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## Blogs - 2013 - May

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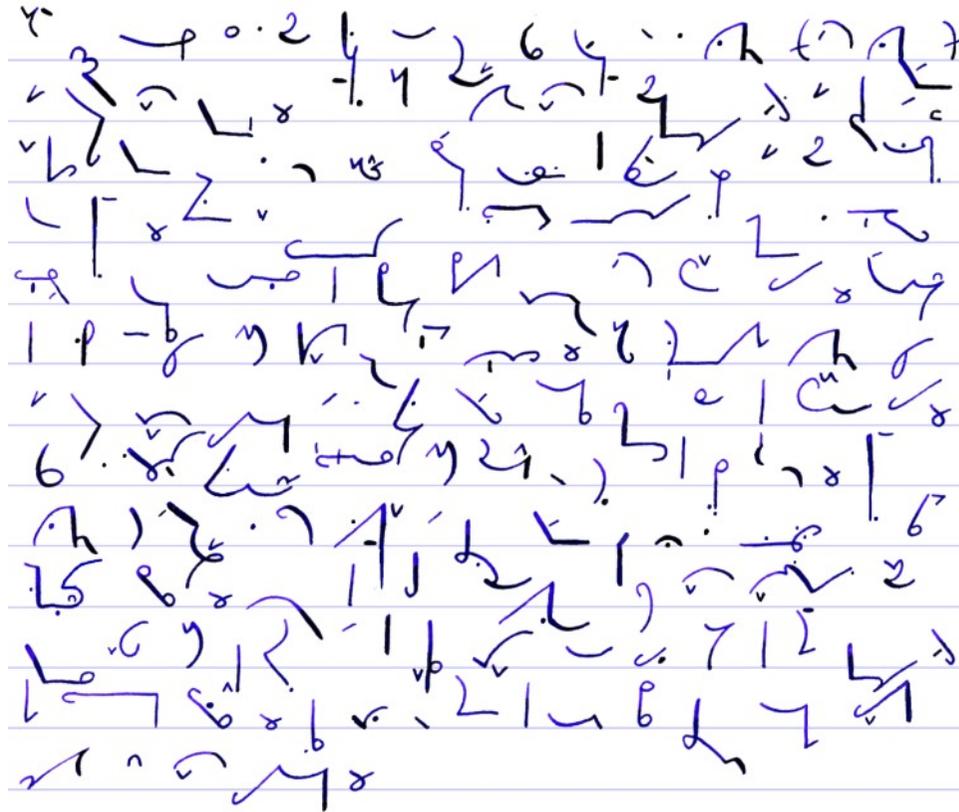
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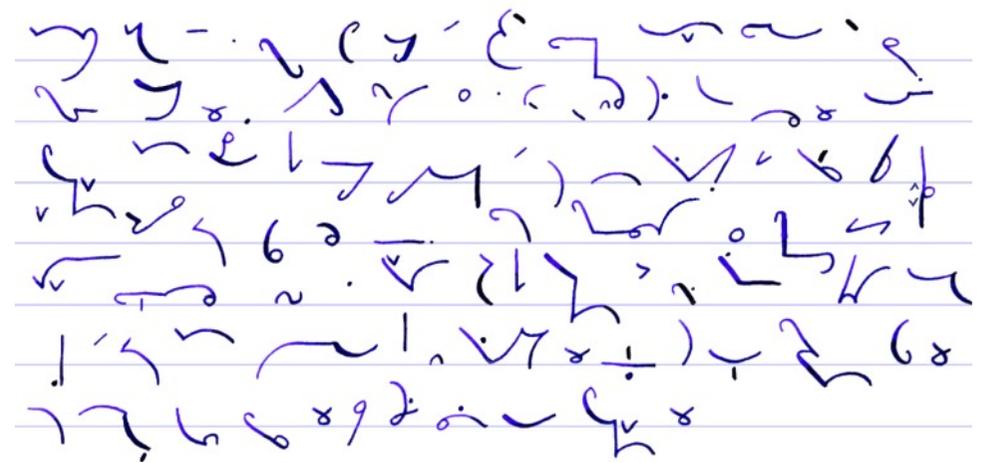
PDF Date: 13 July 2019



**Clever Creatures**

I thought you would be interested, as a shorthand devotee, in seeing this photo of a ladybird (or ladybug) on the page of my book. I had left my shorthand dictionary open on the table and when I turned back to check a word, I found the spotty insect had chosen to sit on the shorthand entry for "dotty". I quickly grabbed the camera and took a couple of closeup photos, in case it suddenly started to move or fly away. Fortunately it stayed quite still and I was delighted to have caught the moment. I then escorted the ladybird, still on the page, to my window and a gentle puff in its

direction sent it flying away. This is an absolutely genuine occurrence and I was astounded to see it sitting on that word. Dotty Ladybird was obviously a very erudite and discerning bug who had made an excellent choice of educational subjects. Maybe it had been reading through my library of shorthand books while I was out shopping, and had decided to lie in wait until it saw the dictionary open at the correct place. It's too late to ask it now, as it has disappeared into the wide world beyond my window.



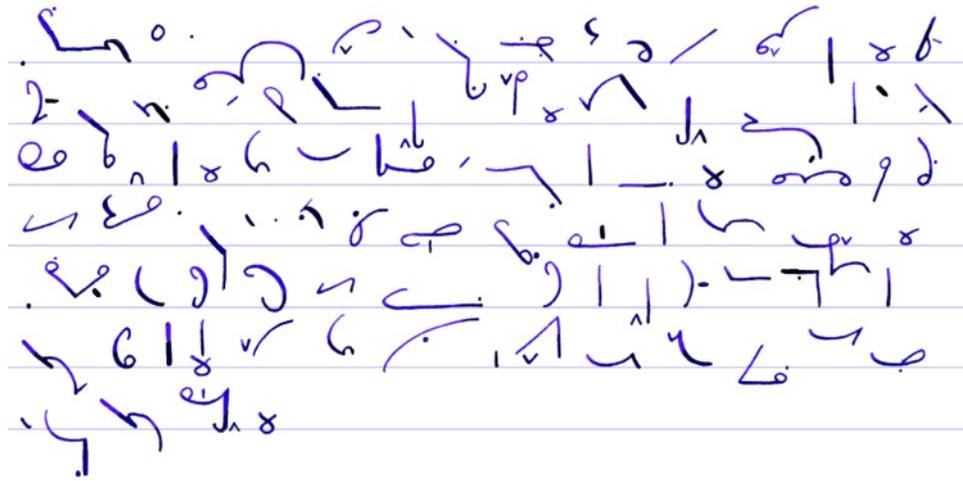
**Clever Creatures**

I am sure I have quite a number of other intelligent and thoughtful creatures in my garden all speaking perfect English. The robin particularly has a lot to say for himself, in fact\* every time I am standing at the kitchen window and see him perching on the post just outside, I always hear these words coming from approximately his direction, "I like crumbs, you have a pile of them at the bottom of

the bread bag which you will never eat, and here I am looking at you patiently. OK, so no problem then. Your move, if you please." He says the same thing\* every time.

\* Omission phrase "in (f)act"

\* "same thing" Not phrased, as that would look like "something"



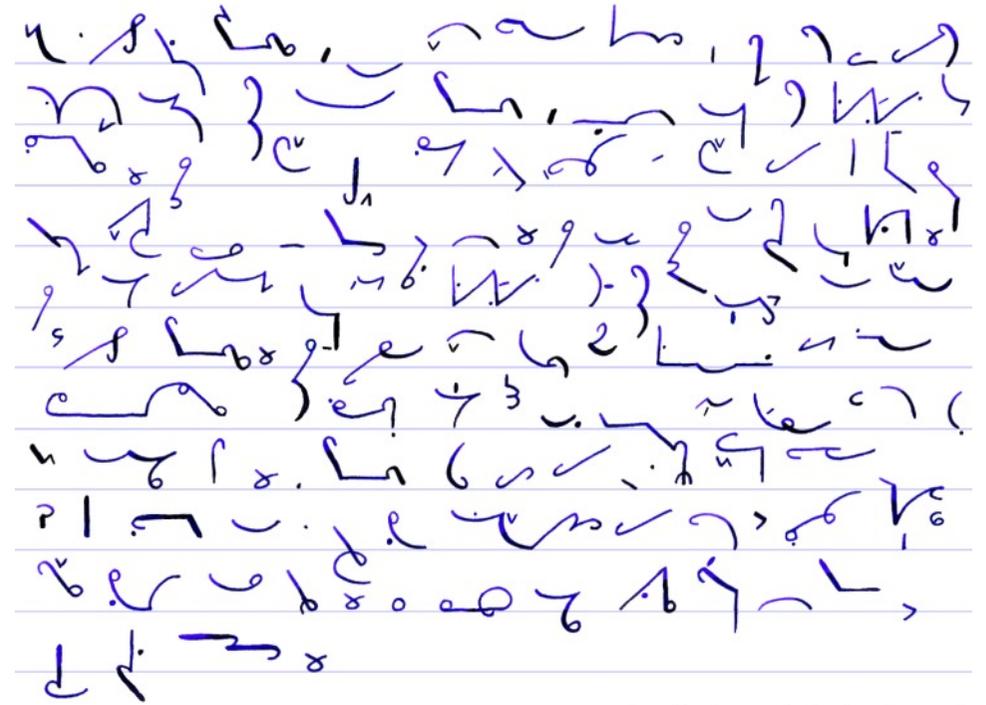
**Clever Creatures**

The blackbird has a similar line of petition, except that the words are slightly different, "Just throw the bits of bread and step back out of sight. I will be down to clear it all up as soon as you do. Thank you in advance, and keep it coming." Sometimes he says, "That was a bit of a hard stale crust, please

soak it for me next time\*." The sparrows have their own version: "Quick, throw it out so I can get it before the others do! I'll thank you later but right now I have chicks in the nest to feed before sundown."

\* Omission phrase "ne(k)s(t) time"

Blank lined area for notes on page A.



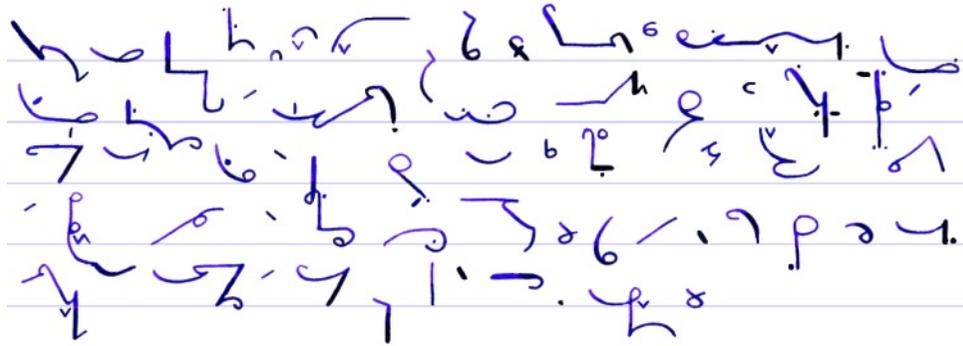
**Clever Creatures**

I have a resident pair of blackbirds who own my garden at the moment\*, but during the very cold weather earlier in the year, there was another blackbird who came into their territory for the scraps. He would fly down, snatch up the morsel and fly away at top speed before the rightful owners could begin to chase him. He knew he would be in trouble if he delayed. He only wanted the food, not the territory, so there was no point in fighting with the resident blackbirds. He was using my favourite shorthand technique - acting as

quickly as possible\*, concentrating only on what you need to capture, and not fussing with or thinking about anything else at all. The blackbird then went away to a quiet corner to deal with what he had grabbed, in a peaceful safe environment, away from all the hassle, but with his prize safely in his possession. His successes in these raids brought him back to the "dinner table" again and again\*.

\* Omission phrases "at (the) moment" "as quickly as poss(ible)" "again (and) again"

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**Clever Creatures**

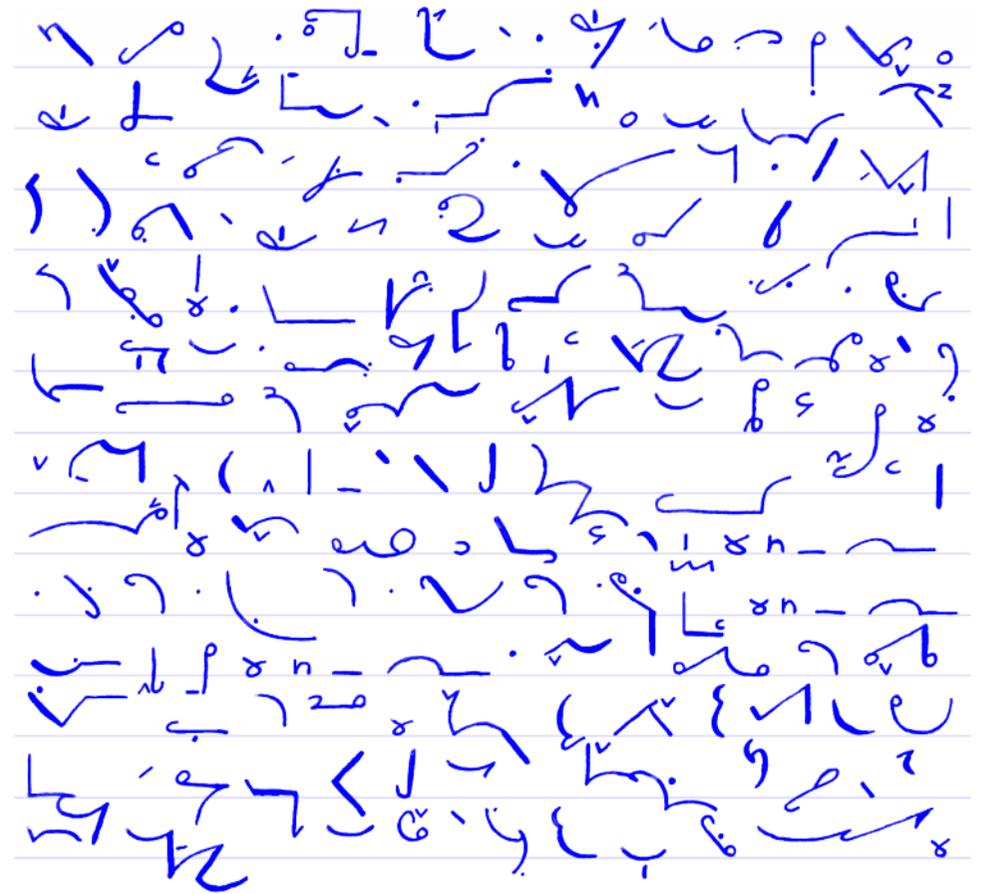
Before the next dictation attempt, you might like to think of this bold blackbird, with his single-minded, fixed, focused\*, determined and unwavering intention, carried out\* swiftly with bravado, audacity and courage in the face of distractions, swooping in on his target and with the final happy and satisfying result of "Mission Accomplished". These are two very sweet words indeed and provide the encouragement and energy to do it all again the next time\*. (657 words)

\* "fixed, focused" Always insert the first vowel, as they are similar in outline and meaning

\* "carried out" Halving to represent the T of "out"

\* Omission phrase "ne(k)s(t) time"

Blank lined paper for writing practice.



**Stone Age**

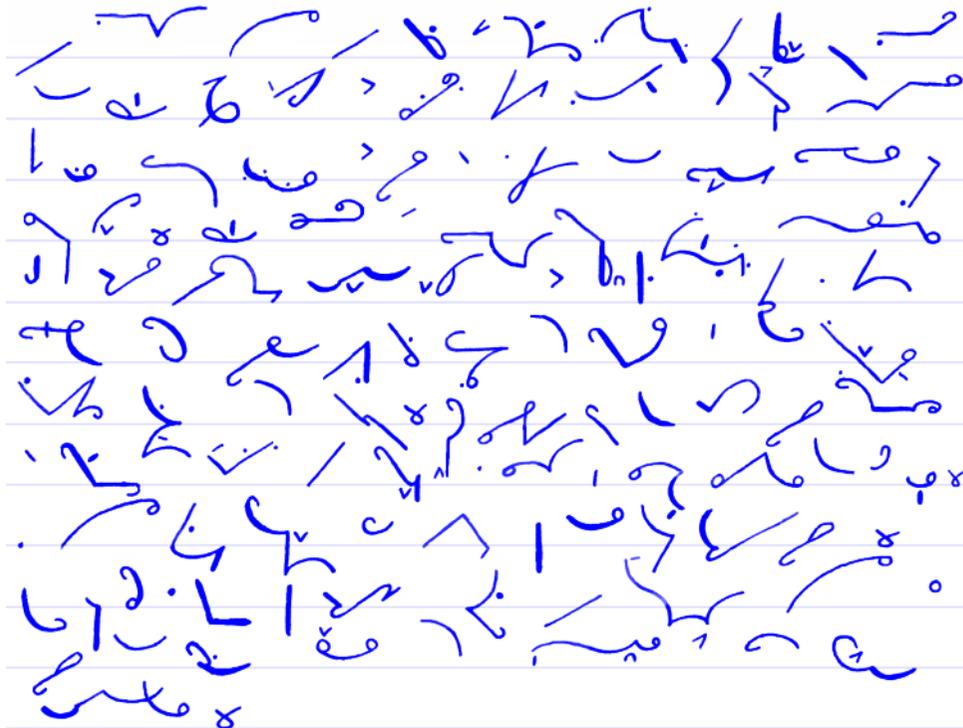
I remember once seeing a cartoon drawing of a Stone Age office man sitting behind his stone desk, talking to a colleague about his new female employee who was busy with hammer and chisel, carving a business letter\* onto a large upright slab of stone: "Smashing new secretary, just look at her biceps!" The picture duly showed the girl working away, a svelte figure clothed in a skimpy Stone Age dress, but with bulging arm muscles. All three characters were smiling widely in satisfaction with the situation. I longed\* to tell them how it could all be done so much more\* quickly with different materials. All my sentences would begin with the word "but." But you could\* make a pen from a feather, or a brush from a splayed twig. But you could\*

make ink out of soot. But you could\* make a writing surface from hides, bark, clay or wax. I think maybe they would reply that they already have sufficient technology and skill to get the job done, in the time frame that they are used to, and that I am indulging in flights of fancy that have no place in their world.

\* Omission phrases "biz(ness) letter" "so much m(ore)"

\* "longed" Stroke Ing cannot be halved

\* "but you could" The "could" is not joined, as that would look too much like "you can"



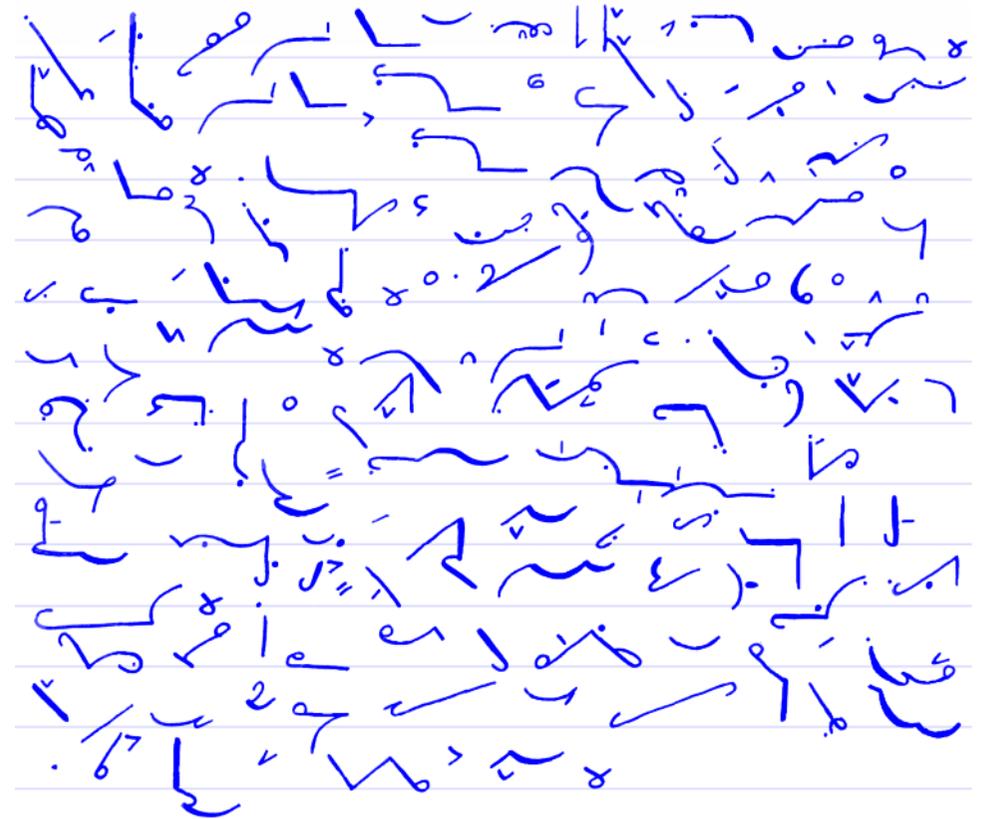
**Stone Age**

Our capital letters are based on the Roman alphabet, which was designed to be carved in stone, and this is the origin of the serifs, which are the narrow pointed marks at the ends, clear evidence of the use of a chisel in creating the corners of each separate line. Stone inscriptions and carefully produced illuminated manuscripts do not always reflect the handwriting\* style of the day which would have been a much more\* cursive version, using reed pens, quills or brushes on papyrus, parchment, vellum or paper. Throughout history people have also used fragments of broken pottery which provided a small but smooth surface for short notes. The letters changed over time

in order to\* represent the different languages for which they were used. Even today there is a big difference between the shape of our formal letters, as used in printing, signs or monuments, and the more flowing handwritten\* forms.

\* Omission phrases "much m(ore)" "in ord(er to)"

\* "handwritten" Always insert the diphthong in "handwriting" to differentiate it. Both of these outlines need a slight angle between the Nd and the Rt strokes to keep them legible



**Stone Age**

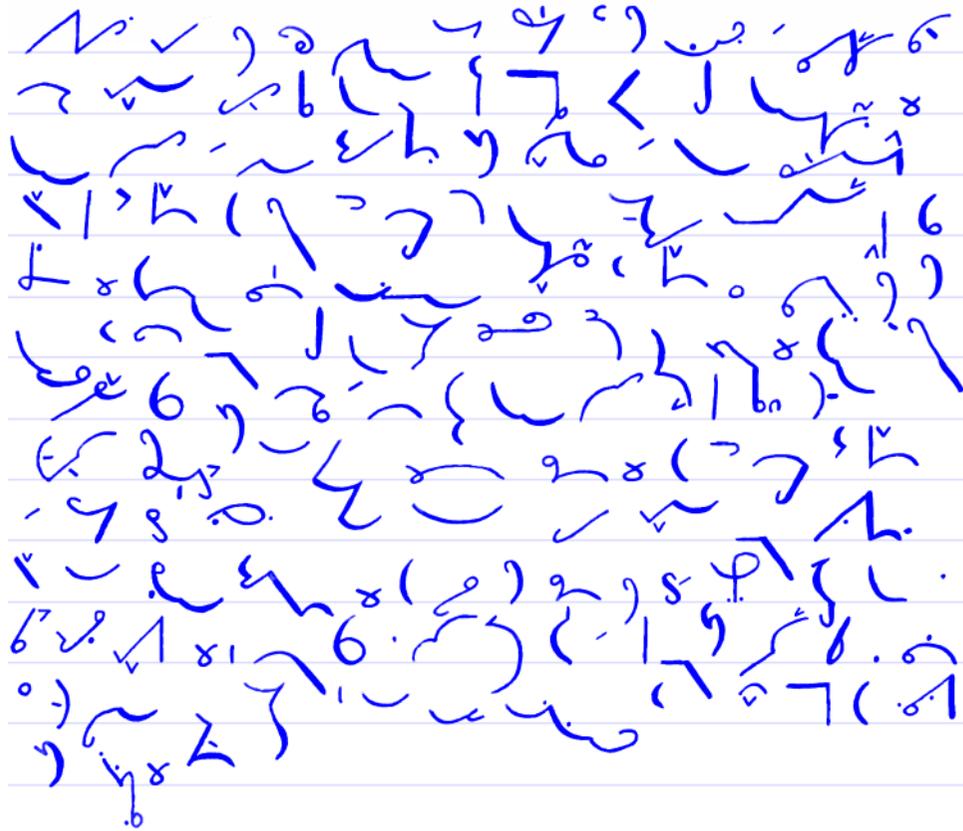
Computer and database users look back in amusement\* at the typewriter and the card index system. Typists look back to the clerk with his quill pen and rows of handwritten accounts books. The Victorian clerk may have mused upon how modern his methods were compared with the ancient process of pressing marks into wet clay and baking the tablets. As a shorthand writer\*, you may recognise this as how you now feel about longhand. Maybe you look on, with a combination of kindly sympathy and gritted teeth, as people write laboriously, gripping their biro or pencil in finger-cramping unergonomic contortions, struggling to maintain neat and readable writing yet wanting to get it done quickly. The joined-

up longhand that we so eagerly awaited permission\* to use at school has now been surpassed in speed and convenience by our new shorthand skill, and we are in the wonderful position of having a choice, depending on the purpose of the writing.

\* "amusement" and "amazement" Always insert the vowel after the M in these outlines and their derivatives

\* Omission phrase "short(hand) writer"

\* "permission" and "promotion" Helpful to insert the vowel after the M, to differentiate

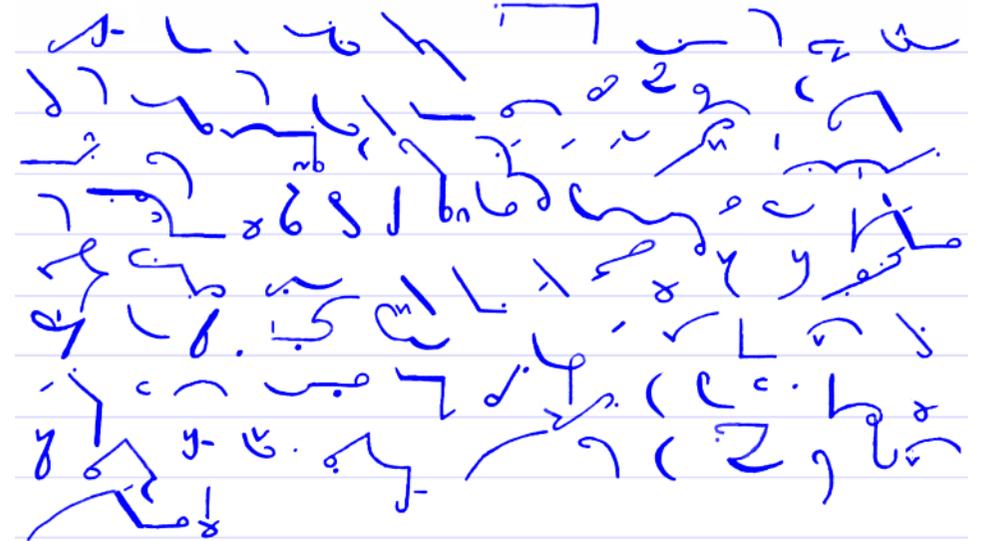


**Stone Age**

Returning to our three friends living in the Stone Age with their ancient and hideously slow method of writing, one does have to admit that it gets the job done eventually. Having learned and written that way all their lives and being surrounded by it all the time, they probably cannot imagine or visualise any other way\* of carrying out this task. They may have some inkling that time is slipping through their fingers, that more could be done if only the inscriptions were easier to produce. They have probably resigned themselves to their methods and may think that, having learned it so thoroughly, there is no point\* in changing to some other\* system. They cannot imagine that the time and energy spent mastering another way of writing could be

redeemed by any saving that would be made. They use their system through blunt necessity and they do not have a choice of ways to write. But maybe this is a little harsh on them, and it could be that they are really just the same as us, willing to jump enthusiastically on any new invention that might get them ahead of their competitors.

- \* Omission phrase "any oth(er) way"
- \* "that there is no point" Insert the vowel in "no" in phrases, as often "any" could also make sense
- \* "some other" Doubling to represent "other"

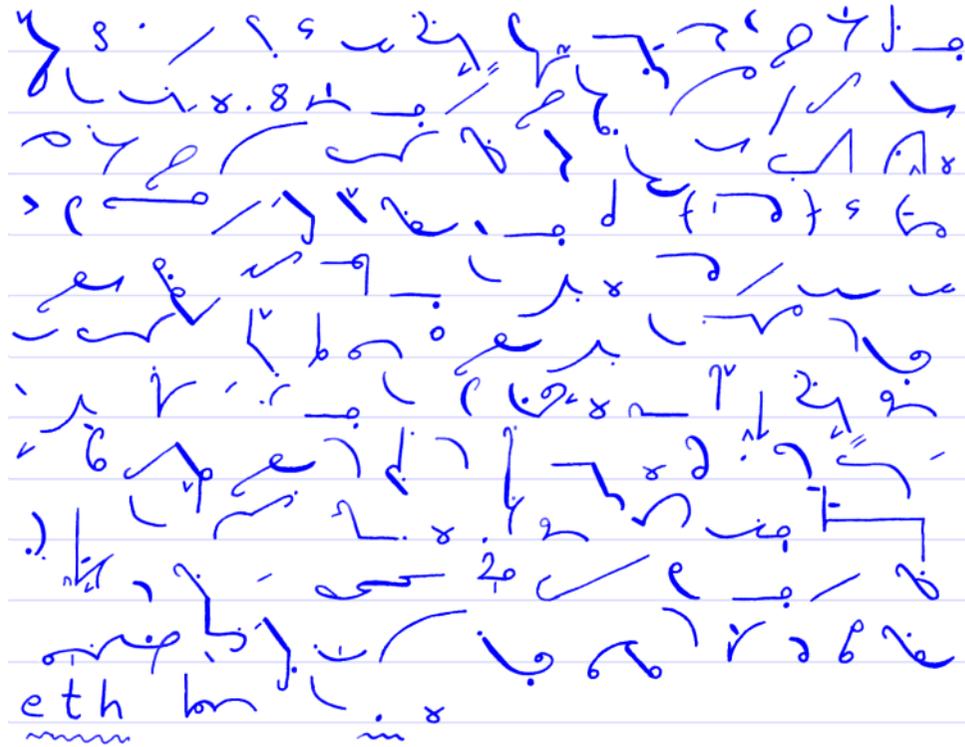


**Stone Age**

We don't have to invent paper, concoct ink, or create fountain pens or nibs, or even put together some sort of shorthand system that will be accurate, free of ambiguities that produce errors, and not reliant on memory or guesswork. All this has been done for us over many years, and is in our toolbox of useful equipment, waiting to be picked up and used. I think I shall reserve

the Stone Age for just the occasional flying visit, and I will take my pen and pad with me in case I get the chance to win them over with a demonstration\*. I just hope I don't find a half-ton letterbox from them crashing through my letterbox! (817 words)

\* "demonstration" Omits the R



**ASETNIOP Virtual Keyboard**

I have just spent an hour playing with the new ASETNIOP virtual keyboard method that uses only ten keys for input. The eight home keys are used for these\* letters, each one being the most commonly used letter normally pressed by that finger in the QWERTY layout. All the other characters are obtained by pressing two keys at once (chords) with the thumbs using the space bar, and one extra key for shift. Chords are nothing new in normal typing, it is the same as using shift for capitals, or combinations of shift, Control and Alt keys for other variations. You can try out the

ASETNIOP system on the author's website, using your tablet or traditional keyboard. There is a very clear and easy tutorial for learning and practising. The system also includes autocorrect, word prediction and stenographic shortcuts where several keys are pressed simultaneously to obtain common letter combinations, syllables or whole words, such as pressing E T H at the same time for "the".

\* "for these" Advisable to insert the vowel in "these" and "those" in phrases when they are out of position

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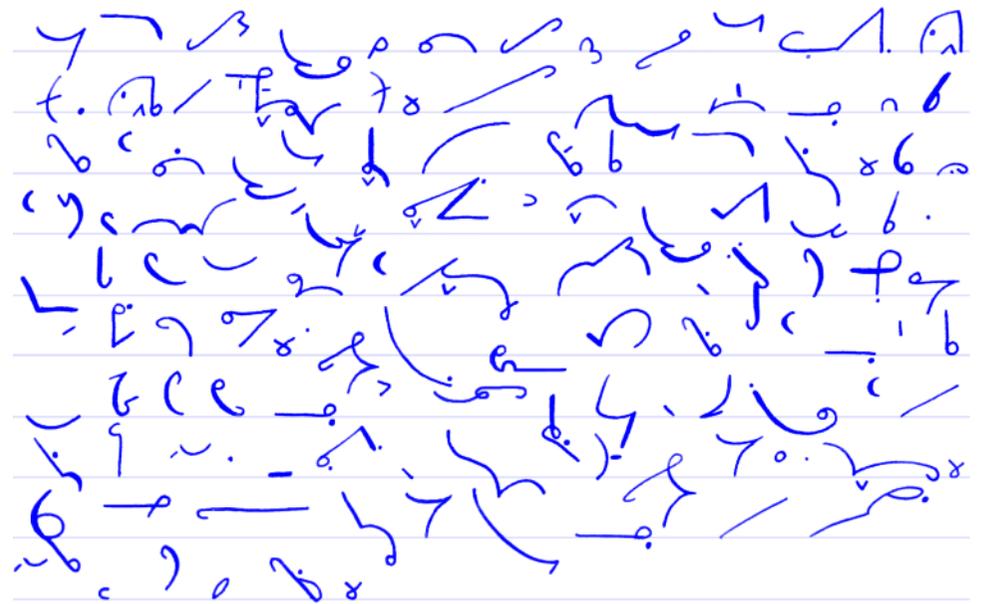
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**ASETNIOP Virtual Keyboard**

In each chord, one of the fingers is the same one you would use in the QWERTY layout (the layouts are customisable). Rather than leaving the home keys, you just press that same finger for the desired letter plus its chord pair. This meant that I was able to immediately and conveniently "hijack" what my fingers already knew, which is a big advantage over any system that requires the learner to abandon their existing skill and start from scratch. A

useful feature is that you can also press that key on its own, and then the other seven keys of the on-screen display change to show the combinations that are paired with it, not a good habit to form, so useful only as a reminder. This is possible\* because the character appears only after the keys are released, not when they are first pressed.

\* Omission phrase "this is poss(ible)"

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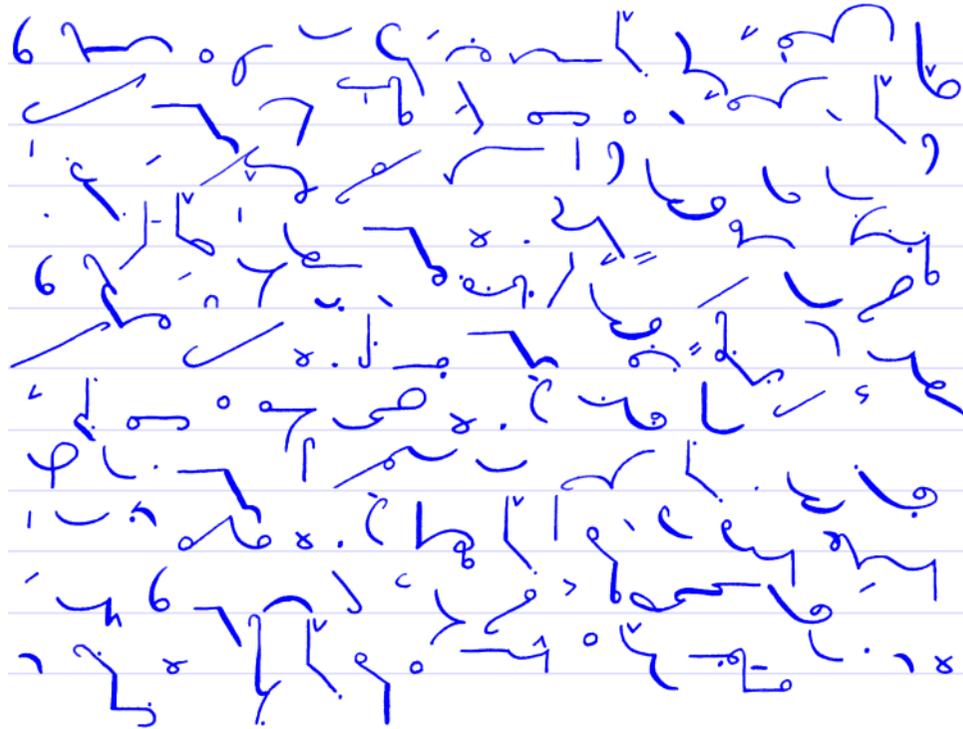
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**ASETNIOP Virtual Keyboard**

This program is still in development\* and aims to make typing easier on the smaller devices, where the keyboard image clutters up the screen, is too small to type on comfortably, and requires the user to look at their fingers, even if they are a touch typist on physical keyboards. The ASETNIOP system eliminates those problems and you only need to concentrate on which fingers are being used, rather than where. The ten keys can be made semi-transparent\* or invisible on the tablet screen as skill increases. The author envisions doing away with the necessity for a keyboard at all, resulting in merely tapping\* the finger combinations on any hard surface. The author demonstrates\* typing at speeds of over 70 words a minute

and no doubt this could be improved upon with full use of the stenographic combinations and word prediction. Traditionally\* typing speed is counted as five keystrokes for a word.

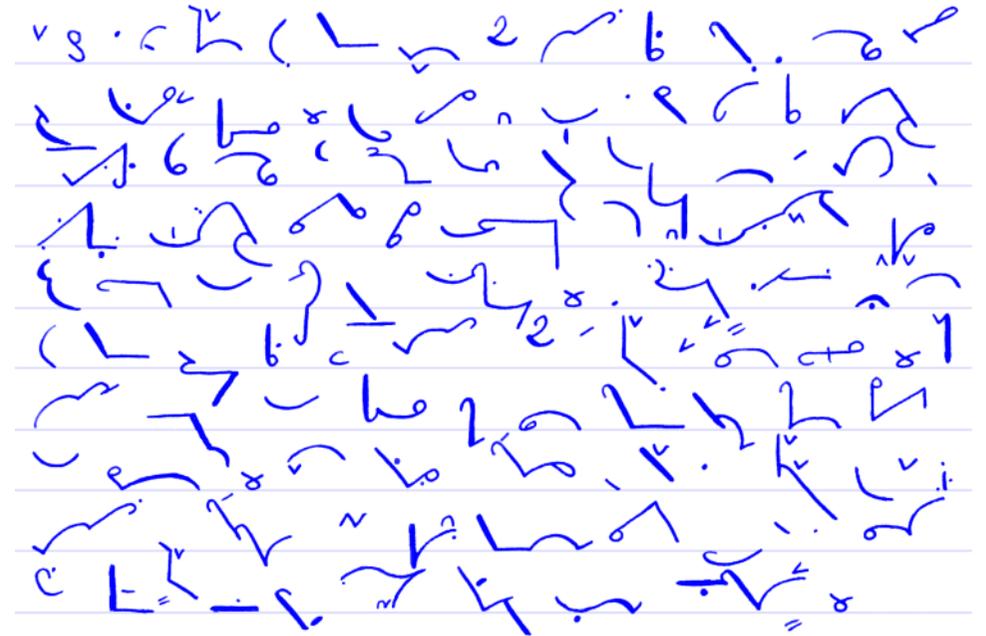
\* "development" Optional contraction

\* "transparent" Omits the first N

\* "demonstrates" Omits the R

\* Insert the vowel in "tapping" so it does not look like "typing"

\* "traditional" Insert the final vowel, as "traditional" would also make sense here



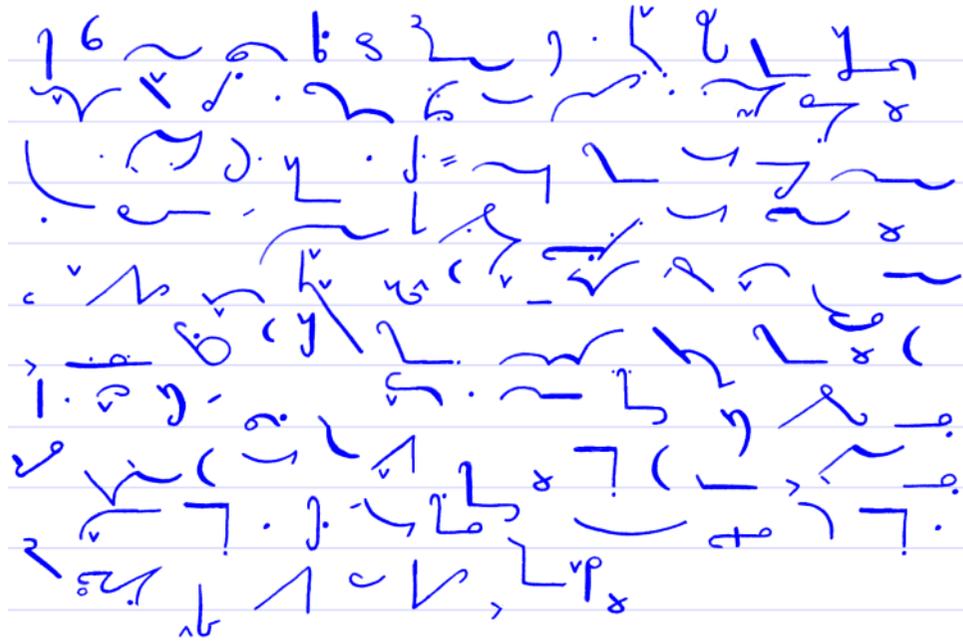
**ASETNIOP Virtual Keyboard**

I spend a lot of time thinking back to my shorthand learning days, remembering the methods I used to overcome various difficulties. Even once you know a subject well, it is helpful to retain those methods that worked for you, both for continued improvement and also to eradicate unhelpful habits, such as incorrect or unreliable outlines that have crept in and threaten to become entrenched. The ASETNIOP article made me think back to college days, when I learned shorthand and typing on the same course. I had learned the keyboard in advance, during the

summer break before the term started in September. My parents promised to buy a typewriter if I committed to learning to type properly\* and I duly became the happy owner of a small flat duck-egg blue manual portable named the "Gabriele"\*.

\* "properly" Always insert the first vowel, and the diphone in "appropriately" as these are similar in outline and meaning

\* "Gabriele" This was the French pronunciation, hence the silent "e" at the end



**ASETNIOP Virtual Keyboard**

During those many summer days spent working through a typing instruction book, I discovered, entirely by chance, a very important element in learning a manual skill. After a longish session, I took a ten-minute break in the kitchen, making a snack and looking at the restful\*greenery in the garden. When I returned to my typewriter I found that I could hardly stop my fingers going to the exact places that I had been practising immediately before the break. They had a mind of their own and

seemed to have acquired a magnetic attraction to their respective keys, always pulling them in the right direction. Getting them to go to the wrong keys would be like getting a train off the tracks to take another course, or getting a cartwheel out of the rut in order to\* turn to the side.

\* "restful" Omits the lightly sounded R

\* Omission phrase "in ord(er to)"

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**ASETNIOP Virtual Keyboard**

I pounced with glee on this discovery and decided, if you will pardon the cliché, to milk it for all it was worth. I narrowed the timing down to 20 minutes training and 10 minutes rest. Twenty minutes was about the time I could manage before fatigue set in and the fingers began to give up obeying me. Shorter than 10 minutes rest was insufficient, and longer was unnecessary. This method worked best on intensive repetition of letter combinations or short words, rather than plain sentences or passages that used the whole keyboard at

random. The 10 minutes does not need to be wasted, and a relaxing perusal of the shorthand book would be quite in order\*, to squeeze every minute out of the available study time. The important thing was to give the hands a rest.

\* "in order" These two words do not belong with the following "to", therefore that shorter phrase "in order to" is not appropriate here, and additionally the longhand comma is essential here to provide that pause

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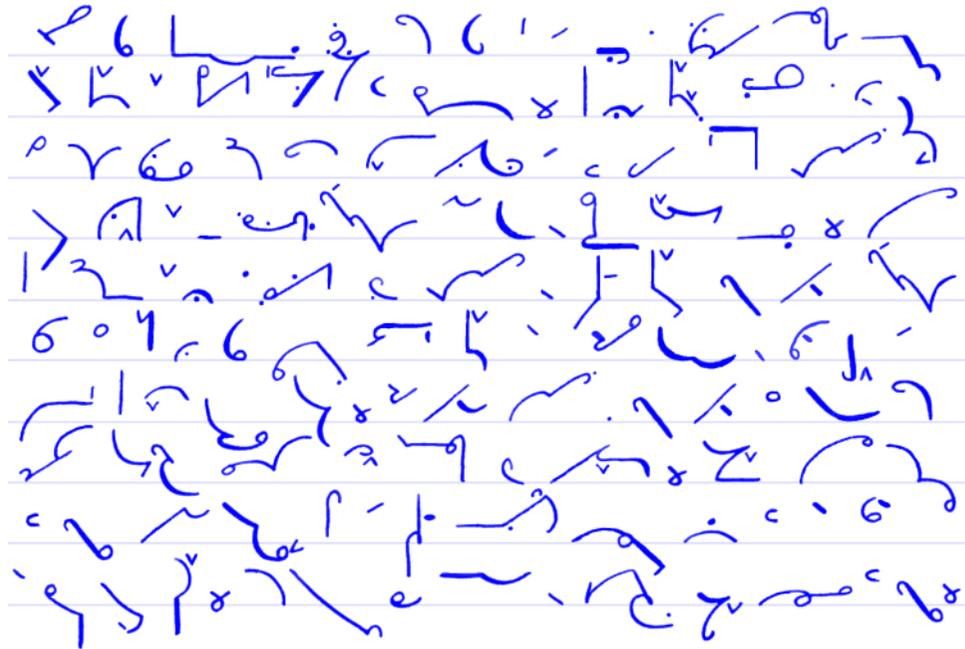
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**ASETNIOP Virtual Keyboard**

I used this technique consistently from then on and gained an elementary mastery of the keyboard by the time I started college that September. It made the typewriting classes a lot easier, as the early lessons were more like revision, and when we got to learning page layout, I could concentrate properly and not have to struggle finding the keys. Later on at work I made a concerted effort to learn to touch type the number row properly\* as well, as I had let this slip and grew tired of always having to slow down and look at my fingers for them. I would recommend learning the number row as being very worthwhile\*, for the

comparatively small amount of extra effort required. Unlike letters, errors with numbers are not obvious at all and total accuracy must be the aim, with all thoughts of speed pushed aside. Your computer is not going to helpfully underline mistakes with numbers.

\* "properly" Always insert the first vowel, and the diphone in "appropriately" as these are similar in outline and meaning

\* "worthwhile" Optional version omitting the Ith stroke

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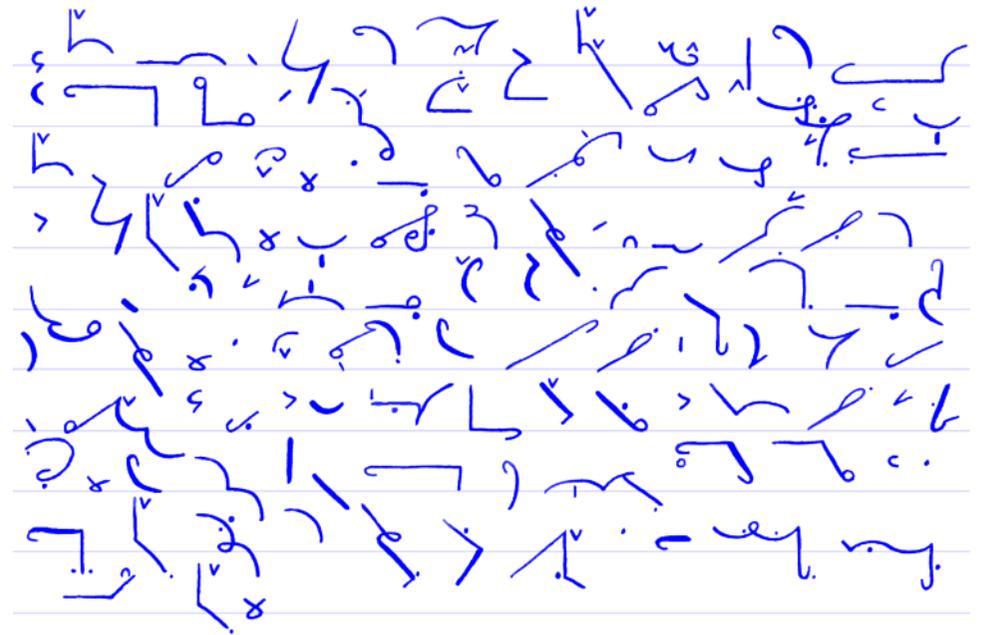
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**ASETNIOP Virtual Keyboard**

When the time came to change from manual to electric typewriter, I found out very quickly that correct strokes and errors alike happened instantaneously with no time to change one's mind. A key press resulted in the instant clack of the typebar. No hesitations were possible, and you could not really rest your fingers too hard on the home keys either, although a little bit of empty key travel was possible. A light

hovering over rather than resting on, was the only way to survive, with the weight of the hand occasionally taken by the base of the palm resting on the edge of the machine. Every error had to be corrected through multiple carbon copies with a gritty typing eraser, or possibly the page retyped, a great incentive to maintain accurate typing.

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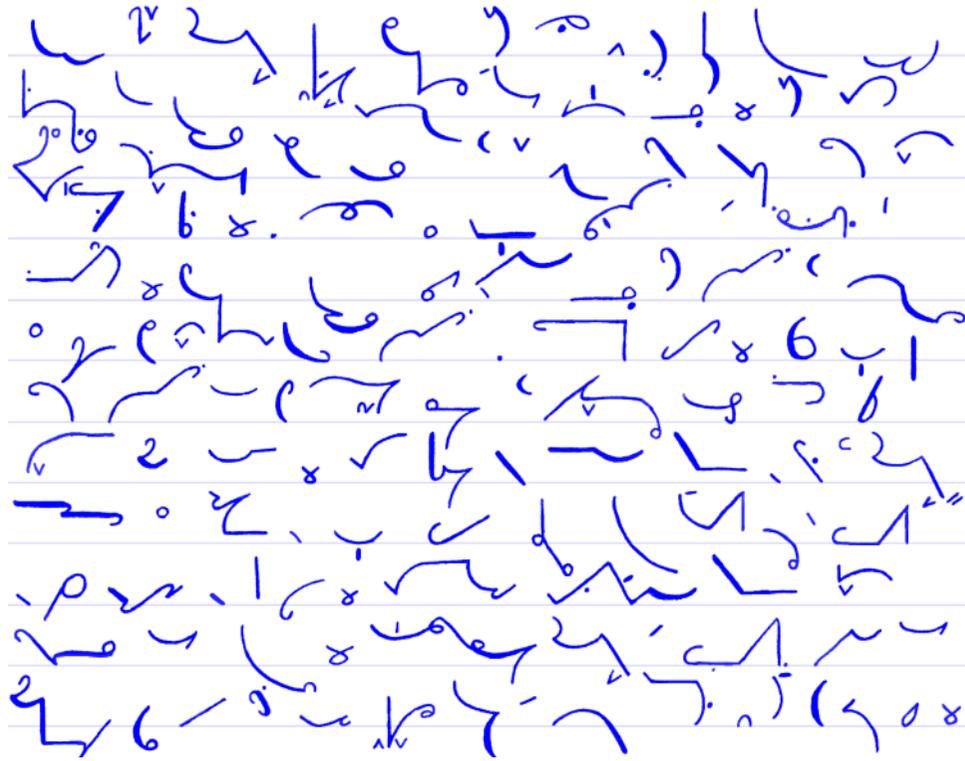
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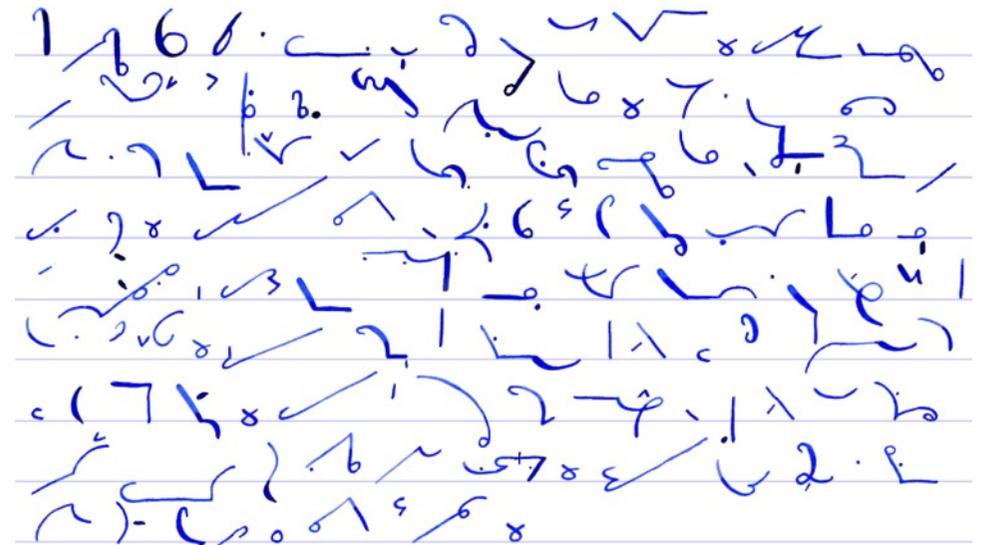


**ASETNIOP Virtual Keyboard**

Having tried the ASETNIOP tutorial several times I was amazed how easy it was, after initial temptations for fingers to move off the home keys. I was also sharply reminded of several things that I should have remembered\* better from my college days. The most important is to go slowly and concentrate on accuracy. Every time the fingers hit the wrong keys, they are learning that movement as surely as they might have been learning the correct one. This is no different from learning any other manual skill that requires instant action, just like shorthand in fact\*. I will definitely be going back to play with ASETNIOP again and again\*, as I would like to know whether it is possible\*, after 40 years of QWERTY, to switch between the two at will\*. I look forward\* to reporting back on

my progress in the future. Unsurprisingly\* ASETNIOP and QWERTY are not in the shorthand dictionary, these are brand new outlines for them and maybe I can say "You Saw Them Here First". (1336 words)

- \* "amazed" and "amused" Always insert the second vowel
- \* Omission phrases "in (f)act" "again (and) again" "it is poss(ible)" "I look fo(r)ward"
- \* "unsurprisingly" Short forms retain their position when preceded by the prefix "un-"
- \* "at will" The plain L stroke for "will" in phrases is only used for the verb, compare "I will" above. The noun is written is full.



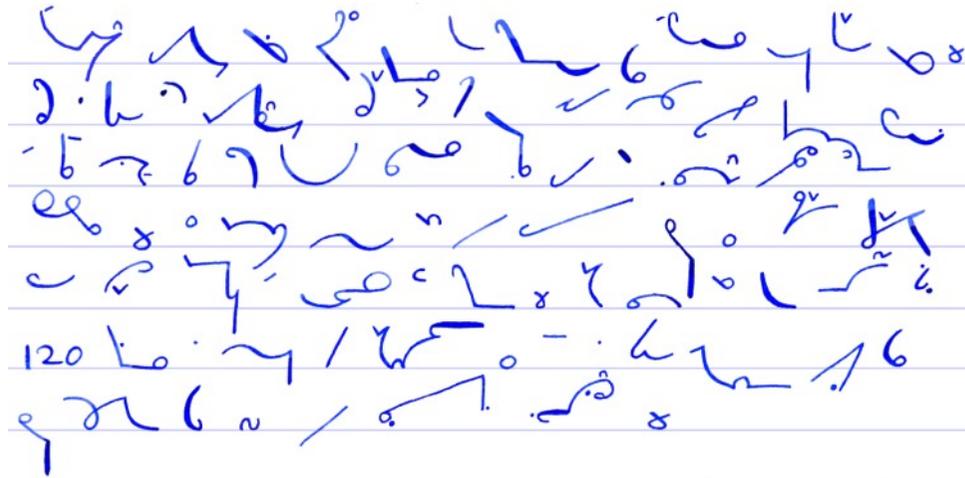
**Pigeon Power**

Dear Readers, This is just a quick note from us pigeons in the park. We would like to express our appreciation of the tasty treats that you have been leaving for us. Only a few days ago, someone left a very big pile of our favourite flavoured crisps for us to work our way through. We were happy to share this with the other birds, namely ducks, coots and moorhens, but one of the big Canada geese unfortunately\* became a bit possessive about it for a short while. But we are very good at pecking\* it up

when they are not looking, or when they get bored. We are on orders from the Council to eat up any remains really quickly, so that rats are not encouraged. When we are finished, there is not a speck left, so everyone is happy with the result.

- \* "unfortunately" Optional contraction
- \* "pecking" Insert the vowel so it is not misread as "picking"

Five horizontal lines for handwriting practice.



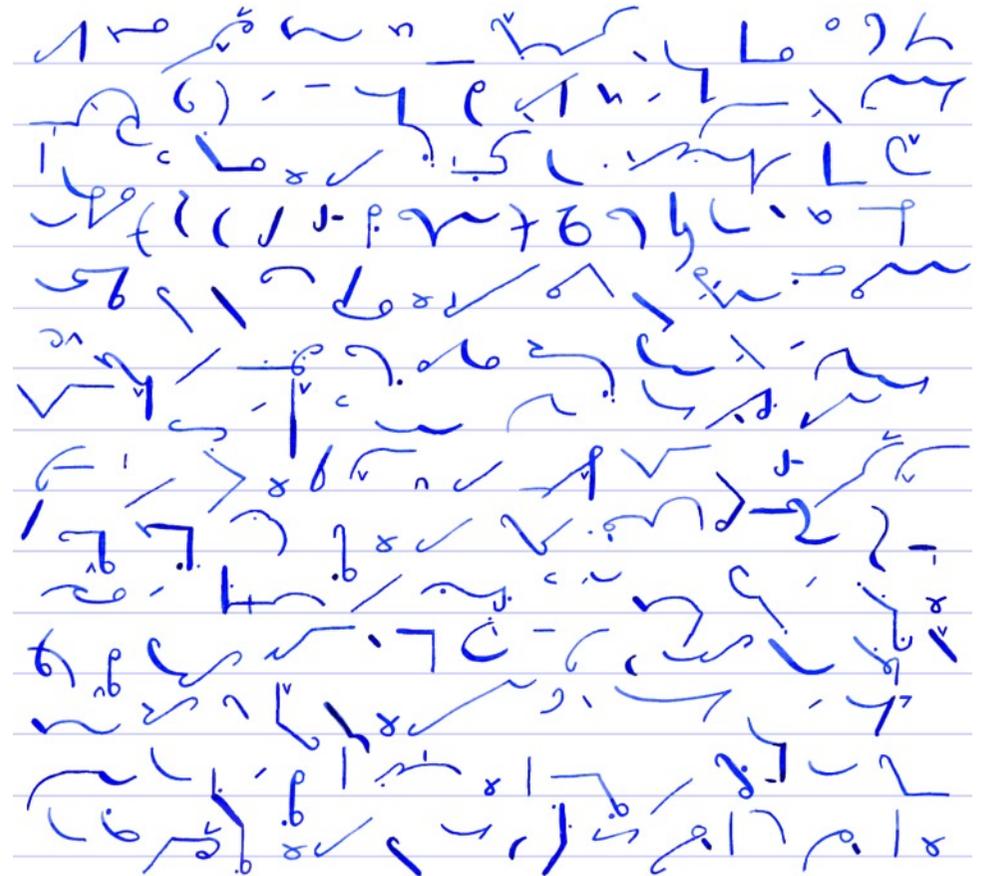
**Pigeon Power**

Fortunately we have the best sharp beaks for breaking these offerings into tiny pieces. There is a definite art to reducing the size of the larger bits, and we mostly use the Teamwork Fling and Toss Method, which is very efficient, as long as we all consume the results as soon as possible\*. As I am sure many of you are aware, speed is highly desirable in our line of activity and

increases with practice. I think some of us have actually achieved 120 pecks a minute, which I think you will agree is quite an achievement, and if you can reach this speed yourself, then you have our hearty congratulations.

\* Omission phrase "as soon as poss(ible)"

Horizontal lines for writing practice.



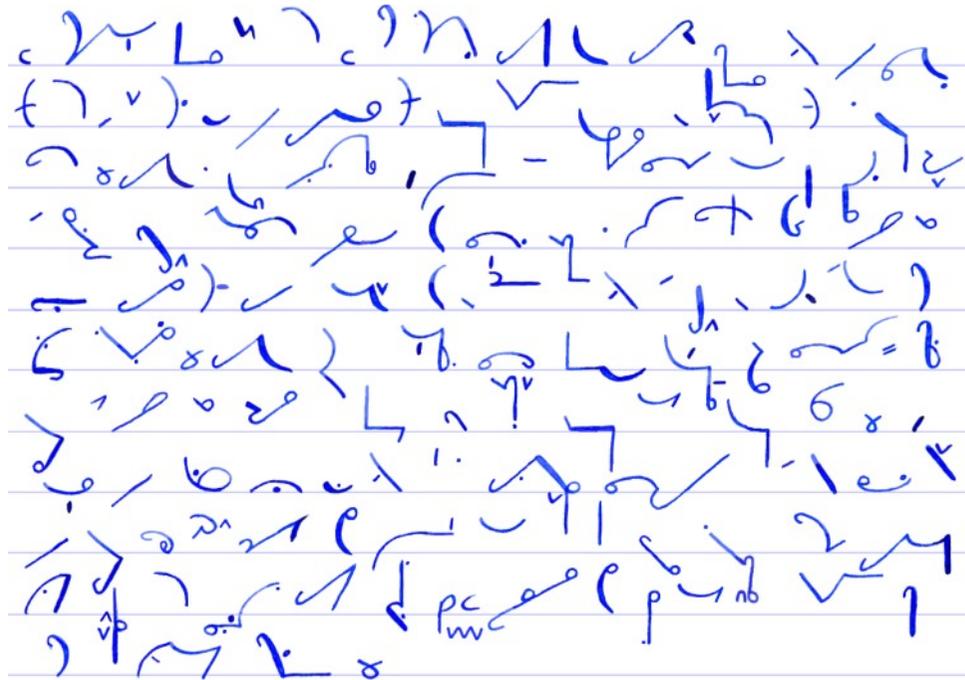
**Pigeon Power**

We do of course realise that many of you come primarily to feed the ducks, as they are much more\* colourful than us and quite endearing as they waddle about and look up longingly at visitors with bags. We occasionally have an ornamental duck fly in (although they generally don't stay very long) and this is very advantageous for all of us because it encourages people to be more generous. But we are happy to be the supporting cast, hanging around to provide our excellent free service of clearing everything up and leaving the park clean and tidy, with nothing left for the rodents, who are not welcome on our patch. Just

like you, we countryside park pigeons don't really like large crowds of greedy messy eaters. We prefer a smaller gathering, so that good manners and decorum are maintained, with not too much flapping and competition. This arrangement suits everyone and we can all get along quite well without anyone being pestered by too many of one particular type of bird. We are not short of natural food and enjoy looking for titbits and seeds at random. It keeps our brains in practice for fast reactions. We believe in the old adage "Use it or lose it."

\* Omission phrase "much m(ore)"

Horizontal lines for writing practice.



**Pigeon Power**

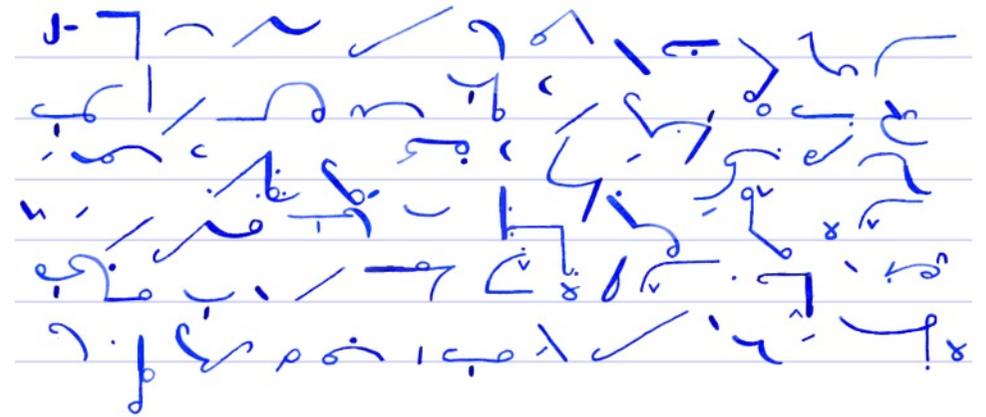
When there are no ducks about or when they are asleep, we do have one or two\* tricks up our sleeve (or should I say under our wings) to get park visitors to admire us a bit more. We have a few relatives who look quite smart in different shades of white and speckled brown, and for some reason they seem to attract a little more attention than the rest of us grey ones, so we invite\* them to walk up and down to show off their elegant appearance. We have especially noticed someone taking photos of these smartly-dressed pigeons and the rest of us always take the opportunity of trying to get in the photo as well. Who knows, our faces may end up on a website somewhere and be seen by our

pigeon friends around the world, as they look in at people's computers\* from the window ledge outside, or secretly watch tablet PC users as they sit in the park during their lunch break.

\* Omission phrase "one (or) two"

\* "invite" and "invade" Insert the second vowel, as these two are similar in outline and opposite in meaning

\* "computers" In the plural, the U diphthong can no longer be joined, therefore doubling cannot be used in this instance



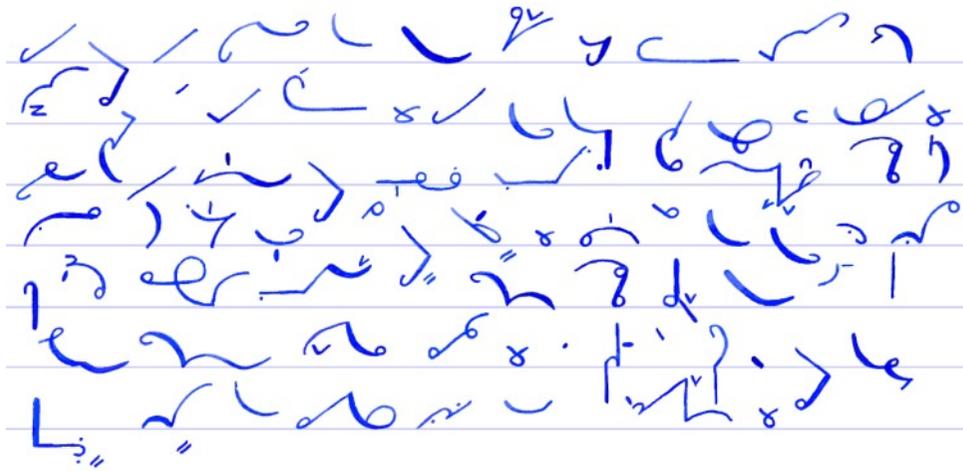
**Pigeon Power**

Don't get me wrong, we are very happy to be grey pigeons and if you look closely at our colours, you may notice that our plumage is equally beautiful and handsome, with iridescent blues and greens that change and shimmer as we move about, and our wings covered in decorative bars and stripes. Like snowflakes, no two are exactly alike. Just like a crowd of humans\*,

from a distance everyone is the same, but close up we are all individual and interesting.

\* "humans" Special outline, see [www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand.org.uk/distinguishing-outlines-2-rule.htm](http://www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand.org.uk/distinguishing-outlines-2-rule.htm) "human humane"

Blank lined paper for additional notes or practice.



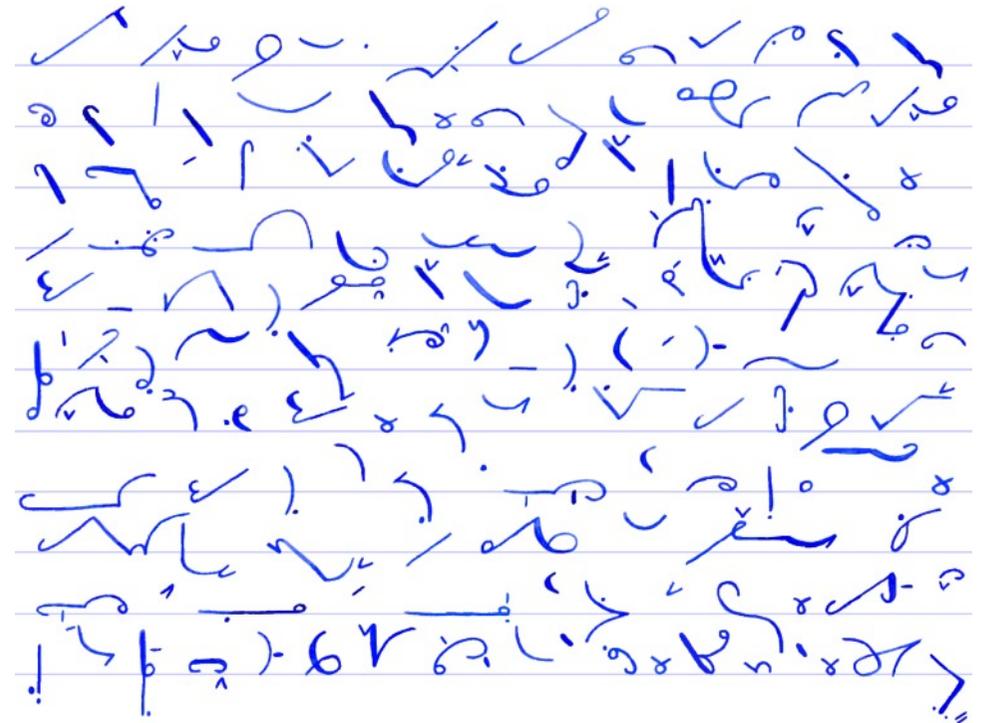
**Pigeon Power**

We pigeons are well known for being highly intelligent, quick to learn and very loyal to each other and to our flock. We even feed each other's youngsters when necessary. Using our homing pigeon cousins to carry miniaturised messages on their legs was commonly known as the Pigeon Post. Some of us have even earned medals during wars, successfully carrying very important

messages, despite being shot at, and saving very many lives as a result\*. A total of 32 pigeons have received the\* Dickin Medal for services rendered in wartime.

\* Omission phrases "as (a) result" "have (re)ceived the"

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**Pigeon Power**

We are able to recognise ourselves in a mirror whereas some of our less able bird friends believe it to be another bird. Some pigeons have successfully learned to recognise number groups, and tell apart various paintings by different famous painters. Our excellent colour vision, including seeing ultra-violet light, meant that we could help sea rescues by being trained to spot orange lifejackets in the distance on rough seas, long before the humans'\* eyes could see them, and so many more lives were saved that way. Here in the park, we train ourselves to react quickly when we see or hear a commotion that means eating is going on.

We hope you will\* continue to appreciate our services in recycling the stale crumbs, and the cakes and cookies\* that fell on the floor. We don't mind eating off the dusty ground, so this is the ideal solution for all concerned. Best wishes to you all. Yours sincerely\*, Pidgie (960 words)

\* "humans" See note on previous paragraph

\* Omission phrases "we (h)ope you will" "Yours (sin)cerely"

\* "cakes and cookies" Insert vowels in order to differentiate

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