making friendly clucking and cooing noises, but of

course if you or I were a lot smaller they would eat us as quickly as deinonychus would. Next time I see a dinosaur I will do my best to think of him as just a big chicken.

* "he could" Written separately, to prevent misreading as "he can"

* Omission phrase "it is poss(ible) that" "ne(k)s(t) time"

* "beautifully" Final vowel is essential, as "beautiful" would make equal sense



Dinosaurs

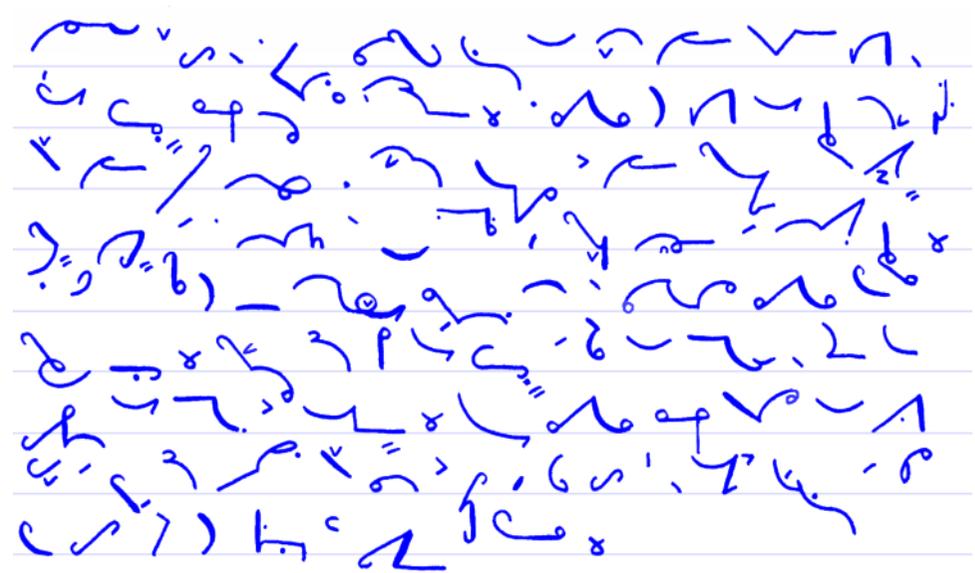
It is difficult to see the tyrannosaurus or the velociraptor without drawing an analogy with the shorthand exam, the desire and necessity for superhuman speed to enable you to leap ahead of the relentless pursuer (dictator). Your place of safety is a full five minutes away but you cannot afford to think about that at the moment*. If you want to survive the encounter, you cannot let your guard drop, you must deal with and jump

over all obstacles as rapidly as you know how, without getting tripped up, and you surely don't want to find out what happens if you slack off or give up. If ever there was a powerful incentive to be prepared ahead of time, this is it*! (563 words)

* Omission phrase "at (the) moment"

* "this is it" In another context, this same outline could be "this city"

Horizontal lines for writing practice.



Glorious Sixty

Last weekend I went to a Jubilee Celebration Fair in my local park, held to honour the Queen's sixty years as monarch. A service was held in the display area, attended by local church ministers, the Mayor, veterans of the local branch of the Royal British Legion, and a multitude of young cadets who provided music and marching displays. A short address was given emphasising the supreme importance

of selfless service over personal gain. Prayers were said for the Queen and all those in government to ask for wisdom in the governing of the United Kingdom. After the service, sixty balloons in red white and blue were released by some of the children, who then went on with their families to enjoy the funfair and stalls, every one of which was decorated with Union Jack flags.

Horizontal lines for writing practice.

