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Blogs - 2013 - December

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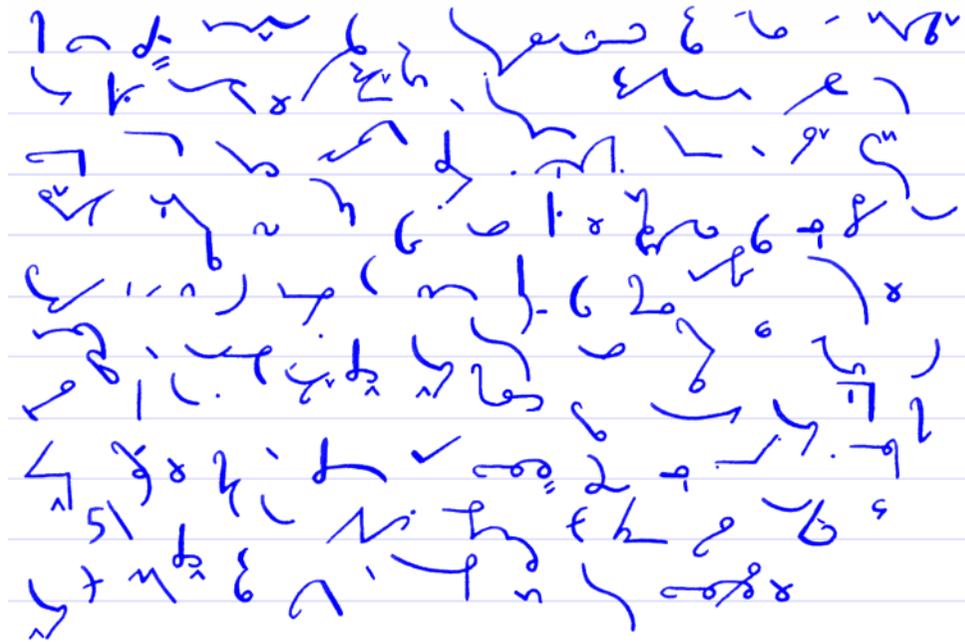
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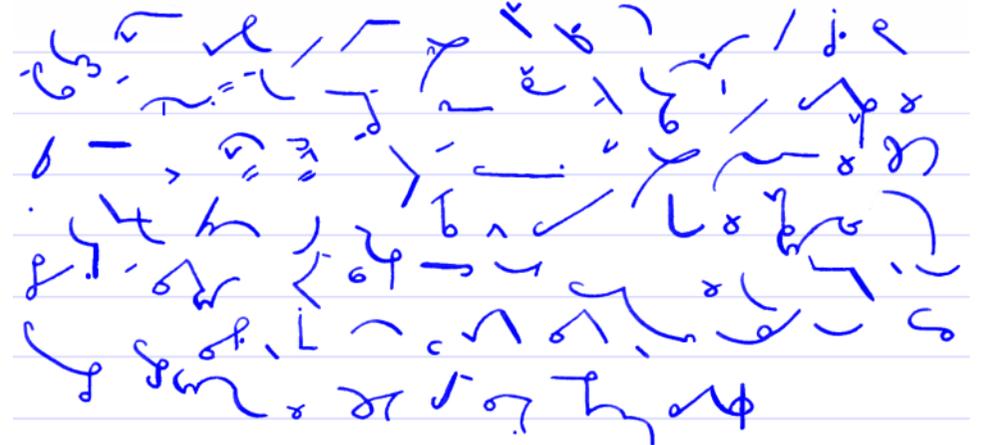


Padded Letter

Dear Mr Jones, I am writing this letter to thank you for your recent communication with this office, and I apologise for the delay in my reply*. I would like to confirm that we have now received your credit card payment and we will be despatching the multi-pack of High Flyer Spiral Notepads you have ordered within the next day. I trust that you will find* these goods satisfactory in every way, but should you wish to exchange them, you may do so within three weeks* of receipt of the order. I am very pleased to enclose herewith* a discount voucher for your next purchase with us, and if you wish to use it for an

online transaction, please enter the Voucher Code during the checkout process. During the month* of December, all our Christmas Season goods carry an extra 5% discount for returning customers (which you can use in conjunction with the Voucher) and I hope that this* will be of interest to you for your Christmas requirements.

* Omission phrases "in my (re)ply" "I trus(t) that you will find" "enclose (herew)ith" "three (w)eeks" "further (assi)stance" "during the (mon)th"



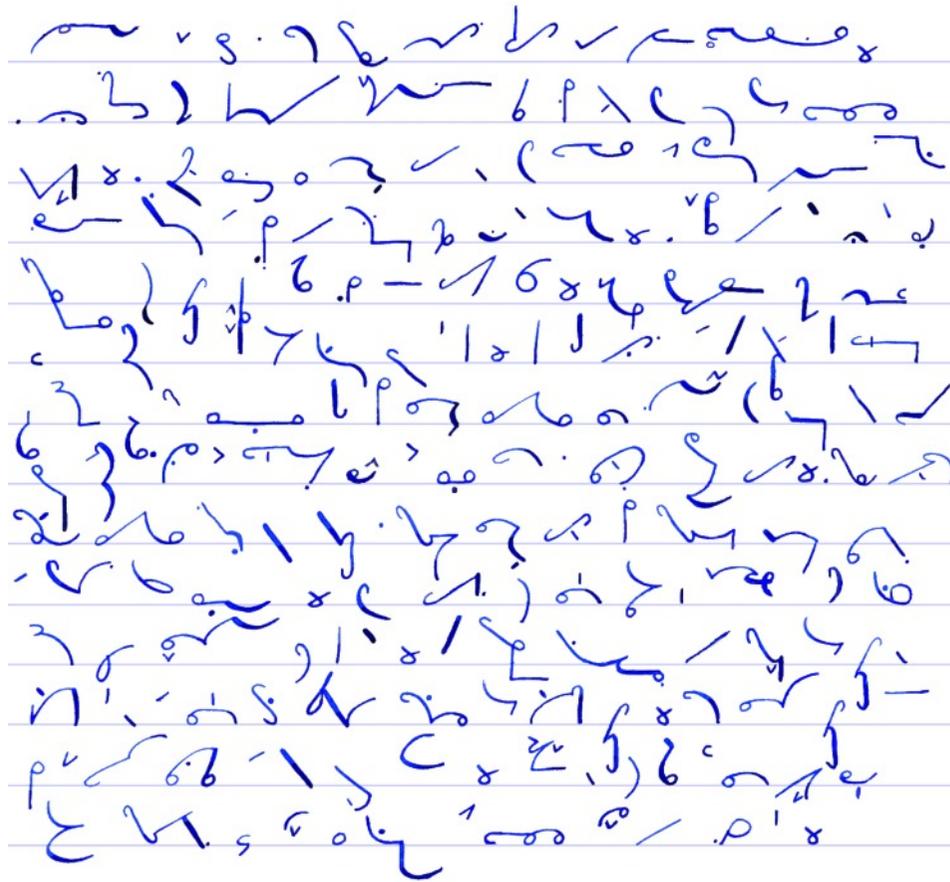
Padded Letter

If you would like to receive our regular newsletter by post or email, which contains special offers and money-off coupons, you can sign up for this on our website. Just go to the My Account page and click on the Newsletter link. There is also a feedback form which you may wish to visit and tell us how we are doing. I trust that you will find the* order satisfactory and hope that you will shop with us again in the near future. If I can be of any further

assistance*, please do not hesitate to contact me, when I will be happy to answer any questions* that you may have. Yours sincerely*, John Smith, Customer Services Department.

* Omission phrases "and I (h)ope" "I trus(t) that you will find the" "Yours (sin)cerely"

* "questions" Optional contraction

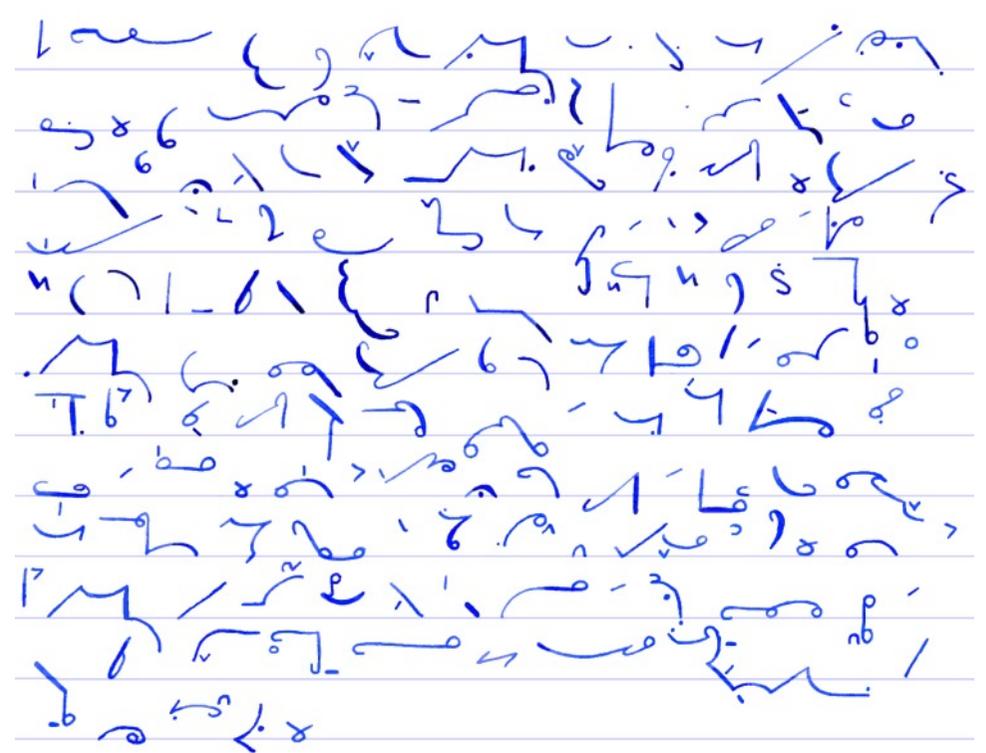


Chilly Christmas

Last weekend* I spent a very pleasant morning at one of our local garden centres. The main attraction was the temporary ice rink, which is set up every year over the Christmas period. The shrub section is moved away to other corners, and the square rink, café, snack bar and seating are erected towards the end of November. The sides are all made of sheets of perspex so that children outside and those seated can watch as well. I visited several weeks ago* during the midweek* when there were* only four people on it. It had been raining and large puddles had collected but this worked to these particular skaters' advantage, as it smoothed the surface somewhat, allowing them to get up greater speed and there was less of the crunching sound of the skates, more a slushy

splashing one. The present rougher frozen surface appeared to be better than a perfectly smooth one as it prevented too much slipping and overly fast skating. However, we did see some falls but I am glad to say that* their faces were still smiling through it all. Large plastic penguins are provided for the children to hold on to, and some plain adjustable frames for the older children. Very small children can sit on the yellow sledges and be pushed along. I would like to see all this with some real snow falling, preferably when the light is fading and the Christmas lights are switched on.

* Omission phrases "las(t w)eekend" "several wee(k)s ago" "mid(w)eek" "there (w)ere" "I am glad (to) s(ay) that"



Chilly Christmas

At the garden centre, they have three live reindeer in a pen in the rear landscaping section. These animals were quite relaxed, although at times a little bored with things, but maybe that is made up for by the guaranteed supply of hay and water. They were completely unaware of why they are the centre of attraction for the children and of all the stories and tales about them, or it could just be that they have been told to keep quiet about their planned activities. The reindeer theme seems to be* everywhere this year, not only decorations large and small, but as cuddly toys, hot water bottle covers, slippers and knitted onto jumpers, hats, gloves and socks. Some of the ornaments made from wood and twigs have been simplified in the extreme, and only the presence of antlers allows you to recognise what they are. Some of the toy reindeer are actually standing up on two legs and wearing

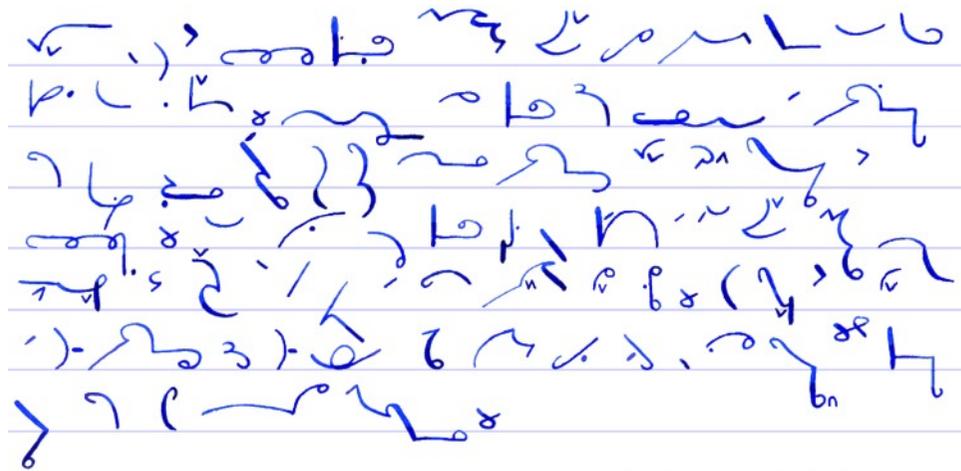
Christmas suits and boots, just like cartoon characters - in other words*, anthropomorphic* which means human-shaped*.

* Omission phrase "seems (to) be"

* "in other words" Doubling to represent "other"

* "anthropomorphic" Resembling or made to resemble a human form or attributes, applied to things that are not human

* "human" above the line, to distinguish it from "humane" on the line - easy to remember if you think of the second vowel as the one giving it its position. Ensure the Tick Hay is clear, and insert the diphthong, so it does not look like "man"



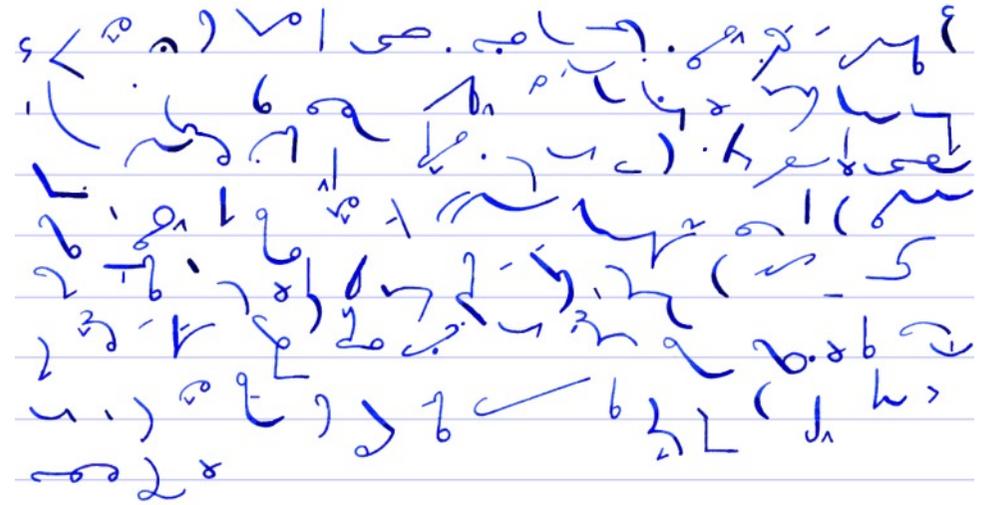
Chilly Christmas

I like to see all the Christmas decorations and I am glad that the shiny ones are now back in fashion, at least* for a time. Many years ago most decorations were glistening and reflective, from tinsel to glass baubles, so that there was maximum reflection of light around the branches of the Christmas tree. In later years decorations tended to be duller and not shiny, and I think this may have coincided with the arrival of

much cheaper and more reliable lights sets. They provided all the light, and so reflections were not so necessary, and this left the way open to mass produce all sorts of decorative objects from other materials and fabrics.

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

Blank lined writing area for notes.



Chilly Christmas

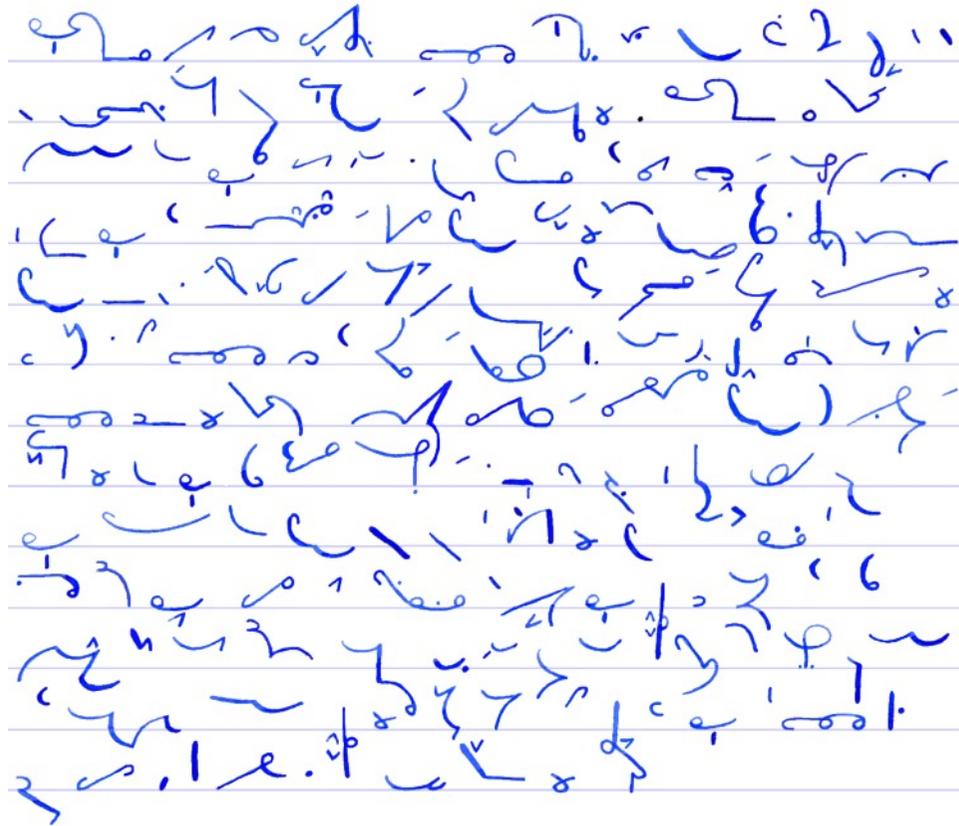
When the cheap lights made their appearance, it increased the craze for covering the house frontage and windows with them, but after a few years this seems to have* reduced as the novelty faded. I am sure having to get the big long ladder* out twice a year in the cold was a large part of the* reason! Increasing numbers of houses had the strings of lights up longer and longer*, and eventually some had them hanging from the gutters all year. It was just too much trouble and bother to remove them and one could occasionally

see the wires and dull plastic icicles waving in the warm spring breezes. It is more common now to see lights strung through bushes and trees, where it is easier to take them down at the end of the Christmas season.

* Omission phrases "seems (to) have" "large part (of) the" "lo(nger and) longer"

* "ladder" A lone L stroke is doubled for -ter but not -der or -ther

Blank lined writing area for notes.



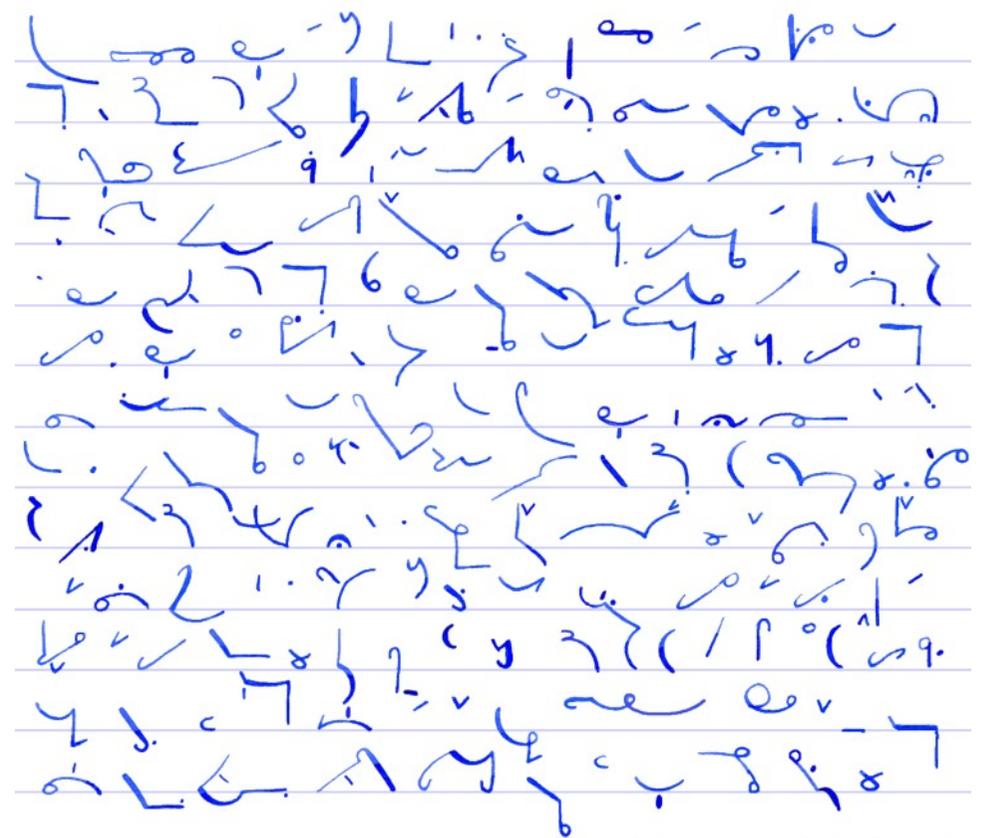
Chilly Christmas

Snowflakes are the most widespread* Christmas motif of late, being flat they are the easiest of all to incorporate onto pages, clothing and shop windows. The snowflake is part of the longing for snow – not a few flakes that hit the ground and instantly melt, but thick snow that accumulates and turns everything white. I am convinced that this is a desire to make everything come to a stop while we enjoy our victory over the rigours and challenges of winter. When I was a child, Christmas meant that shops and businesses did in fact* shut down, some for the whole Christmas week. Apart from emergency services and hospitals, everything was restful and quiet. If it

snowed, then that was interesting and a good opportunity to play, but it was not necessary to have snow in order for everything to be put on hold. However, all the scenes on cards were snowy ones and the presence of real snow outside would ensure that those lounging about in the warm indoors need not feel any pressure or necessity to do anything that involved going outside. I think the only child disappointed with snow on Christmas Day would be the one who had received a new bike.

* "spread" on its own has stroke D

* Omission phrase "in (f)act"



Chilly Christmas

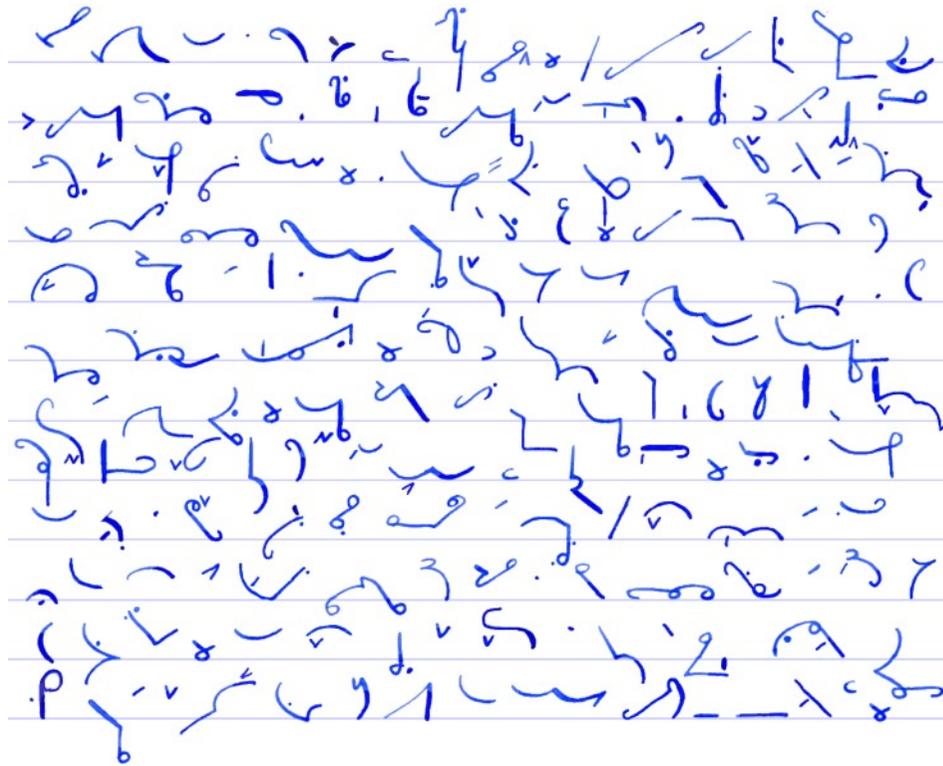
After Christmas, snow and ice take on a completely different significance, and mean delays in getting to work or shops, danger on the roads, and soaring heating bills. The failure to take precautions, that were considered but not carried out*, is now being regretted – insulating the loft, checking water pipes, sealing draughty windows and doors, buying a snow shovel, or getting those snow boots before the shelves are emptied of them once the snow has started to fall in quantity. I did once get some ankle boots in preparation for further snow, but made the mistake of opting for a cheap pair, as I thought I would not really be wearing them very much. The soles, although ridged*, were

unfortunately* made of a plastic type material. I slipped three times on the same journey, on a particularly icy bend in the footpath, once on the way out, and twice on the way back. It was true that I did not wear them much at all as they went straight into the bin when I got home and I visited the garden centre as soon as I could to get some big chunky rubber Wellington boots, with no expense spared.

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

* "ridged" For "rigid" insert the second vowel to differentiate

* "unfortunately" Optional contraction

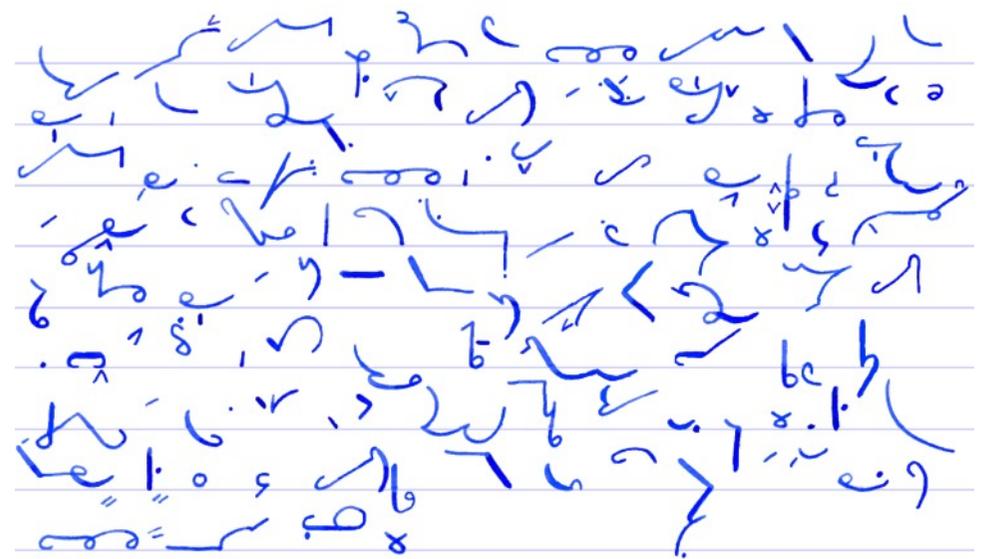


Chilly Christmas

I used to live in a very old, cold and draughty house. Each winter we taped plastic sheeting to the window frames against the draughts, but on those windows not covered, the condensation would run down the glass and freeze on the inside sill overnight. The pencil shaped pieces of ice could be prised up and removed next morning, sometimes bringing bits of paint with them! We kept warm through layers of clothes and had a coal fire only in the living room, the other rooms remaining unheated. Frost would form on the panes in fantastic flower and leaf shapes. Nowadays I would be wanting to take photos of it but then I just had to admire the frosty decoration

while it was there, not knowing when it would be gone. I gained an interest in hoarding a supply of woolly* hats, scarves and mittens which my Mum and Nan made for me, and the furry slippers were always a special Christmas present and worn until they fell apart. In my teens I acquired a pair of hook lace-up sheepskin suede boots, and I really felt I was ready for anything the weather could come up with.

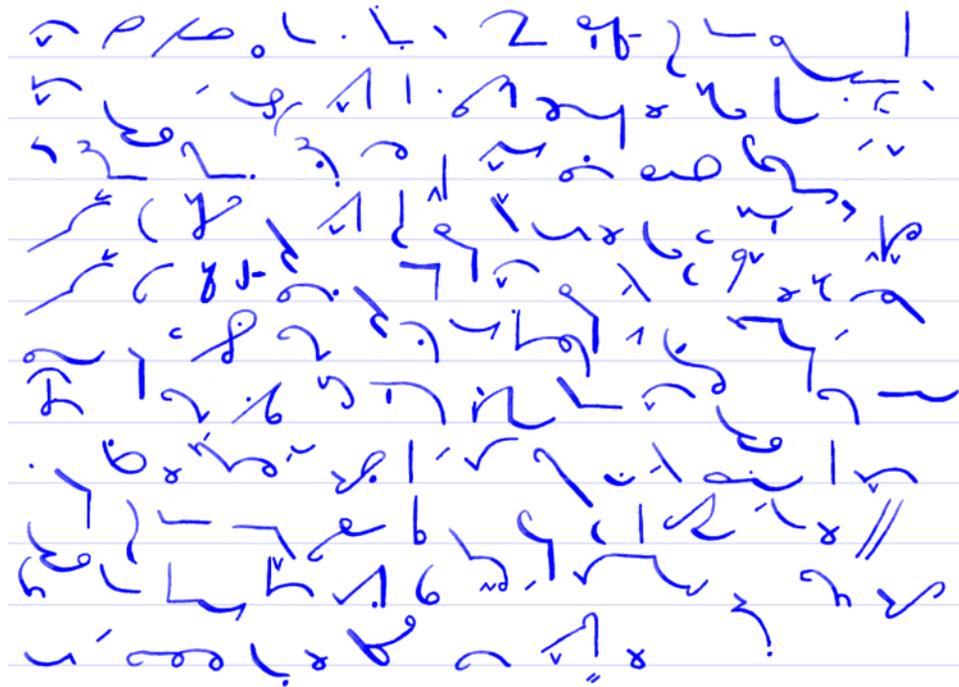
* "woolly" Insert the last vowel to differentiate from "wool" and ensure it does not acquire a hook at the end of the L stroke, which would be "woollen" - all three words have the same meaning when used as an adjective.



Chilly Christmas

If we really wanted to stay warm over Christmas, we would not be wishing for snow, but for unseasonably mild weather and abundant sunshine. It seems that what is wanted is not a cold chilly Christmas but a white one, snowy outside, but with clothing and housing that prevents it from affecting our comfort level. Without the luxury of these items, snow and ice go back

to their real job of freezing not only the water, the ground and the plants, but also fingers and toes, and bringing greater discomfort, danger, disruption and even a halt, to all the essential activities that we need to do. The day after Boxing Day is when the weather conditions can be viewed more objectively, and not seen through Christmas-coloured glasses. (1400 words)



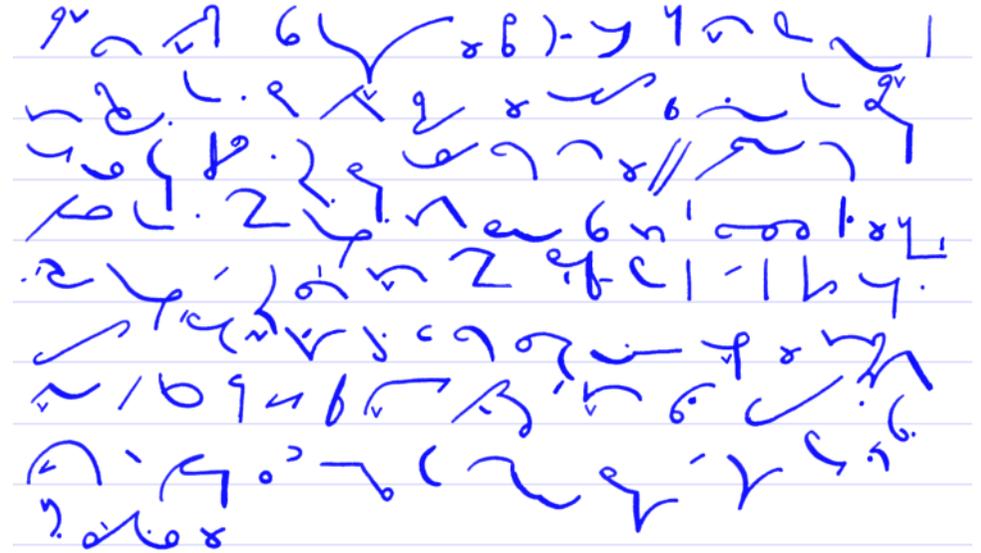
Dear Father Christmas)

My last request is for a packet of Magic Snow Dust so that I can sprinkle it on my fingers and instantly write at a hundred words a minute. I have been doing a lot of hard work practising, wearing myself out writing the same sentences over and over again*, and I really think I deserve to be able to write at that speed by now. Even when I know all the outlines really well, I just don't seem to be able to get my speed up that high. I think it must be* something to do with resistance from the air in the atmosphere and the force of gravity and magnetism from the earth's iron core holding back my fingers from going a bit

faster. I promise not to waste it, and I will probably end up sticking it to my fingers so that I can keep using its powers every day, without it washing off. Thank you for taking the time to read this, and I look forward* to hearing from you between now and Christmas Eve. Best wishes*, Mr Ryter.

* Omission phrases "over (and) over again" The second "over" is reversed to make a good join; "mus(t) be" "I look fo(r)ward"

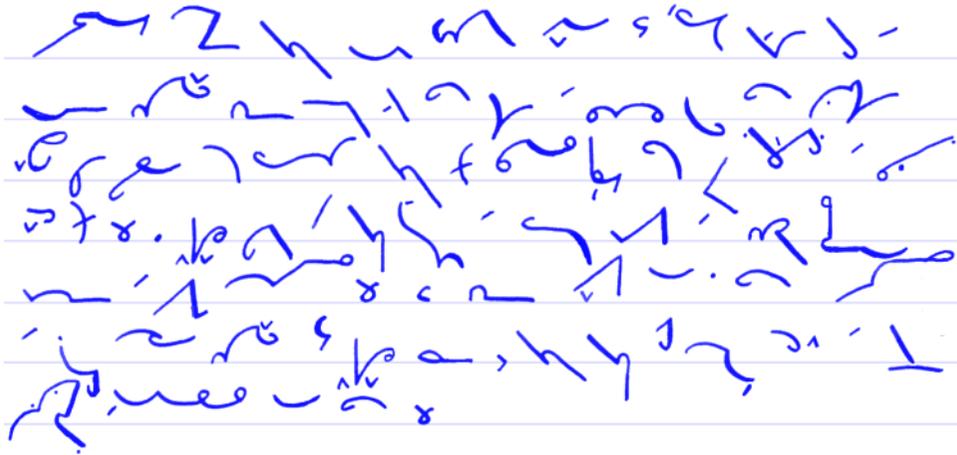
* "best wishes" Upward Ish to enable it to join



Dear Father Christmas

Hi Mr Ryter, Thanks for your letter. As it is so unusual, I had my staff bring it to me personally for a special reply straight away. Anyone who is aiming for high speed in the things they do deserves an especially speedy answer from me. Regarding your request for a Magic Pencil, I will be sending this to you on Christmas Day. I took an

ordinary pencil and showered some of my Magic Snow Dust over it and it turned into a wonderful North Pole pen with very smooth ink inside. I am sure you will be writing much faster with it – just like the runners on my sleigh, where a thin layer of liquid is what keeps them moving speedily and easily over the hard icy surface.

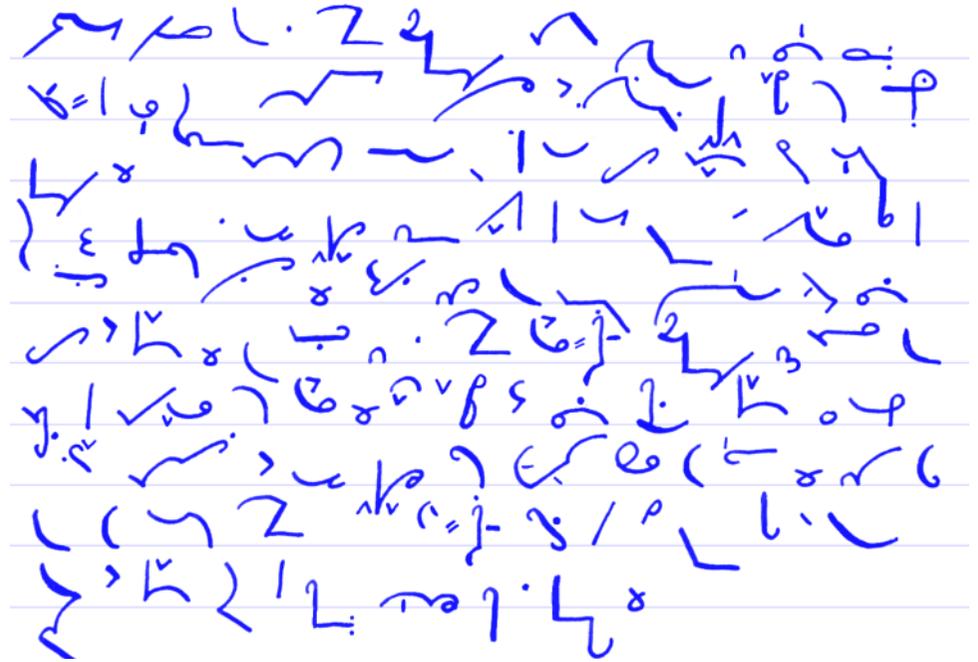


Dear Father Christmas

Regarding the Magic Paper, now that you will be writing with the North Pole pen and ink, you will find you can keep up more easily, and sometimes even more leisurely, whilst still using your normal paper (as long as it is not the very cheap absorbent and hairy kind). The outlines will be much

better formed, and clearer to read, and you will not be struggling to make and read the marks. When you can write in a more relaxed and confident manner, you will find that the outlines stick to the paper better and do not move around and become illegible nonsense any more.

Horizontal lines for writing.



Dear Father Christmas

Regarding the request for a Magic Shorthand Dictionary, I will be leaving you some sticky post-it notes so that you can mark the letters of the alphabet down the side of your existing dictionary. I am also going to add in one of my special notepads so that when you discover a new outline, you can write it in the book and revise it again later on. That way you will not have to keep looking up the same one all the time. If I gave you a Magic Voice-

Controlled Shorthand Dictionary, you would of course have to train it to recognise your voice. Might I suggest that the same training time is instead applied to learning all the new outlines very thoroughly as soon as they occur. You will then have them in your Magic Thought-Controlled Brain, which has the big advantage of being available all the time, especially at tricky moments during a dictation.

Horizontal lines for writing.



Novelty Wearing Off

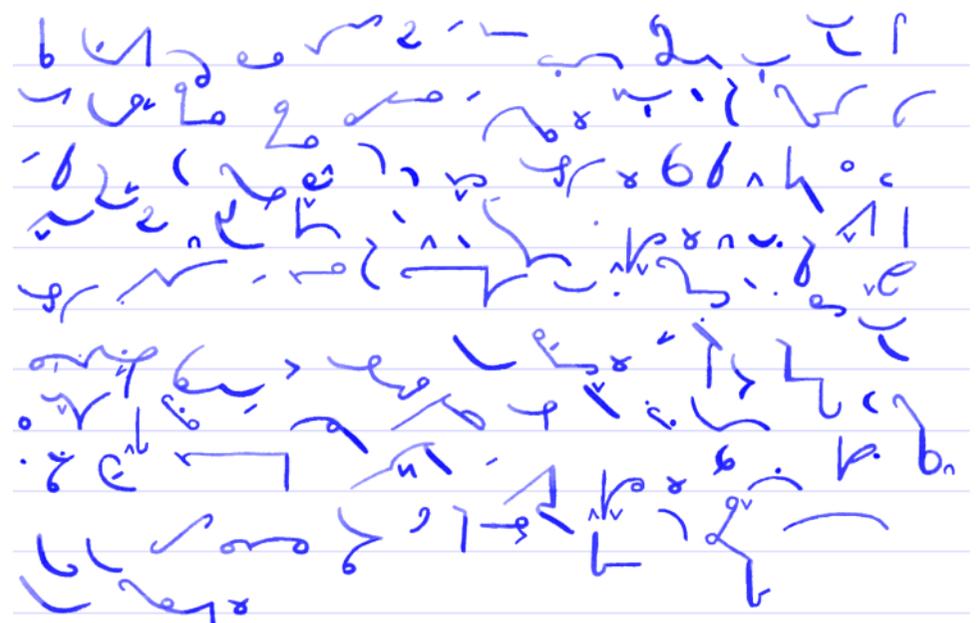
Novelty is defined* as newness, innovation, originality, freshness, uniqueness, something of transitory appeal, experienced by a person encountering for the first time* something that catches their interest. Once you have reached chapter five, the amazing* novelty of chapter one will be long past. You will be quite at home with P B T D and all the other strokes. Obviously this is going to happen with all the other chapters eventually and there will come a point when none of the book contains any novelty factor at all. If novelty was the one and only attraction, then it all falls flat at the end of the book, or possibly even before, and something else has to be found to take its place. In seeking a replacement novelty, before the shorthand

can actually be used for real, one might miss the more satisfying novelty of being able to write shorthand as comfortably as longhand – in fact even more comfortably, as your hand will not lag behind your thoughts or the words of the speaker, and you can say goodbye to slow cramped fingers.

* "defined" always insert the diphthong, to help distinguish it from "definite", as they can both be used as adjectives

* Omission phrases "for (the) first time" "in (f)act"

* "amazing" and "amusing" Always insert the vowel



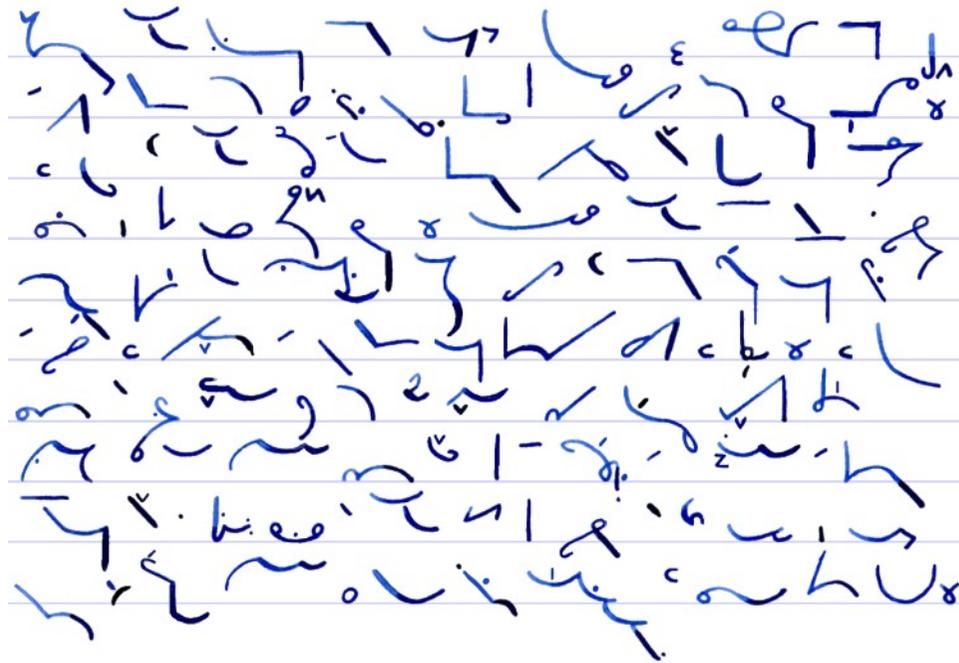
Novelty Wearing Off

It is forty years since I learned shorthand and I can claim that there is now no novelty at all in the various strokes, hooks, circles and loops. I know all of them perfectly well and just seeing them brings the sound or word to mind instantly. This is just how it should be, as when writing shorthand you do not have time to think of how to form an outline. You need to just write it instantly, rapidly and of course correctly in a fraction of a second, whilst simultaneously listening to the next few words* being spoken. On the battlefield of

dictation, novelty is entirely out of place, and must be replaced instead by complete familiarity that produces an endless flow of correct, reliable and readable outlines. That is the aim, at least*, even if one sometimes falls short of it because of the difficulty or high speed of the matter being presented.

* Omission phrase "ne(k)s(t) few w(or)ds"

* "at least" "at last" Always insert the vowel



Novelty Wearing Off

I think maybe the novelty effect can be enjoyed afterwards, when you successfully get down and read back your first complete piece taken at one of your speed goals. When even that novelty wears off, it can be replaced by doing exactly the same but at the next higher speed. In other words, novelty can become a useful movable tool for maintaining enthusiasm, one that can be brought into play and used when required, and put back into temporary storage when it is not. When, after some time of effortless gliding through your

shorthand writing, you are forced to write at some length in longhand, you may find it quite frustrating and annoying, and it may be accompanied by a definite* sense of novelty – it used to be all that you knew, but now the poor old plodding longhand is being compared unfavourably with something much more* efficient.

* See note on "defined" in paragraph 3

* Omission phrase "much m(ore)"



Novelty Wearing Off

To be able to use shorthand effectively and comfortably, you need to get to the point where everything you write in shorthand is devoid of novelty, and every outline is a known one that flows easily from your mind, through the pen and onto the paper. For shorthand learning and improvement, there has to be a progression from novelty to familiarity. Novelty is a useful concept, and it can still be made use of, if it is shifted over into another area, such as ways to improve your performance and speed your pen along the paper. Once you have a skill,

then ways to use it start to suggest themselves, and eventually you wonder how you managed without it. All the novelty will then be in the minds of your friends and colleagues, who will be standing in awe* of your easy and relaxed prowess in this subject. (869 words)

* This sloping vowel short form is written downwards and stands for "awe, ought, aught" (Aught is an archaic word for "anything"). The vertical version is "owe, O, oh"
