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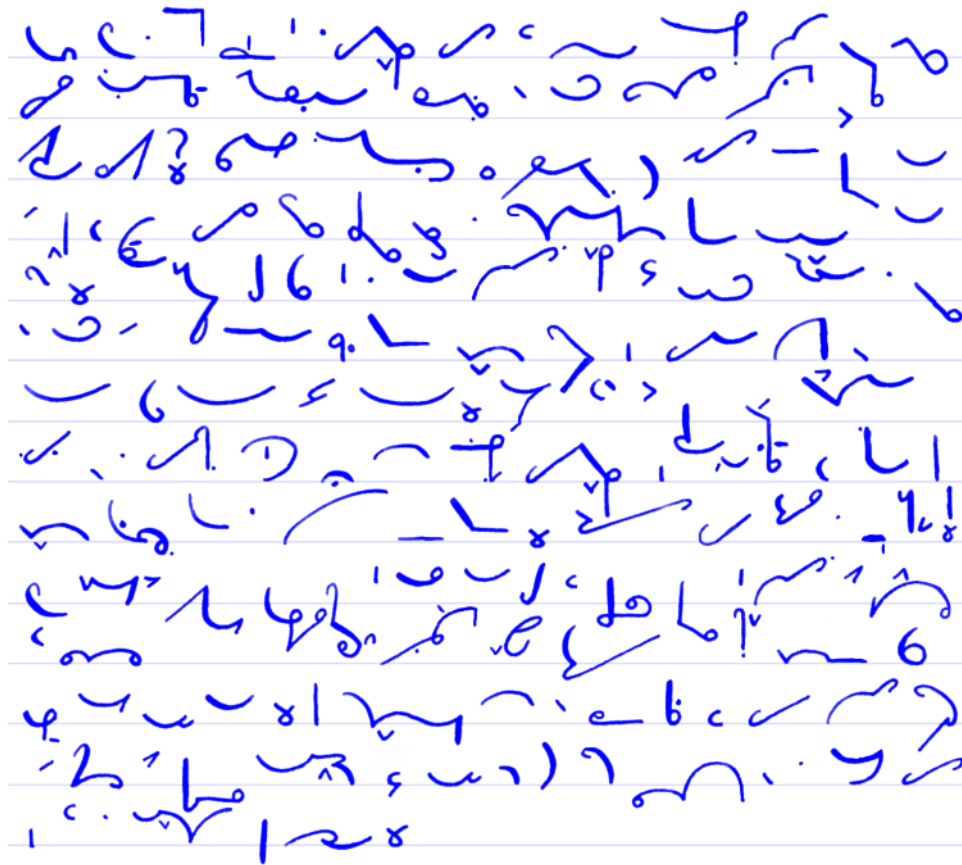
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PDF Date: 15 December 2024

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Instant Response

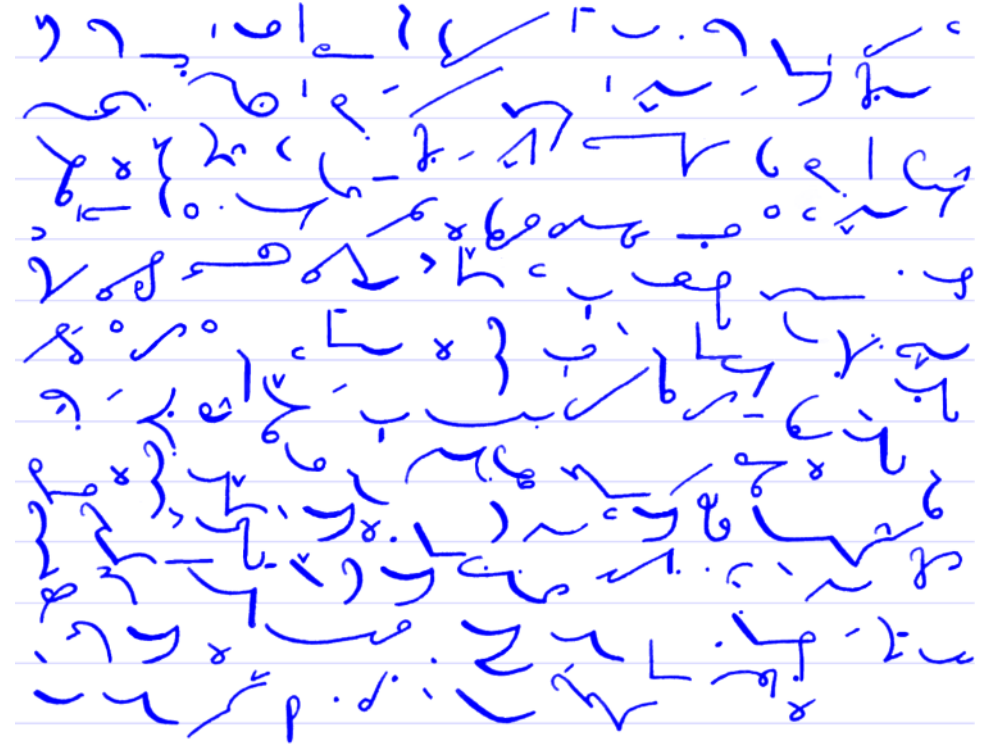
Have you ever got stuck on a website, one with many interesting little bits and pieces, stories, anecdotes and fascinating snippets of information more or less* related to the original search? As long as the navigation is reasonably easy, and one can dip in and out without losing one's place, it is possible to spend a very long time doing nothing in particular. I have just done this on a language learning site, with the intention of finding a piece of information and going straight back to my project, but one thing* led to another, then another, and yet another. Only the thought of the dinner potatoes boiling away to a watery mush* made me exit the website, but not without adding it to my Favourites for a later comeback. I wonder whether that was a good idea! However, I enjoyed reading the

visitors' contributions on languages in general, with discussions, tips on learning and the howlers that sometimes resulted whilst they were trying* to make themselves understood in the new language. It reminded me of school days, when we learned French and German, and the difficulties encountered when the new word was very similar to an English one, but with an entirely different meaning.

* Omission phrases "more (or) less"
"wu(n) thing"

* "mush" Helpful to insert the vowel, so it is not misread as "mash"

* "trying" No diphone, as the I sound is included in the Dot Ing



Instant Response

I was very keen on languages at school, although they were taught in a very bookish way, with minimal emphasis on speaking, and rather too much on writing and translating* passages. I think they assumed that if you could* translate and write correctly, then speaking it fluently would occur as a natural result. This was certainly not the* case, as with writing there are hesitations and corrections happening all the time, with no incentive to make an instant response as one has to do when talking. There was none of today's technology for easily creating, storing and sharing sound files, and no internet where one could listen to native speakers. There was no time for us to have lengthy conversations to practise our skills. In addition to this, there was the problem of the intrusion of English. The book was written with English instructions, vocabulary lists were accompanied by their

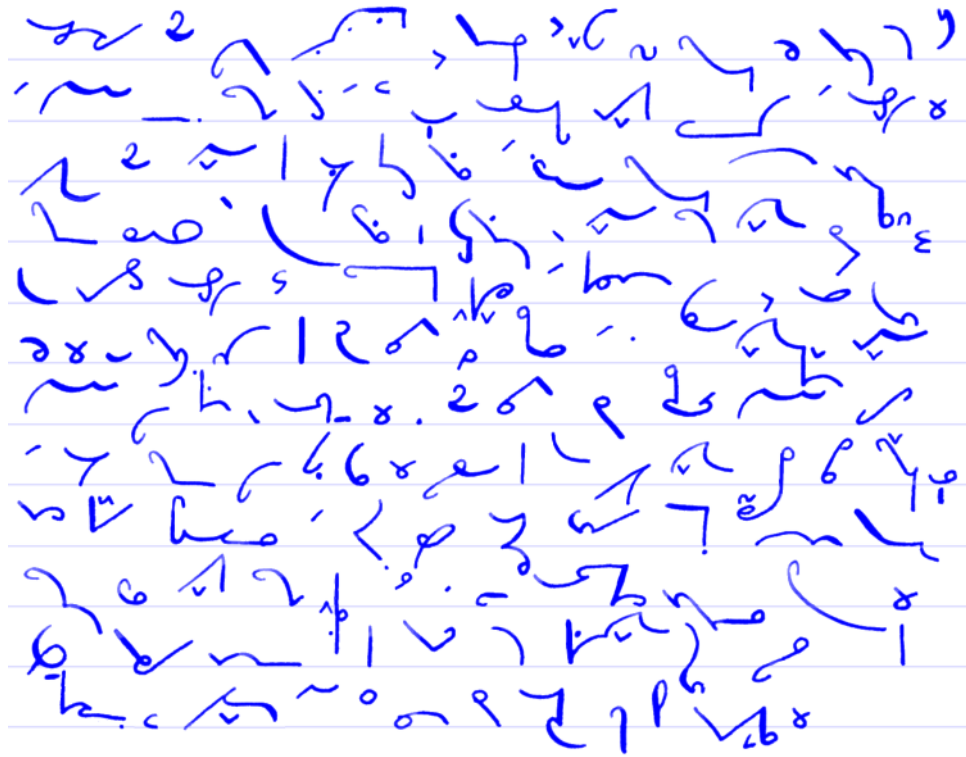
English equivalent, and we did a lot of written translation to and from English. In other words*, the English language* never took a back seat, and so the new language never really stood a chance of being properly mastered.

* "if you could" The "could" is not phrased, so that it remains in its correct position and so cannot be misread as "can"

* "certainly not the" N Hook and halving to represent "not"

* "language" This short form should be phrased with caution, as it could be misread as "-ing". It is obvious here with the name of the language, but may be less so in other situations.

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



Instant Response

In the same way, shorthand will be relegated to the back seat all the while you have printed words before your eyes and longhand coming from the pen, and with no incentive to write quickly and instantly. Reading shorthand, writing it neatly at your own pace and converting printed matter to produce practice sentences all have their* place, but they do not compare to writing from live speech when you have to respond instantly with the correct outlines and at the same time* listen to the next few words. Under pressure, you will do whatever habit* is the strongest* and a lifetime of writing longhand will attempt to intrude. The shorthand habit* has to be stronger* than the longhand one and only practice will achieve this. Using it for real life situations such as private notes, appointment diary, telephone calls and shopping lists ensures that you are getting immediate benefit from your efforts right

from the outset and is a great encouragement to progress further. This is the best way* to make it part of your daily life so that you use it automatically when required and not as some special endeavour during study periods.

* "have their" Doubling for "their"

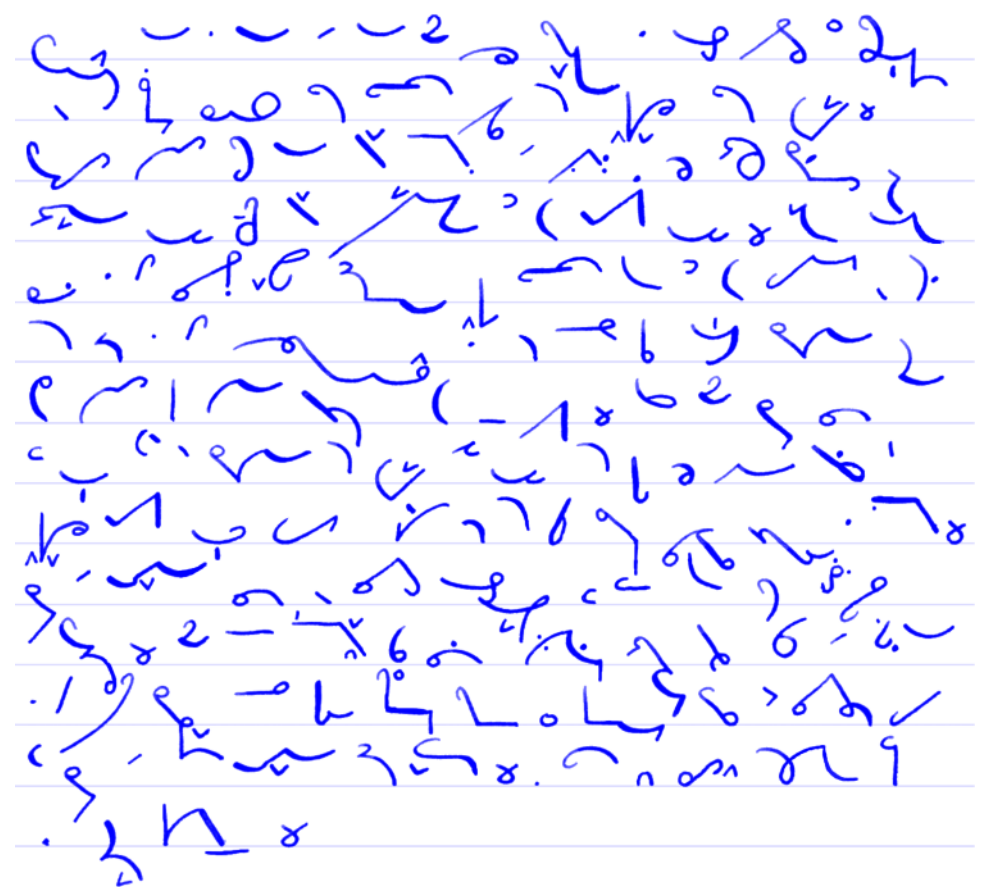
* "at the same time" Halving to represent the T of "time"

* "habit" Helpful to insert the first vowel in this and in "hobbies" as they are similar in outline and meaning

* "strongest" Alternative outline, omitting the G stroke

* "stronger" The hooked form here includes the hard G sound

* Omission phrase "bes(t) way"



Instant Response

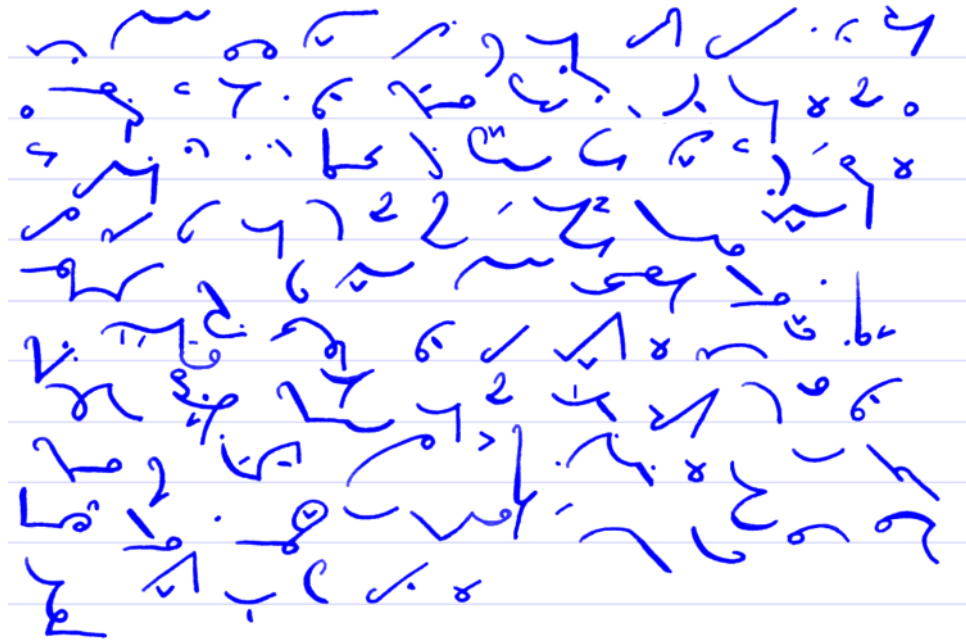
Fluency in a language and in shorthand means providing an instant response, as there is no time to construct the sentences from grammar rules or outlines from theory. Everyone learned their own language by copying and repeating the words and phrases spoken to them and creating new utterances by rearranging what they already knew. I have never seen a child hesitating whilst working out the grammar for what they wanted to say or heard a child mispronounce a word because of its unusual* spelling, seeing as they learned it long before they could read. Fast shorthand has to be the same, with no thought of spelling or theory, and with new or difficult words written based on outlines already known, whether the whole word or just

separate syllables to prevent a gap. Speech and handwriting seem to happen instantaneously when called for, through constant use over the years. Shorthand can occupy this same elevated and privileged position as well and achieved in a much shorter space of time*, because definite targeted practice is taking the place of the haphazard* way that speech and handwriting were acquired. The more you surround yourself with it, the easier it will become.

* "unusual" Insert first vowel, as it could be misread as "English" in this context

* Omission phrase "space (of) time"

* "haphazard" Optional contraction

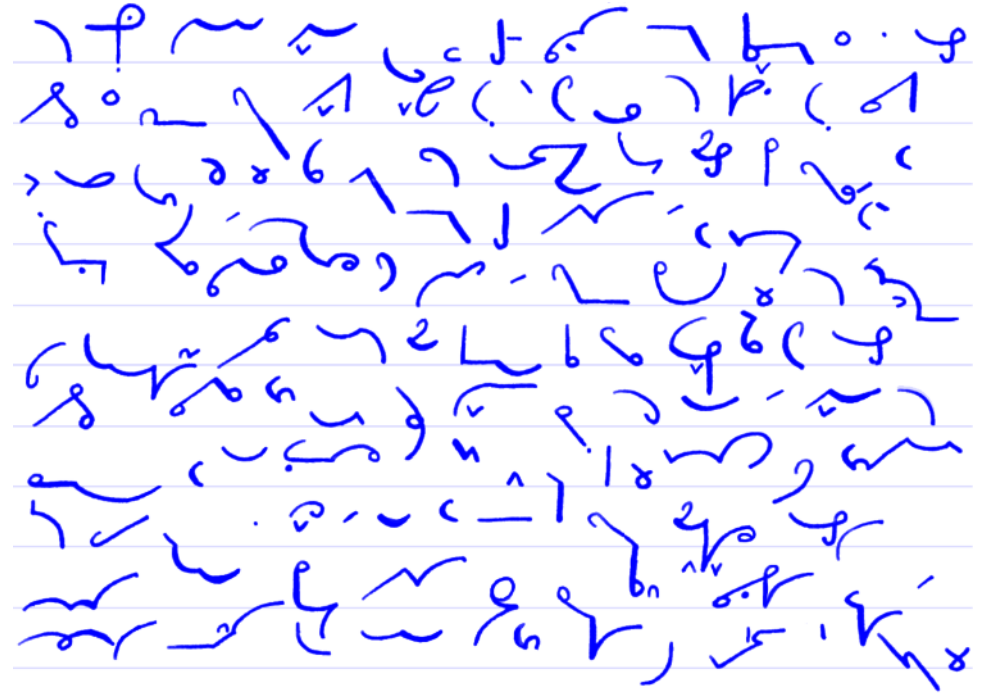


Instant Response

To me, longhand seems like running through knee-deep water, where a lot of energy is expended with only a slow progress forward to show for it. Shorthand is called the winged* art, an apt description of the pen flying along the line with ease and speed. Once you are well into your shorthand journey and enjoying the benefits of writing extremely briefly, then writing longhand increasingly becomes a tedious, dreary, monotonous and

frustratingly slow way to write. You may find yourself spontaneously breaking into shorthand, unable to watch your hand's slow progress through the convoluted letters of the traditional alphabet. Filling in paper documents becomes an exercise in patience and maybe even some sympathy for those who can write no other way.

* "winged" Stroke Ing cannot be halved



Instant Response

Your existing longhand writing, even when done slowly, can be described as an instant response, as you can probably write whilst thinking of other things, or at least thinking ahead to the next few words. This should be very encouraging for the shorthand student* as it proves that complicated shapes and movements can be done rapidly and without too much thought, as long as they are learned and practised sufficiently*. Your hard work will eventually result in your shorthand taking its place alongside all those other instant response habits* that you now possess, like speaking your own language and writing your signature without any qualms* about how to do it. I am also sure that you are now on your way to having a mind and hand that can

produce shorthand outlines instantly, immediately, suddenly, rapidly, swiftly, speedily, hastily, without delay and, most importantly, accurately, for anything that you wish to record on paper. (1063 words)

* Omission phrase "shorthand s(t)udent"

* The short form includes the "-ly" version, but you could write in a disjoined L for clarity on any short form or contraction

* "habits" Helpful to insert the first vowel in this and in "hobbies" as they are similar in outline and meaning

* "qualms" The longhand L is silent

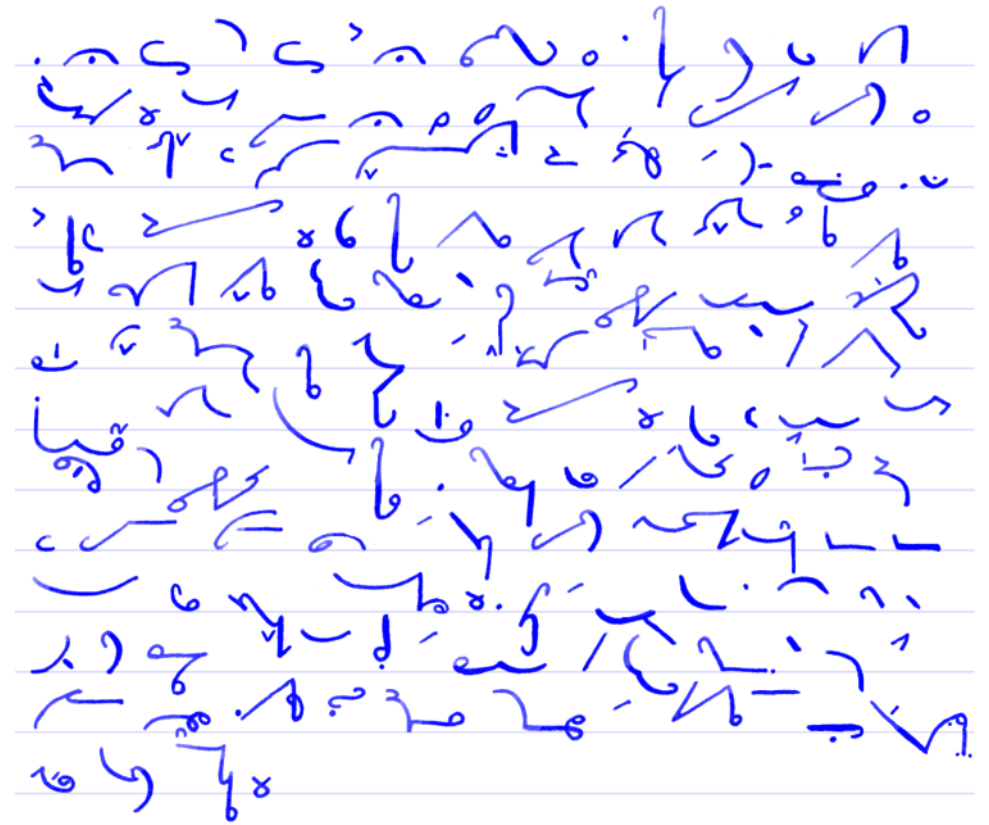


May Queen Celebrations

A week ago I went to see the May Queen celebrations in Petts Wood. The event started with a procession along the main roads, led by a samba drumming band, followed by the previous and present May Queens and their retinue of girls dressed in white and yellow, with green tunics for the pageboys. The crowds gathered at the starting point but rapidly flowed along the street to position themselves further down for more photographs. Having completed their circuit, the procession finally arrived at the Memorial Hall, where the Mayor of

Bromley crowned the new Queen, and brief* speeches were given. After a formal photo session on the stage, the Queen and her entourage gathered outside and danced around the Maypole to the traditional tunes. There were many other displays of dancing, singing and music, and the grounds were packed with stalls and entertainments, with fairground amusements in the adjacent road.

* "brief" Always insert the vowel, so it does not look like "number of"

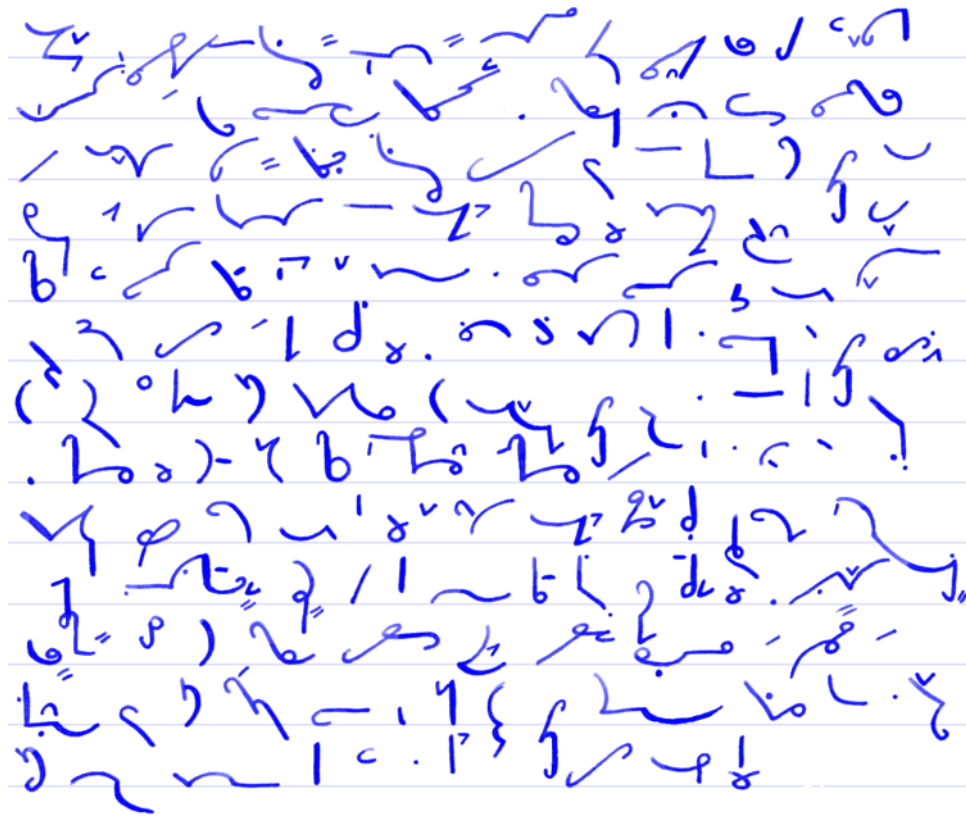


May Queen Celebrations

The May Queen, or Queen of the May, celebration is a traditional British event held all over the country. In the UK, May is the first month where the weather is warm and dry, with little likelihood of cold and frosts, and so signals the end of the discomfort of winter. This tradition represents youth, health and life, and has its roots in the fertility rites that have been present all throughout human* history, including worship of sun, light, warmth, trees and vegetation, and ultimately crops, all of which represent the continuance of life after the deadness of winter. Even without knowing any of the source or history of the traditions, the present-day

events are often the first occasion of the year when we can welcome summer and better weather, and encourage the community to come together in their efforts to provide the entertainments. The children and young people have an important opportunity to show their skills in dancing and singing, which they have been practising all year, and the local musicians, artists, craft workers, organisations and charities can gain publicity and funds for their activities.

* "human" See www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand.org.uk/distinguishing-outlines-2-rule.htm "human humane"



May Queen Celebrations

Unlike the historical fairs-cum-markets, which were huge events generally with wild, unruly and even criminal behaviour, the present-day May Queen celebrations are entirely well-behaved affairs, where people can take their children in safety and the whole family can enjoy the attractions. I am sure the beautiful white dresses with yellow bows caught the eye of many a small girl who would now like to be able to wear one and do the dances. The samba band also had a crowd of children surrounding them, especially as at the end of their performance they invited the children to have a go at beating the drums. So I think dresses, costumes and drums are on a lot of birthday lists from now on. I particularly enjoyed the Highland dancing display from the Orpington and District Caledonian Society which had many toes tapping throughout the audience*. The

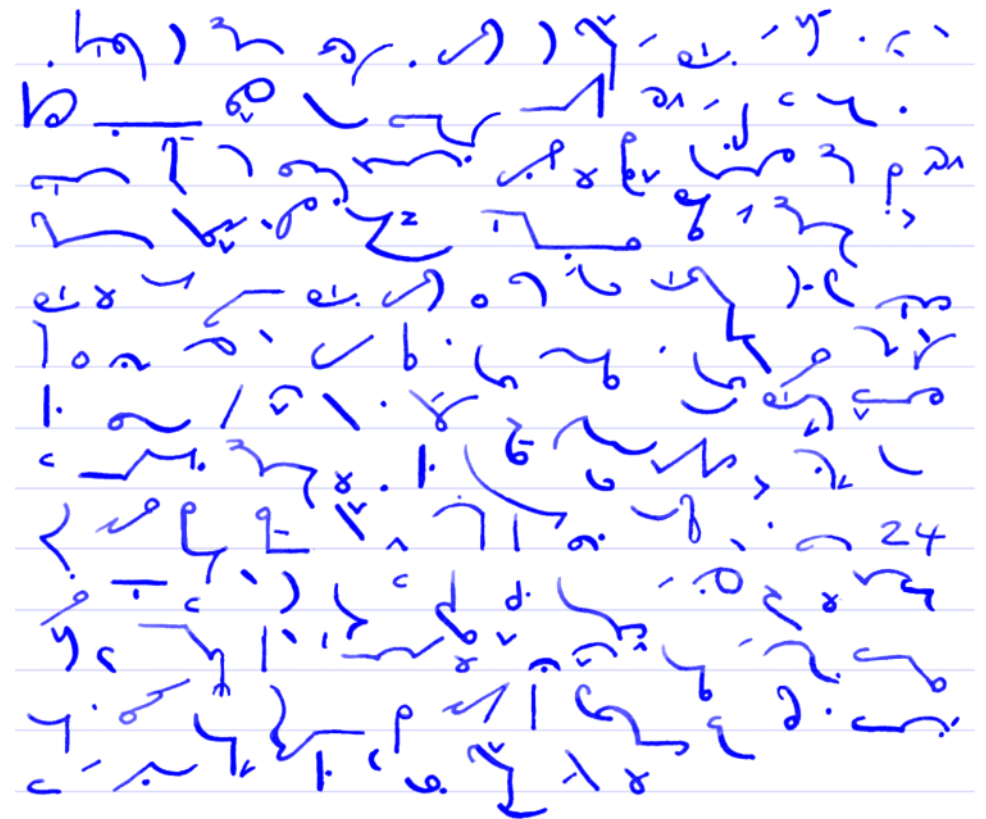
Reptile Events stand was present once again*, showing rescued snakes and lizards, and educating people on their proper* care, but I do think that the children asking their* parents for a python of their own may have to make do with a toy one instead!

* "audience" Insert the diphone, as here it might be mistaken for "dance"

* Omission phrase "wu(n)s again"

* "asking their" Doubling to represent "their"

* "proper" Insert the first vowel, and the diphone in "appropriate", as they are similar in outline and meaning



May Queen Celebrations

The atmosphere was warm and friendly, the weather was bright and sunny, and I saw a lot of delicious cake slices being carefully carried around and eaten, with never a crumb* dropped or smear of cream* wasted. Satisfied families were sitting around the perimeter, behind the stalls, enjoying their* cupcakes, sandwiches, and the warmth of the sun. In the UK sunny weather is very often unpredictable, so every moment of it is made the most of, whether it is a few minutes, a few hours or the whole day, something which might be a puzzle to those living in sunnier climates* with guaranteed warmth. The day after the event I returned to the area for shopping, and was suddenly struck by how empty it seemed, in contrast to a mere 24 hours ago when all was filled with tables, tents, fairground and masses of people. I am glad that I was able to capture it all on camera.

I made my photos* and movie clips into a half hour video*, so that we can sit and watch it over and over again*, whenever there is a gloomy, cold and rainy day that needs brightening up. (721 words)

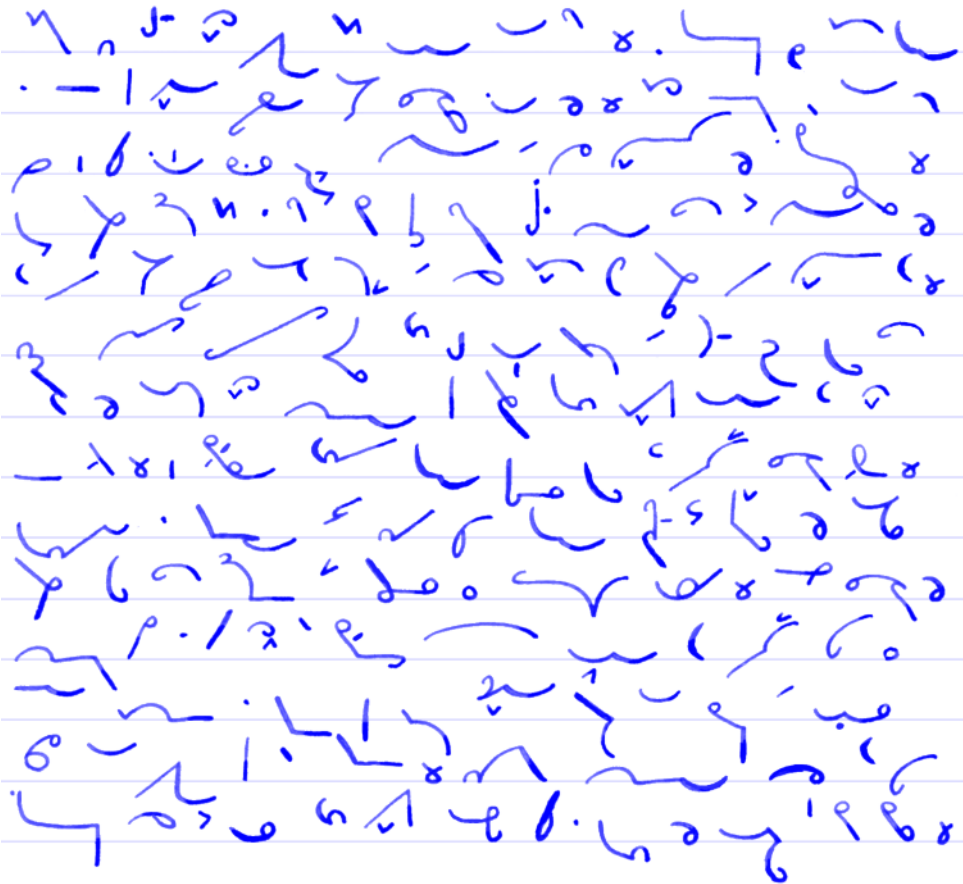
* "crumb" "cream" Insert the vowels as the outlines are identical otherwise

* "enjoying their" Doubling used to represent "their"

* "climates" Ensure the halved M is short, to prevent it looking like "climes" (a poetic version of the word)

* "photo/video" Insert diphone in video, as these two are similar in shape and meaning

* Omission phrase "over (and) over again" The second "over" is reversed in order to make clear joins

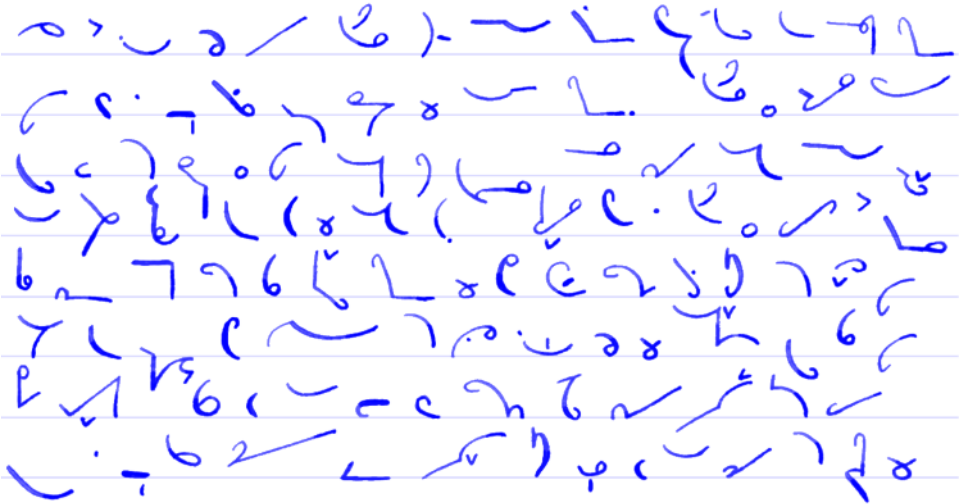


Simple Words

I hope you don't mind reading about nothing in particular. The fact is that I am having a go at writing using only the simplest common words. I am not keeping to any word list but just common sense to avoid the longer and less likely words as far as possible*. If the passage were about a particular subject, it would probably contain many more of the longer words that are only used in that area, and most of my other passages are like that. You would be able to learn wonderful shapes that you did not know before, and so would have even more words in your mind, making it possible for you to write anything that might come up. But supposing that you are having difficulties even with really simple

stuff. If you are not a beginner and yet you are still having trouble with the type of words in this passage, then more work on the basics is clearly necessary. Because the simple words make up such a large amount of spoken matter, knowing them really well is going to make a big difference to your shorthand writing*, both in speed and neatness, as well as in reading it all back. You will be making improvements that will affect most of the things that you write, instead of just a few words now and then* on special subjects.

* Omission phrases "as far as poss(ible)" "short(hand) writing" "now (and) then"



Simple Words

Most of the common words are short forms, so going back over them often for extra practice will build a good base to your skill. In fact* practising short forms is always in order*, even when your speed is well into three figures, because you are never going to find any passage that does not have them. Never thinking twice over a short form is one of the biggest advantages you can get from this type of practice. As they flow from the pen on their own, your mind will only have to deal with the other longer

or less common words. In time, even those will start to write themselves without any great effort from you, and then you are really on your way to being a good fast shorthand writer* who can rely on their notes without any worry or trouble.

* Omission phrases "in (f)act" "short(hand) writer"

* "in order" Special phrase: R Hook and Doubling to represent "order"



Simple Words

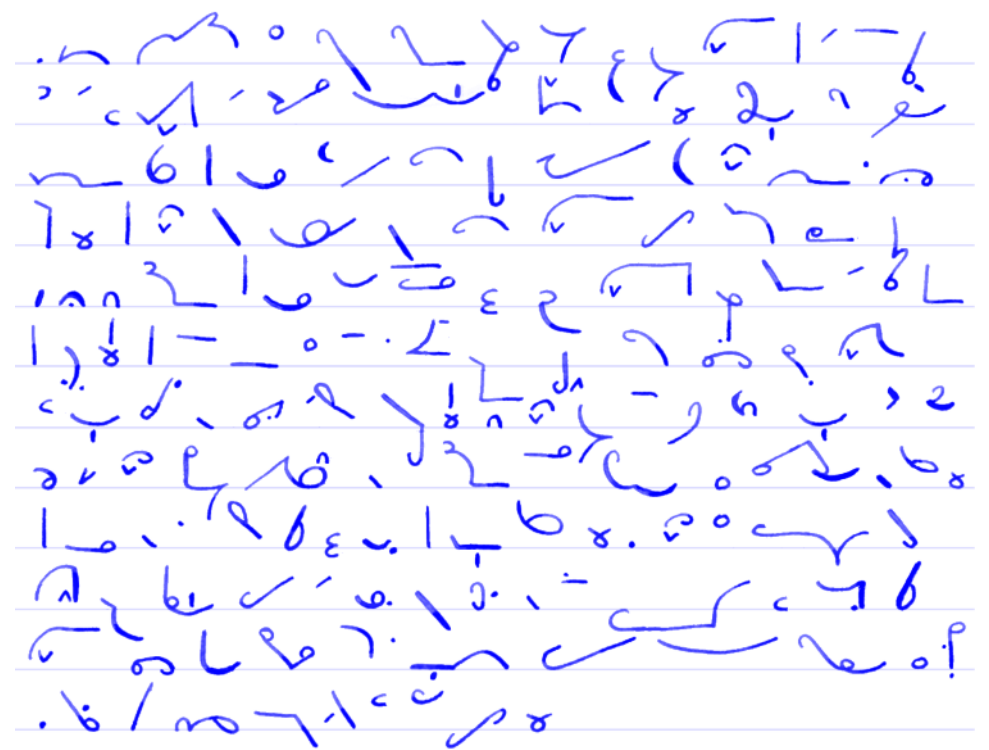
Having difficulties with quite simple matter may possibly mean that you are trying speeds too far* beyond what you can do at the moment*. There is a place for this, but doing it all the time is not, on its own, going to make you a fast writer. In fact* what you are doing is teaching your hand to scribble wildly rather than write neatly. This would be a bad habit* to form, as you are then likely to fall into it all the more easily every time things start to get difficult. It may also happen if you have been learning the subject in a very slow manner, with no particular reason to try fast writing. You may have decided that shorthand

would be an interesting study, rather than something needed for your work. If so, you may never have had to recall the shorthand in a hurry, without any time to think about what to write.

* "too far" Note that "far" on its own is written with full strokes

* Omission phrases "at (the) moment" "in (f)act"

* "habit" Helpful to insert the first vowel in this and in "hobbies" as they are similar in outline and meaning



Simple Words

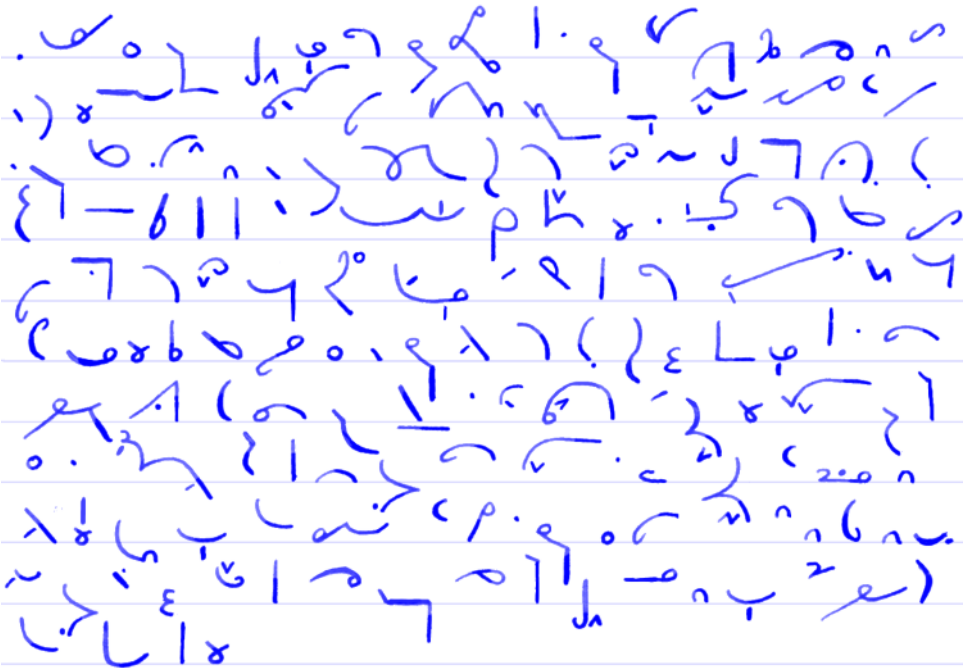
The home learner has probably practised passages only when they feel like it and can choose what and when to write, and always in their own time. There is no particular reason to make themselves do things that are more difficult and where they might make a mess of it. It might* be necessary to become* more like one of your school teachers who made you work at things in class when you would have liked to sit back and take it easy! It can come as quite a shock to take down from someone speaking live, with no chance to hit the stop button. You might* feel quite sure that you know all the shorthand words, but the mind suddenly refuses to work because everything is happening too fast.

It comes to a stop just when you need it to go faster. The mind has clearly been allowed to have its own way and needs to be trained to act quickly when needed, just like someone doing sports or a game where another person is setting the pace which you must keep up with in order to* win.

* "it might" is not phrased, so that it is distinguished from the phrase "it may"

* "to become" is based on the short form "to be"

* Omission phrase "in ord(er to)"



Simple Words

The answer is to take down notes from speech as much as possible*, at a speed that will lead towards the improvements you want to see. Going slowly will help you to practise good writing, and ones that are a bit faster allow you to push yourself so that your mind and hand do not get lazy, thinking that they can just do it all in their own sweet time. An occasional very fast one will get your mind into sharp focus and stop it from wandering about onto other things. Its best use is to speed up your

thinking, so that when you take notes at a more reasonable rate they seem to have become a lot slower and easier. I like to think of it as a warm-up, although it may feel more like a cold shower that wakes you up! If you know for certain that such a speed is well beyond you, then you need not feel bad when you find it impossible to get most of it down, because you know what the reason was for doing it.

* Omission phrase "as much as poss(ible)"



Simple Words

The simple words that you hear all the time are the ones that need to be known the best, as they will always come up in every piece, whether it is real speaking, practice passages or a speed test. Knowing them really well will put you in a good position to be able to deal with the less common ones, which may take longer to write, not because the shapes are longer but because you cannot call them to mind so quickly.

Having got to the end of the piece, it is a really good feeling to know that you were able to get it all down on paper without any gaps. You were able to catch up more easily after any delay over a difficult word or two. When you can read your notes without having to stop and guess, this is a really great way to keep up the interest and gives you a good reason to continue with the subject.



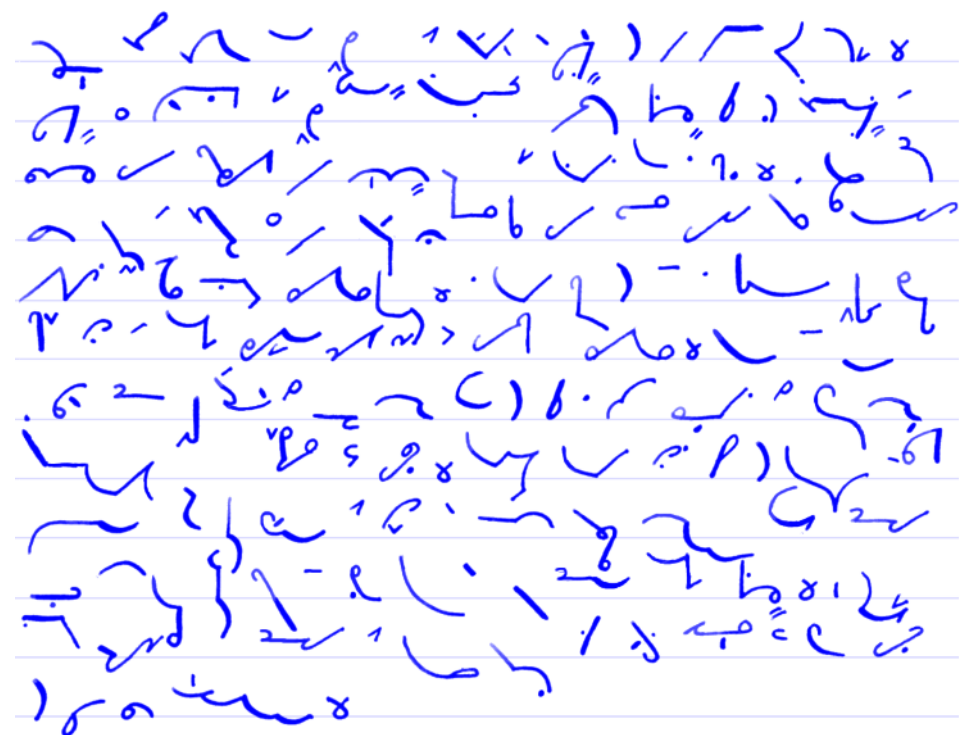
Simple Words

I do realise that a passage made up of almost entirely simple words sometimes makes the shorthand less smooth and easy, when you get a row of words that cannot be joined and are therefore slower to write. I hope you will find that the gains made are worth the effort of putting up with material that sounds like something from your school days, with its annoying repetition of phrases and groups of words which you can now think of better ways to say. Those early reading books were difficult at the time, because you were new to reading, and you are now in the same position with shorthand, at least for a short while. The big advantage is that they get practised* all the time, whereas difficult words may

get practised here and there*, and then they may not come up again for a very long time. If you decide that this part of the subject needs more work, and actually do the practising, the day will come all the sooner when you can take it all down without having to stop and think, and read it back without any trouble, which is the goal of all shorthand writing*. (1266 words)

* "practised" This could also read as "practice" (i.e. noun), therefore use wavy underline to remind it is past tense

* Omission phrases "here (and) there" "short(hand) writing"



Woolwich Ferry

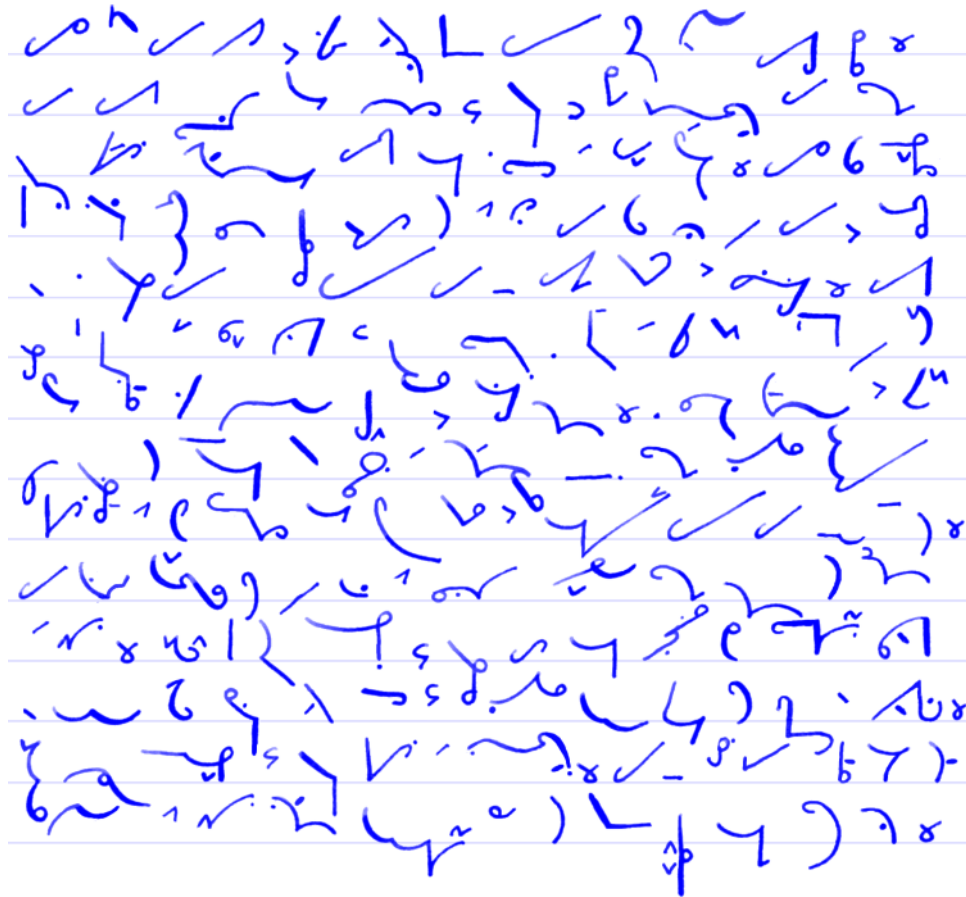
Years ago I used to live in South London* and the borough of Woolwich was our regular shopping area. Woolwich is located on the south bank of the River Thames just east of Greenwich and sometimes we persuaded our Mum to take us on the ferry for a treat. The vessels were steam powered and I remember that as our boat made its way across, we would pass another one returning, and this kept the service continuous. A ferry trip was quite an adventure, out of the safety of dry land and onto the swaying* world of the water surface. Being quite young, the slow walk down the pontoon as the queue moved along was just a little scary, as the floor moved back and forth* sideways with the waves. Fortunately the ferry landing stage was fairly solid looking, although it was

floating, and the line of calm passengers moving along the walkway gave me confidence that it was probably quite safe after all to be walking onto the Thames. But seeing the gap between the walkway and the fixed pier edge open and close with every wave was still somewhat unnerving. The steamer itself, being so enormous, did however inspire complete confidence.

* "London" has downward L for convenience of joining to the N stroke

* Based on "sway" therefore does not use the SW circle

* Omission phrase "back (and) forth"



Woolwich Ferry

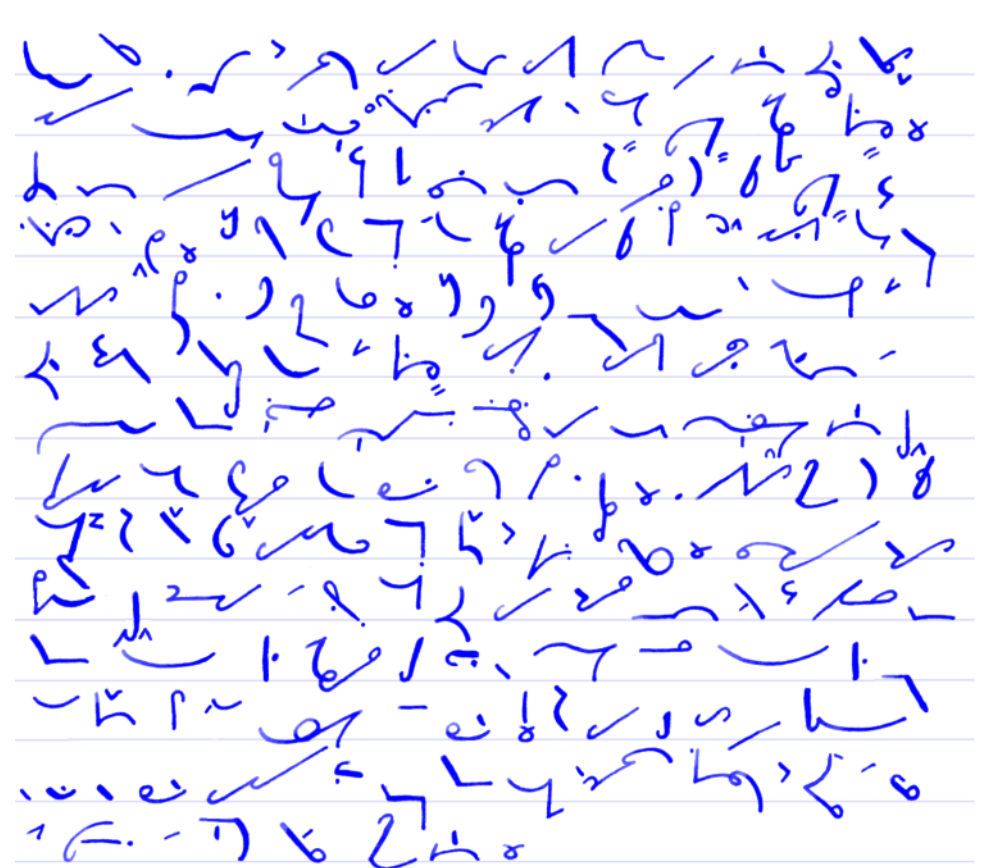
Once on board we rushed to the edge of the open-air deck, where there were long wooden seats. We waited eagerly for the moment when the boat would start to manoeuvre away from the pier, churning* and foaming the water into a green and white froth. Once this excitement had abated and there was some distance between us and the land, we then made our way to the entrance to a passageway where we could watch the operation of the steam engine. We had to stand on tiptoes on the slight ledge, with fingers gripping the top, and just about got our eyes over the edge, looking down to the engine room. The smooth thumping of the giant steel pistons was accompanied by hisses and rumbles coming from the shafts that they were turning, and the other equipment in

the further parts of the interior where we could not quite see. We felt the vibrations through our feet, and the smell rising from the room was warm and oily. I found it especially interesting when the pistons went into reverse, as they gradually* slowed to nothing and then sped up again, with the shafts having changed their direction of rotation. I think this must have* coincided with the boat turning and manoeuvring. We could stand on our toes only so long, and the oily aroma eventually sent us back outside into the fresh air.

* "churning" Emphasise the slope of the Chay, so it does not look like "turning"

* "gradually" See www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand.org.uk/distinguishing-outlines-2-rule.htm "greatly gradually"

* Omission phrase "mus(t) have"



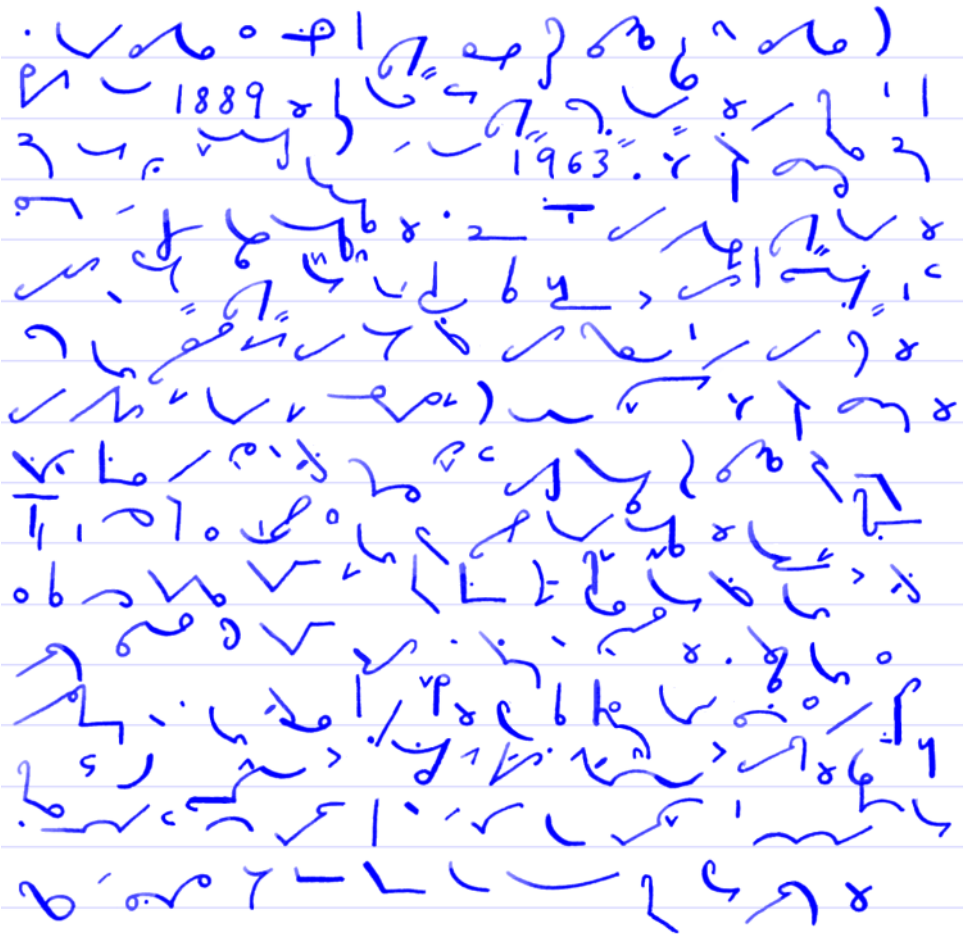
Woolwich Ferry

Having passed the middle of the river, we felt we had left our home shores behind and were entering the unknown parallel world of North Woolwich on the other side of the* Thames. It seemed to me rather strange that it had the same name, although ours was just Woolwich without the appellation of "South". I do not remember ever getting off on the other side*, we just sat around and waited for the boat to return, as it was a pleasure trip for us. I was sure that there could* be nothing of interest on the shore that would be better than being on the Thames, watching the water, waves and foam, and looking back across the murky expanse to our now minuscule home town, which we would never otherwise have seen from such a distance. The return journey was just as

enjoyable, although by then we would have been getting tired of the chilly breezes. Somewhere between starting down the walkway and stepping onto shore, we always came up with the request to come back another day, and this was generally agreed to, mainly because "another day" could* be any time at all, not necessarily quite soon! Although we did not want our adventure to end too soon, we were glad to get back into the warmer atmosphere of the shops and buildings, and the welcoming and cosy bus journey home.

* Omission phrase "on the oth(er) side of the" "on the other side"

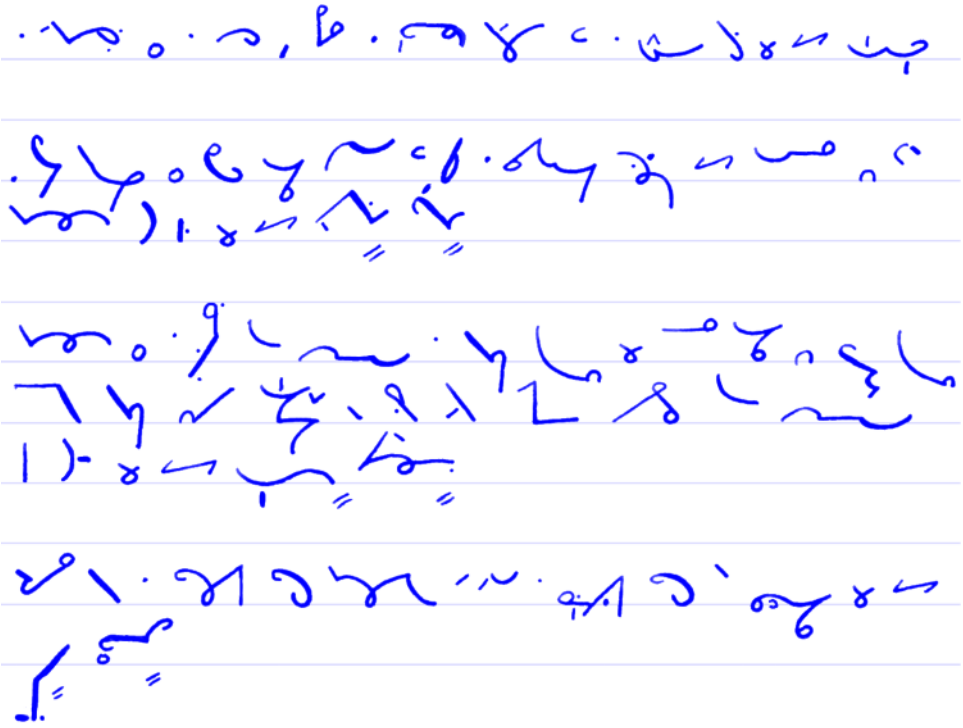
* "could" is generally not joined in middle or end of a phrase, so that it does not get misread as "can". Joining at the beginning allows it to keep its own position.



Woolwich Ferry

A ferry service has existed at Woolwich since the thirteen hundreds but this particular service was started in 1889. It was often called the Woolwich Free Ferry. Our trips on it were in the late 1950's, and in 1963 the old paddle steamers were scrapped and diesel vessels introduced. A week ago we revisited the Woolwich Ferry. We went to North Woolwich via the foot tunnel, which is identical to the one at Greenwich, but with very few users - we only passed one person on our way through. We returned on the ferry but the experience was nothing like the old paddle steamer. Below decks are lots of open rooms lined with wooden benches, so that hundreds of

people could be accommodated, but most of it is unused as few people use the ferry nowadays. Vehicle traffic is its main purpose, parked on the top deck, so the drivers have the best view of the open river, as long as they are not parked between a pair of lorries. The passengers' view is restricted to a few openings at each side. However, its departure felt the same as our childhood trips, with the usual growling of the engines, and the churning and foaming of the water. This time I had a camera with me to record it all, and I will have to rely on memory for the breezes and smells, until I go back for another trip over the river. (912 words)



Optimism Quotes

An optimist is a man who starts a crossword puzzle with a fountain pen.
Unknown

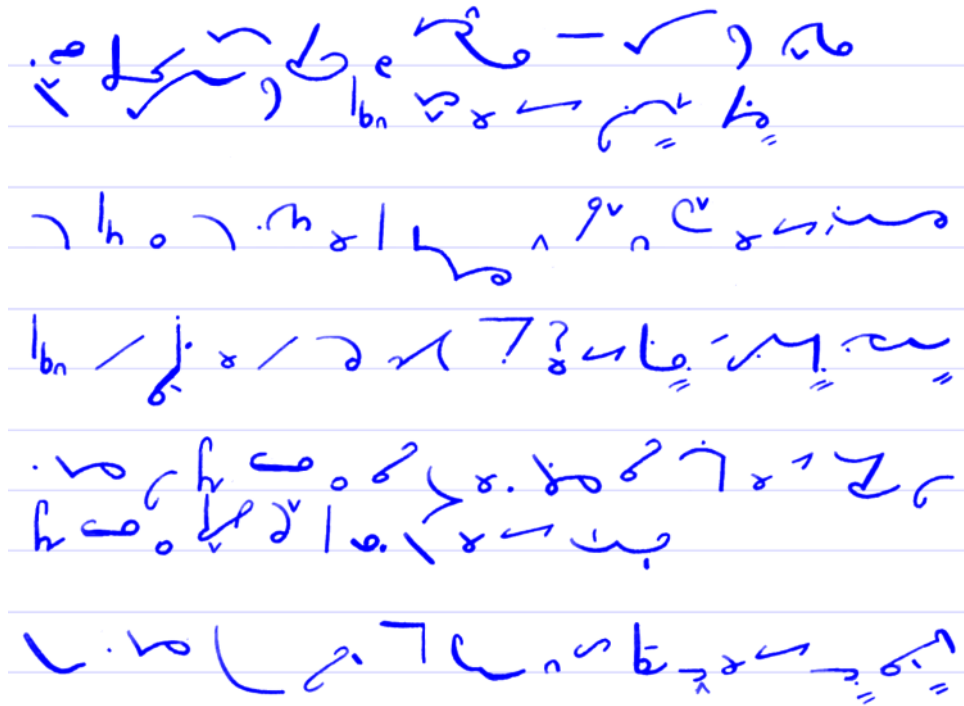
The average pencil is seven inches long, with just a half-inch eraser - in case you thought optimism was dead. Robert Brault

Optimism is a strategy for making a better future. Because unless you believe that the future can be better, you are unlikely to

step up and take responsibility for making it so. Noam Chomsky

Always be a first-rate* version of yourself and not a second-rate version of someone else. Judy Garland

* Omission phrase "firs(t)-rate"



Optimism Quotes

The greatest* discovery of my generation is that human beings* can alter their lives by altering their attitudes of mind. William James

Your attitude is your altitude*. It determines how high you fly. Anonymous

Attitudes are contagious. Are yours worth catching? Dennis and Wendy Mannering

An optimist will tell you the glass is half-full; the pessimist*, half-empty; and the engineer will tell you the glass is twice the size it needs to be. Unknown

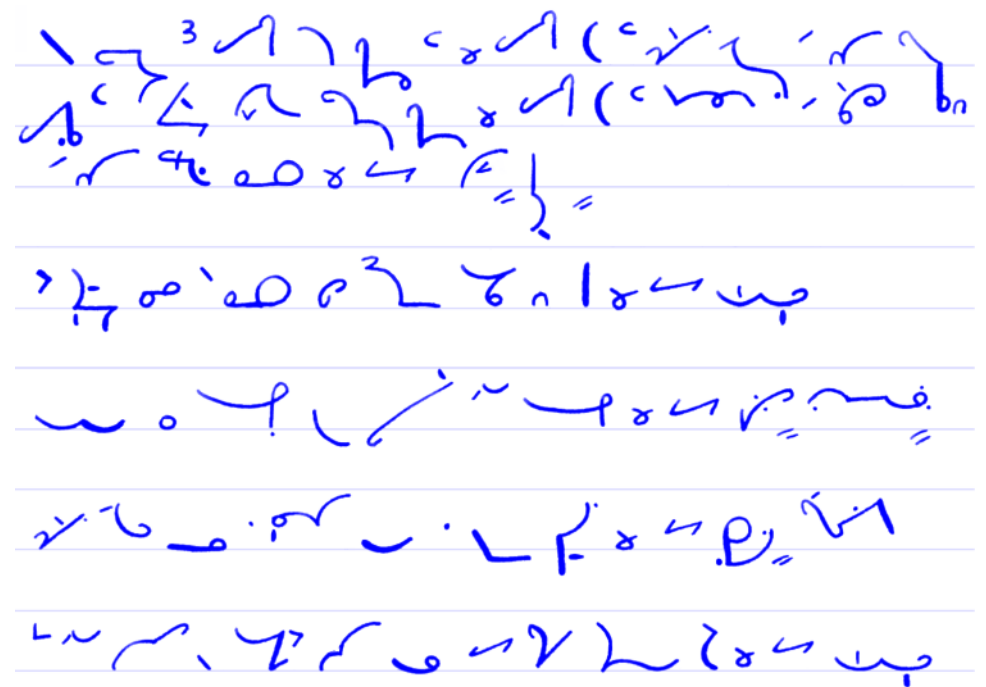
Being an optimist after you've got everything you want doesn't count. Kin Hubbard

* "greatest" Can also be written with full G and T strokes

* "human beings" See www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand.org.uk/distinguishing-outlines-2-rule.htm "human humane"

* "altitude" and "latitude" Always insert the first vowel to differentiate

* "pessimist" Ensure the circle S is clear, as this would be fairly similar to "optimist" when hastily written



Optimism Quotes

Be careful what you water your dreams with. Water them with worry and fear and you will produce weeds that choke the life from your dream. Water them with optimism and solutions and you will cultivate success. Lao Tzu

All the so-called* secrets of success will not work unless you do. Unknown

Nothing is interesting if you're not interested. -elen MacInness

Worry often gives a small thing a big shadow. Swedish Proverb

Why not learn to enjoy the little things - there are so many of them. Unknown

(261 words)

* "so-called" Full strokes as the short form cannot join