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## Blogs - 2014 - August

**[2](#) Business Letters**

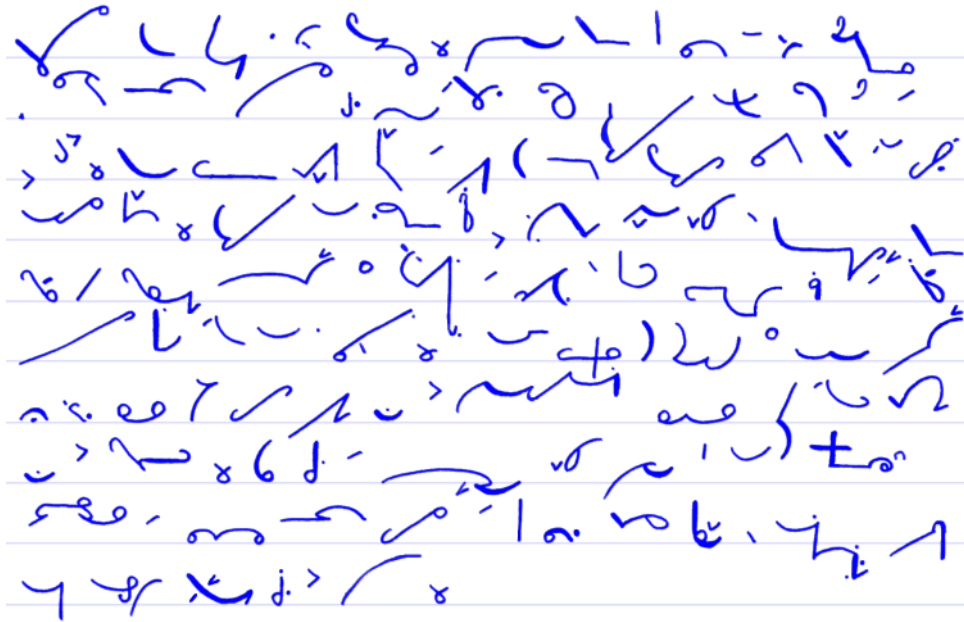
**[5](#) Papyrus**

**[9](#) Books**

**[15](#) Crows, Ravens and R-Hooks**

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PDF Date: 4 January 2020



**Business Letters**

Business\* letters have changed a lot over the years. Looking back at some quite old shorthand books, the sample commercial letters contained many obsolete phrases, but they were nevertheless very short and to the point. Being quick to write, type and read, they kept everyone happy by not wasting anyone's time. They were in stark contrast to the elaborate\* writing style of Victorian book prose, which presented the material as authoritative and worthy of attention, carefully considered and composed, rather than dashed off in a hurry. In fact\*, close attention was essential, as nothing really made complete

sense until one reached the end of the long-winded sentence, which was often also the end of the paragraph. This dense and meandering style lingered on in government documents and correspondence, and sometimes commercial ones, and it seemed almost designed to intimidate the reader into instantly obeying the contents of the letter.

\* Omission phrases "biz(ness) letters" "in (f)act"

\* "elaborate" Note that "laboured" uses halved Br stroke

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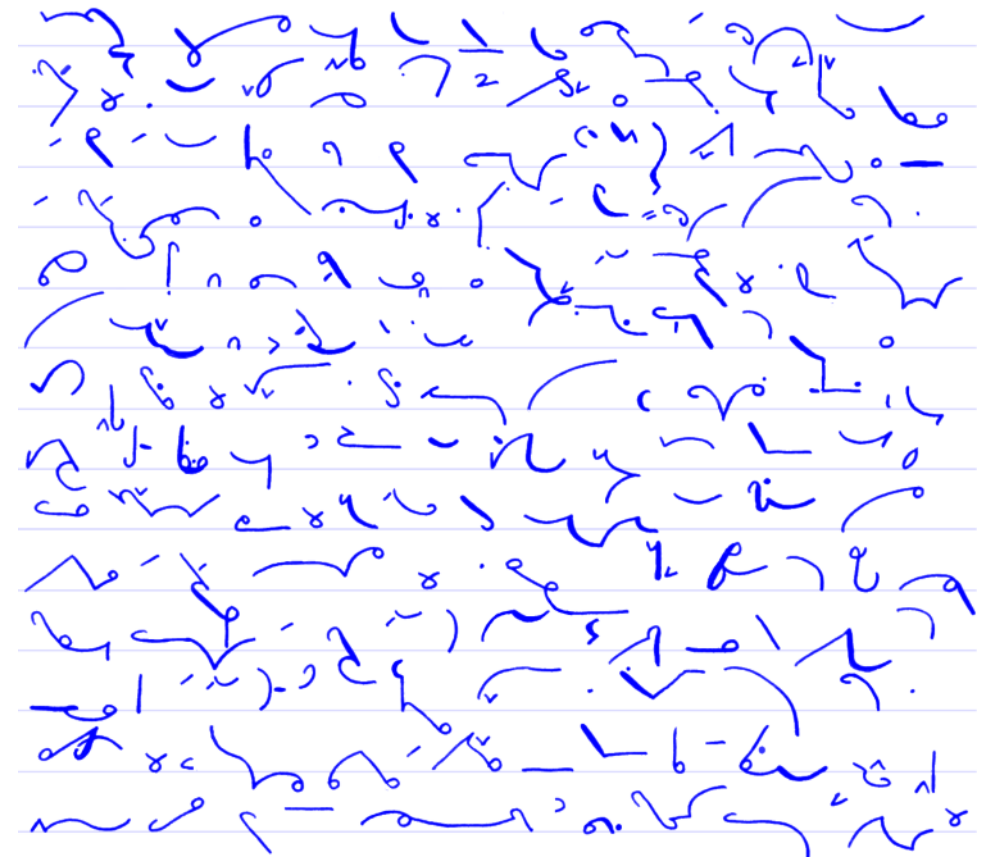
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**Business Letters**

I am very glad that business letters\*nowadays have become even simpler and friendlier in their approach. The language style must match what the recipient is expecting for that type of business and subject, and any departure from it\* has to be carefully thought about, so that the right impression is given and professionalism is maintained. A chatty and over-friendly letter from a solicitor\* telling you some sober news is obviously not acceptable. A stiff and formal letter inviting\* you to the opening of a new café, club or boutique is also out of place. I like a plain and clear letter without frills, but if the helpful tone descends into what I call "hand holding", I feel I am back in the first class of primary\* school. I have often been involved in drafting letters, reports and publicity materials. A specific idea,

suggestion or instruction must be presented clearly and briefly, not so long that the reader gives up reading or ignores it, and not so short that it appears like a barked order from a sergeant major. When forms, slips and replies come back, it is quite chastening to find out how many ways people can misinterpret what seemed perfectly clear on the leaflet.

\* Omission phrase "biz(ness) letters"

\* "from it" Halving to represent "it"

\* "solicitor" Exceptional use of the Ster Loop which does not allow a vowel in the middle

\* "inviting" Always insert the diphthong, and the second vowel in "invading", as these outlines are otherwise identical in shape and opposite in meaning

\* "primary school" Known as elementary school in some countries



**Business Letters**

The following paragraphs provide some basic vocabulary for correspondence. The salutation used depends on how well the addressee is known: Dear Sir, Dear Madam, Dear Sir or Madam\*, Dear Mr Smith, Dear Mr and Mrs\* Brown, Dear Dr Jones, Dear Sir Michael, Dear John, Dear Mary. If the letter is part of admail, which is generally unaddressed, it may start with Dear Reader, Customer, Friends, or it might match the subject, such as Dear Driver, Parent, Home-owner or Gardener. A letter that is to be\* forwarded to another third party whose

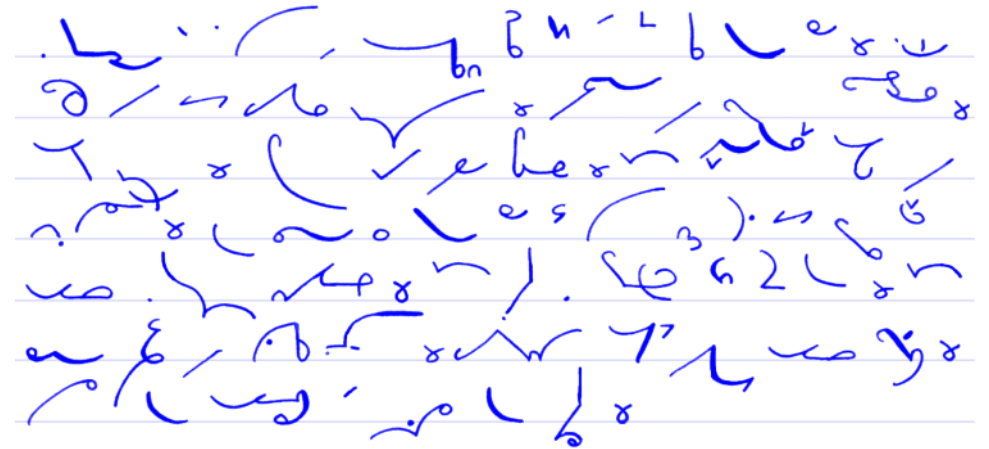
name is unknown may be addressed "To whom it may concern".\*

\* Omission phrases "Dear Sir (or) Madam" "Mr (and) Mrs"

\* "it may concern" You could make this into an omission phrase "it-may-(con)cern"

\* "that is to be" Note the phrase "that has to be" should be separate outlines, so that the "as" remains in position

Lined writing area for notes.



**Business Letters**

The beginning of a letter should introduce what it is about and why it is being sent. Common phrases are: with reference\* to your letter; regarding our previous correspondence; in reply\* to your enquiry; further to our recent telephone conversation\*; I am writing in relation to\* our meeting last week\*. If something is being sent with the letter, you would say: please find enclosed the form you requested; I am attaching the application form that you asked for; I am sending with this letter\* our latest catalogue; we hope you will enjoy reading the enclosed

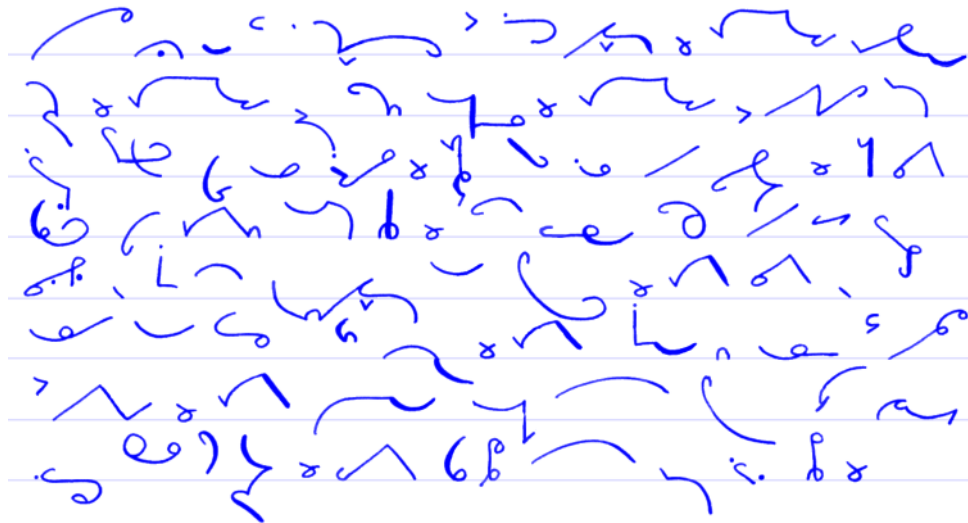
brochure. Letters have enclosures and emails\* have attachments.

\* Omission phrases "w(ith re)f(eren)ce" "in (re)ply" "telephone (conver)sation" "in (re)lation (to)" "last (w)eek"

\* "this letter" Downward L to enable a join to be made

\* "email" and "mail" Always insert the first vowel to prevent misreading

Lined writing area for notes.



**Business Letters**

Letters may end with a reminder of the action required\*: I look forward to receiving your reply\*; I look forward to hearing from you in due course; I look forward to the return of your completed application form within the next two weeks\*; I trust that the\* above comments are useful; I do hope this information will help you in your decision. More closing phrases are: please do not hesitate to contact me if you require\* any further information\*; I will be happy to answer any questions\* that you may have; I will be contacting you next week\* with the results of the report; I will be looking into the

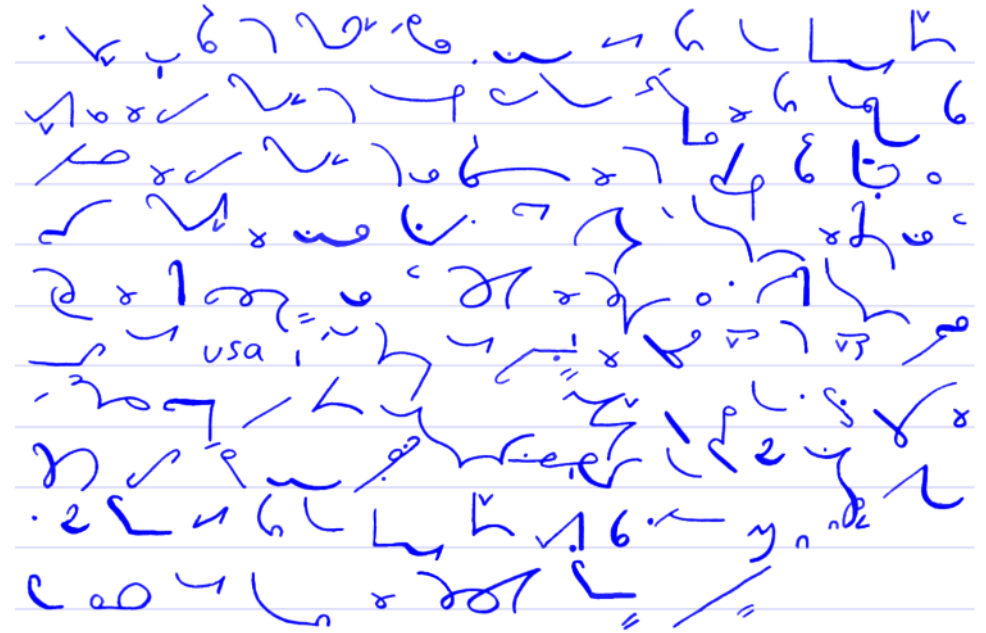
matter further and will let you know the conclusions as soon as they are available; we hope this settles the matter to your complete satisfaction.

\* "require/d" You can also use intersected Ray for this

\* Omission phrases "your (re)ply" "two wee(k)s" "I trus(t) that the"

"further (informa)tion" "next (w)EEK"

\* "questions" Optional contraction



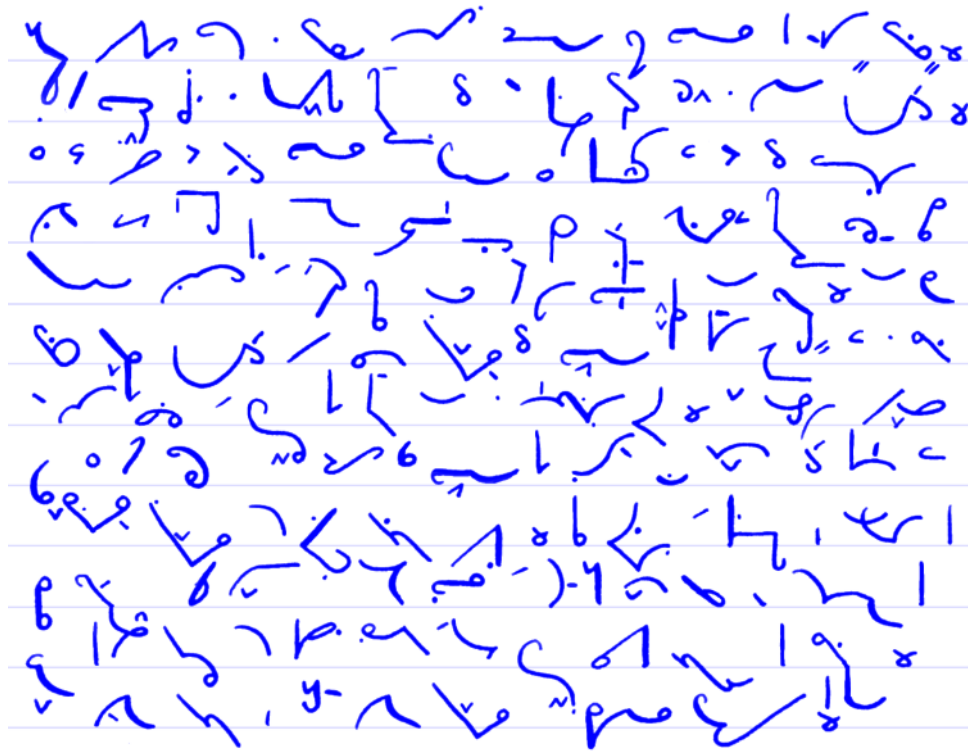
**Business Letters**

A polite note of thanks or appreciation softens the ending: thank you for taking the time to write to us; we appreciate your interest in our company and products; thank you for considering\* this request; we appreciate your comments on this matter; your generosity with this donation is greatly appreciated. Endings vary according to the level of formality. Dear Sir ends with Yours faithfully\*. Dear Mr Smith ends with Yours sincerely\*. Yours truly is an older form current in the USA but not so much\* in the UK. Best wishes, kind or kindest regards and warmest greetings are much more informal and unlikely to be suitable

for a plain business letter\*. There is also one special ending reserved exclusively for shorthand enthusiasts reading a shorthand blog - thank you for taking the time to read this article and I wish you every success in the future. Yours most sincerely\*, Blog Writer. (847 words)

\* Omission phrases "for (con)sidering" "Yours f(aitfully)" "Yours (sin)cerely" "biz(ness) letter" "Yours mos(t sin)cerely"

\* "so much" Writing the M of "much" allows the phrase to join



**Papyrus**

I have just returned from a pleasant morning walking through the gardens at Hall Place. The large greenhouse contains a variety of tropical plants, all densely planted around a long fishpond. As with the rest of the open gardens, everything is educational, with all the plants clearly labelled: cotton, tea, coffee, sugar cane, sweet potato and various tropical fruits such as banana, lemon and orange trees, none of which will grow outside in Britain. In several places beside the fish pond are some papyrus plants, growing tall and thick, with a spray of little stems and flowers at the top, in an umbrella shape. I instantly recognised these as larger versions of one that is growing at the shallow end of my pond at home, called Cyperus Papyrus or Egyptian Paper Reed. It is shapely and decorative but unfortunately\* it seeds

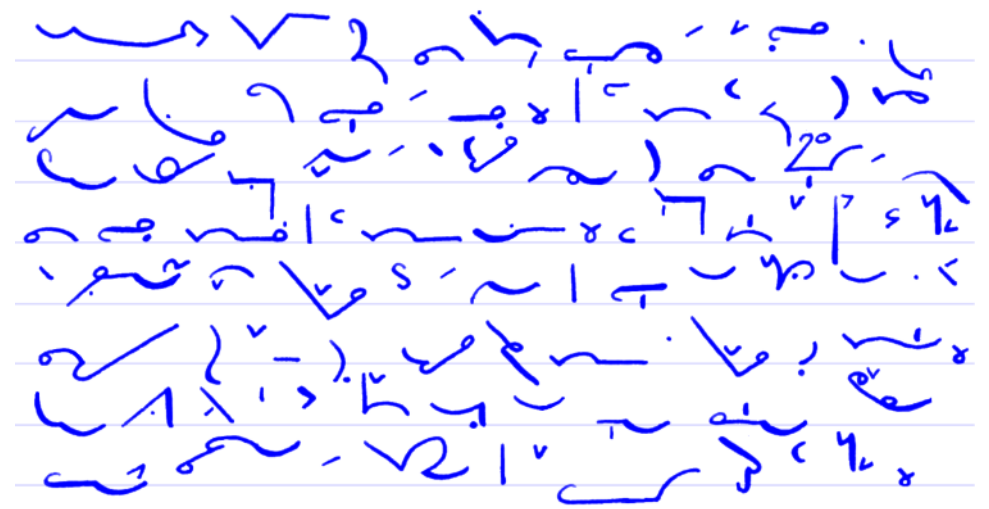
profusely, just like any other\* grass, and so I do my best to remove it whenever it appears, or at least\* snap off the flowering head to prevent it spreading. I love\* paper but I don't love papyrus seedlings everywhere!

\* "unfortunately" Optional contraction

\* Omission phrase "any oth(er)"

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

\* "I love" not phrased, as this would look the same as "I will have". If phrased, it would be advisable to insert the vowel e.g. "I love to do the housework/I will have to do the housework."



**Papyrus**

In another part of the\* park, there were some bamboo clumps and on the grass a few wing feathers from crows and geese. It occurred to me that here was almost everything necessary to get writing, and all that was missing was some charcoal and maybe some grease to mix it with to make ink. When I got home, I toyed with the idea of rescuing my papyrus plant and letting it grow in isolation in a pot somewhere, so that I could\* see if it was possible to make a papyrus sheet of my own. Having read up

on all the time needed in cutting, soaking, splicing, gluing, hammering and polishing it, I quickly abandoned that idea.

\* Omission phrase "part (of) the". Writing "of" as a hook here is avoided, as it would look too much like "number of".

\* "I could" is not phrased, to prevent misreading as "I can". "Could not" can be phrased safely, as "cannot" is written differently.



**Papyrus**

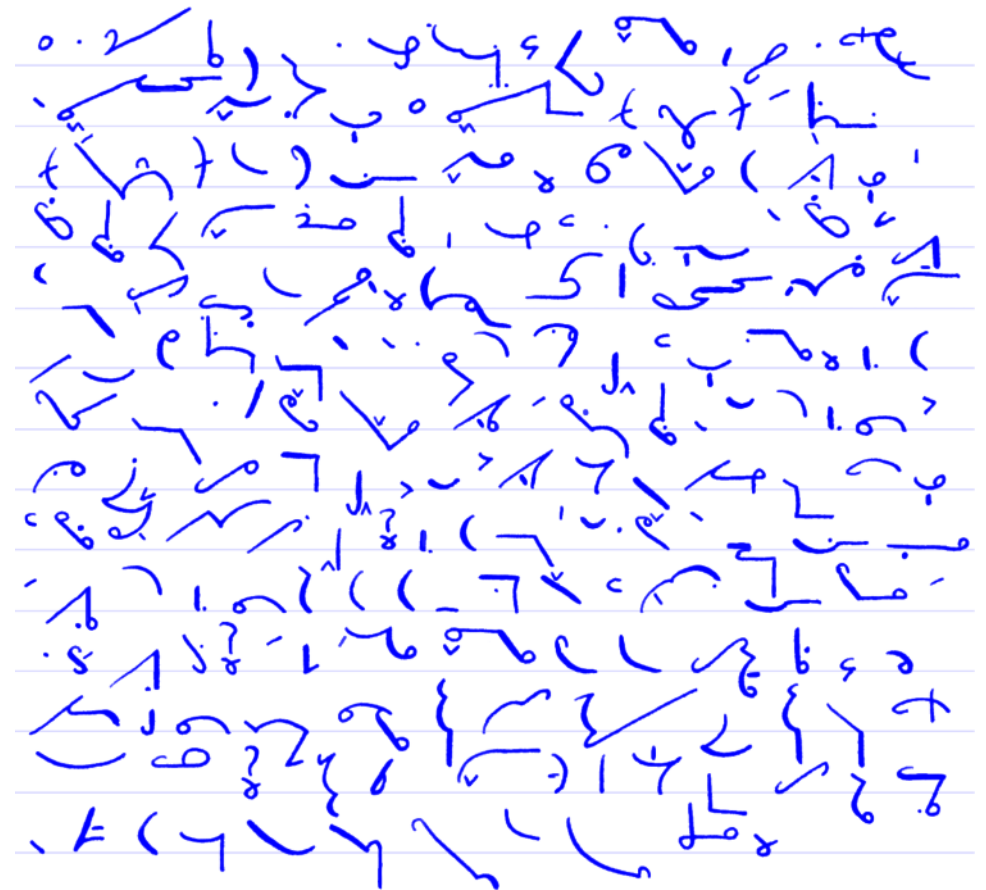
I did once buy a piece of "papyrus" with Egyptian hieroglyphs\* on it, human\* figures, birds, beetles, obelisks and other shapes, in vertical rows, and a drawing or two of colourful seated personages. It was a very cheap seaside souvenir, and I think it was made of bits of flattened English straw woven into something that looked like a small place mat, with the picture printed on and a thin coating of glue to hold it all together\*. It was not long before it fell apart, and this made it look even more like a fragment of antiquity, as the shreds came away. I think it may have had a small label stuck on the back: souvenir of Margate. King Rameses would have loved it

and would most certainly have immediately put it on his bedside table to remind him of his day out to the seaside.

\* "hieroglyph" is the noun, "hieroglyphic" is the adjective

\* "human" Special outline, above the line to accord with its second vowel, to differentiate it from "humane" which is on the line

\* "all together" This is not the same as the word "altogether" which has its own short form



**Papyrus**

As a shorthand writer\*, it is easy to feel an instant affinity with the Egyptian scribes, who used a cursive form of hieroglyphic writing known as hieratic (priestly) and demotic (popular) for their ink writings. As well as papyrus, they wrote notes on plaster tablets\*, which were like wax tablets, but instead with a thin coating of plaster on the wood that could be washed clean for reuse. They must have occasionally had stenographic ordeals like our own, as they attempted to get all of a speech or message down with no gaps.

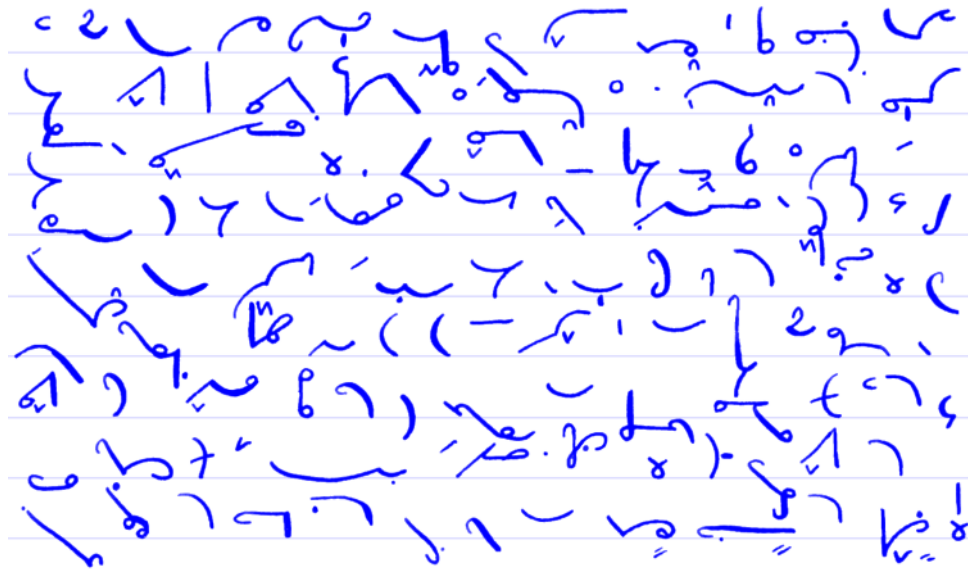
requested to take more notes with space rapidly running out? Did they keep on hand a supply of good quality ink cakes and reeds, or did some of them think they could get by with lumpy ink blocks and a blunt reed pen? And did the novice scribes ever have one of those days when the words required did not seem to match the symbols that they had learned, and they were wishing that they had paid more attention in their classes. I think that, just like us, it only took one of these glitches to jolt them into being better prepared for future tasks.

\* Omission phrase "short(hand) writer"

\* "tablets" Insert the second vowel sign so that it cannot be misread as "tables"

Did they prefer to keep a large supply of papyrus rolls and spare tablets to hand, or did some of the less conscientious ones get down to the end of the roll, only to be





**Papyrus**

With shorthand being less well known nowadays, people like to muse on its secrecy value for those who can write it, hoping that it will be as obscure as a monument or scroll full of hieroglyphs. The Egyptian scribe could definitely count on this, as literacy and schooling was only for officers in the upper ranks of society, with the general population\* being illiterate and needing only to know their own trade or craft. However, maybe present-day diarists should not think they can rely on any traditional shorthand system to hide their

writings, as it is very easy to present any discovered scribbles (with or without the owner's permission) on the internet and request a translation. So please do not write your computer passwords or credit card pin number in Pitman's, Gregg or Teeline!

\* "population" Ensure the shun hook is well formed and open, so that this does not begin to look like "populace" which has the same meaning.

Horizontal lines for handwriting practice.

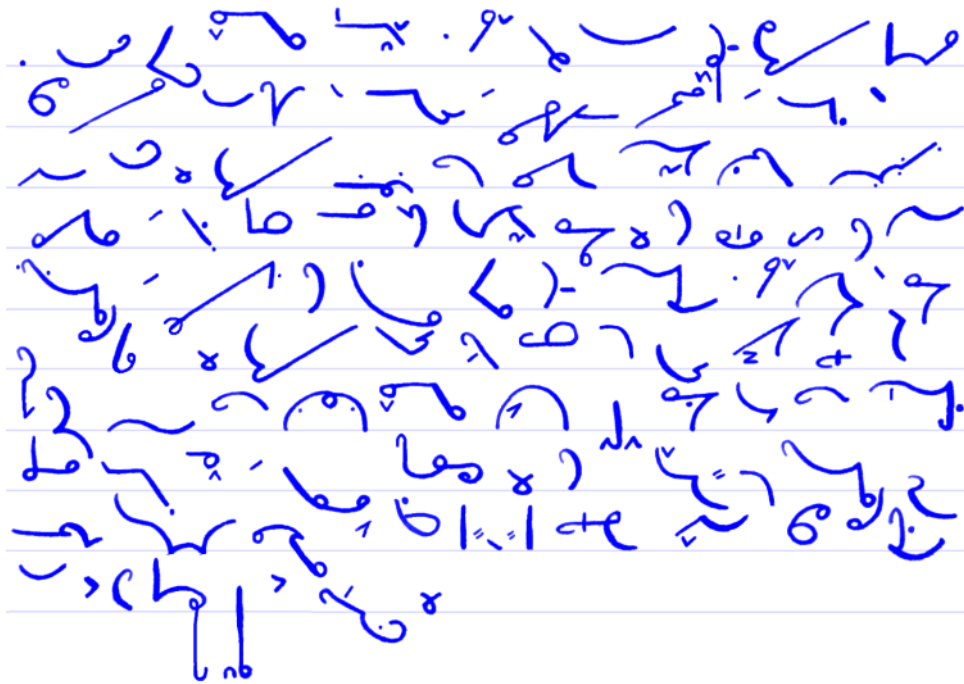


**Papyrus**

The Egyptian scribes of past millennia were no doubt perfectly happy with their papyrus and wooden writing palettes, just as we are with our writing materials, but I would not want anyone to think that laptops and tablets were merely a modern invention. Have a look at the Wikipedia page for Wax Tablet and in the third photo from the top, you can see a scribe with his laptop tablet

on his knees, about to use a stylus and looking remarkably modern. He has obviously had quite enough of typing with two fingers, and cannot be bothered to learn to touch type. Maybe we should ask him what app he is using to write directly on the screen, although it does actually look like the "Bamboo" graphics tablet with stylus that I have in front of me.

Horizontal lines for handwriting practice.



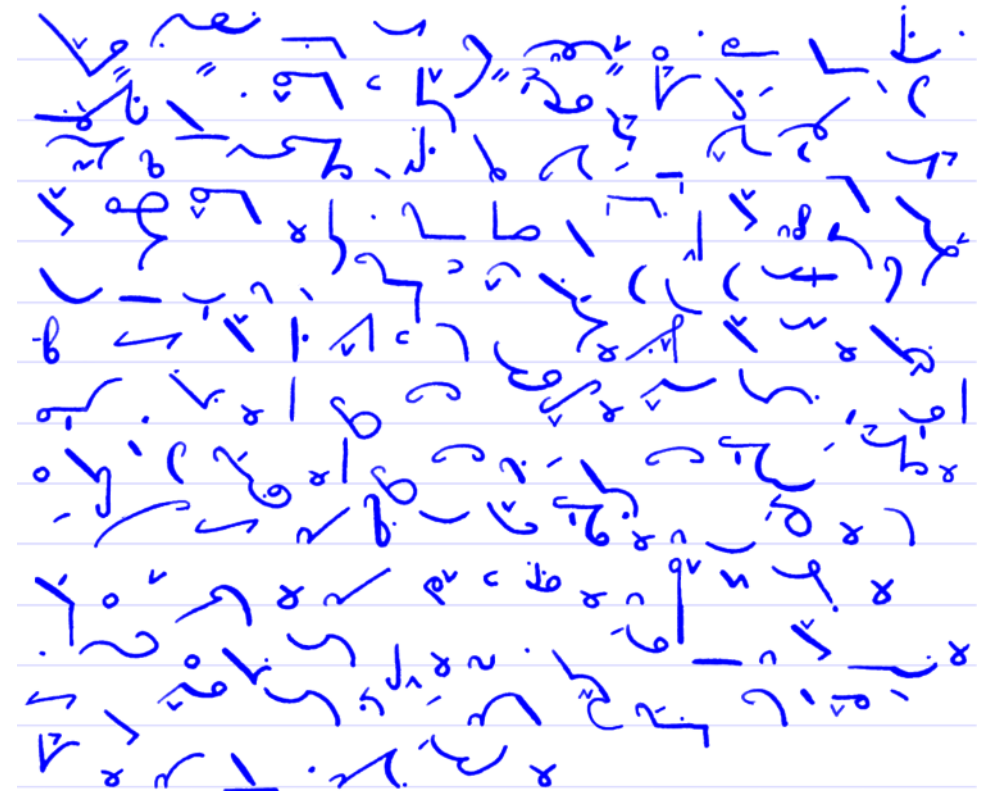
**Papyrus**

The ancient Egyptian scribes occupied a high position in their society, as they were administrators as well as writers, in control of government and historical records, and indeed all written information. They were exempt from heavy manual labour, military service and paying taxes, because of their valuable skills. Their sons went through long apprenticeships and inherited their fathers' jobs, so maintaining a high level of skill throughout the generations\*. They were part of the upper classes or even the royal court, although there were many

more lesser scribes lower down the scale, for the more mundane tasks of keeping accounts and business transactions. Their five-year apprenticeships would have covered the formal symbols and the faster day-to-day cursive writing, as well as training in all the other administrative\* duties of the profession.

\* "generations" Optional contraction

\* "administ(r)ative" Omits the R



**Papyrus**

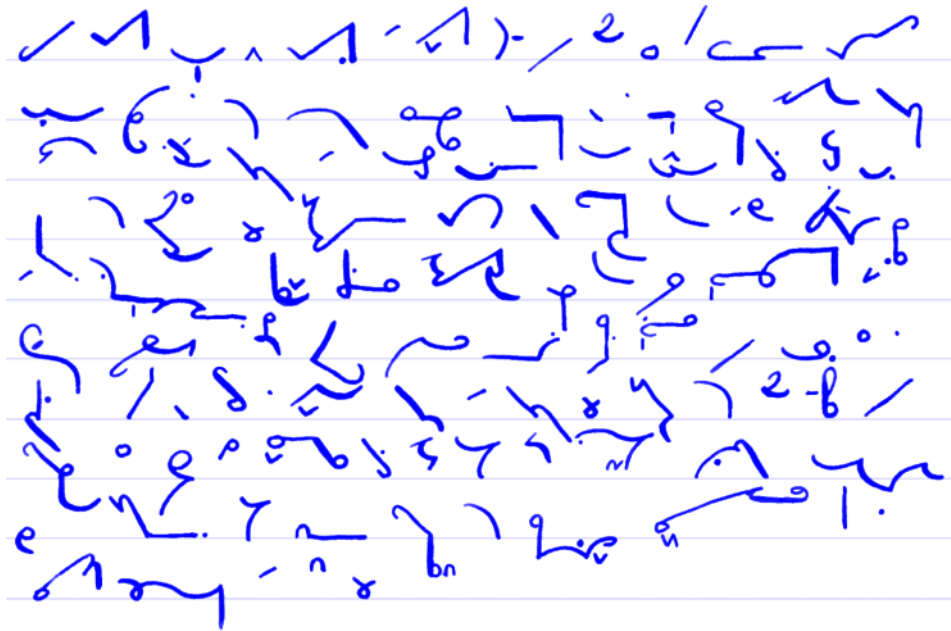
Papyrus Lansing, kept in the British Museum, is a school book containing an exhortation to become a scribe, with dire warnings to avoid the toil, pain and misery of other manual trades, and encouragement to attain the position, wealth and "good life" that could be enjoyed by the successful scribe. It was a practice text to be copied out by the students, who were obviously being given no opportunity to forget what might befall them if they neglected\* their studies:

"By day write with your fingers; recite by night. Befriend the scroll, the palette. It pleases more than wine. Writing for him who knows it is better than all other professions. It pleases more than bread and beer, more than clothing and ointment."

And later on: "You are dressed in fine clothes; you own horses. Your boat is on the river; you are supplied with attendants. You stride about inspecting. A mansion is built in your town. You have a powerful office, given you by the king . . . Put the writings in your heart, and you will be protected from all kinds of toil. You will become a worthy official."

\* "neglected" Both present and past tenses would make sense here, so use the optional short dash through the last stroke, to signify past tense in a short form or contraction that has no other method to show the difference



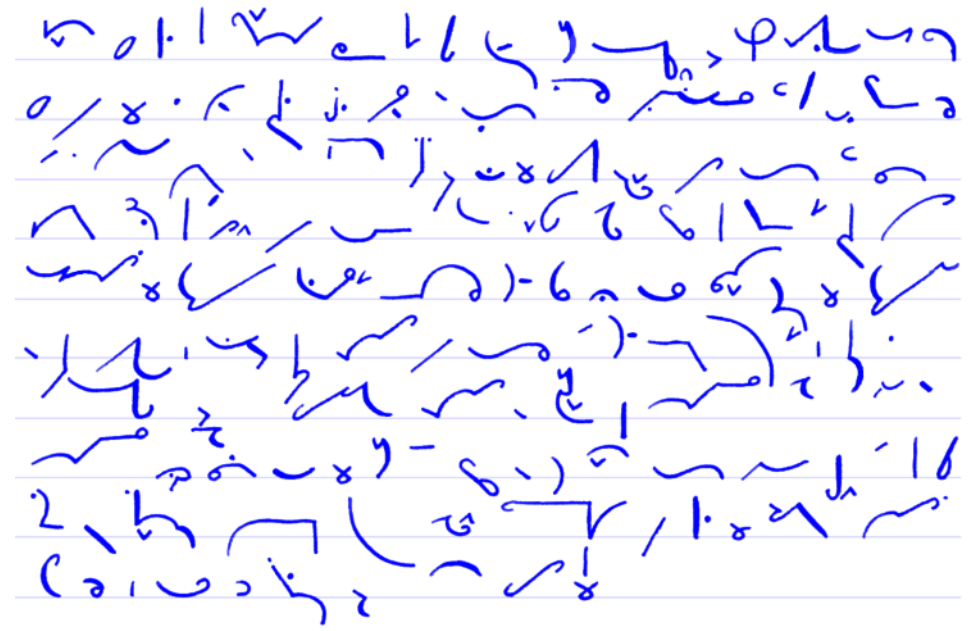


**Papyrus**

We already know how to read and write, so our shorthand is much quicker to learn, needing less than\* a year, maybe six months, to get to a good speed, and we have better and more abundant paper, and instant ink in fountain pens that do not need dipping or sharpening. I think we can also be grateful for soft adjustable seats and ergonomically designed desks, and that we do not have to sit for hours cross-legged on the floor using the standard Egyptian linen kilt stretched across our

knees as a table, on which to balance a writing board and paper. I hope that your shorthand studies are proceeding as swiftly as the scribe's pen, and that the only hard manual labour involved is that of practising until you can produce your streamlined hieroglyphs at a hundred words a minute and beyond. (1413 words)

\* "less than" Downward L in order to make the join



**Books**

On my first day at primary school at the age of four, I was introduced to the necessity of reading in the very first hour. A low table contained rows of name cards, rectangles with large neat black words and a long loop of cord attached to each end. We had to find our own name, with some help, wear it round our neck for a while, and then place it back on the table later on in the morning. They were various colours, so this made things slightly easier. They were not to teach reading, but enabled the teacher to learn our names, and so keep order, but it was an introduction to the fact

that\* we would have to learn to identify different marks and that not all marks meant\* the same thing. I was quite pleased to see my name written down and it just asked to be admired, looked after and found correctly each day. I would be learning other words, but none would compare to that important one!

\* Omission phrase "to the (f)act that"

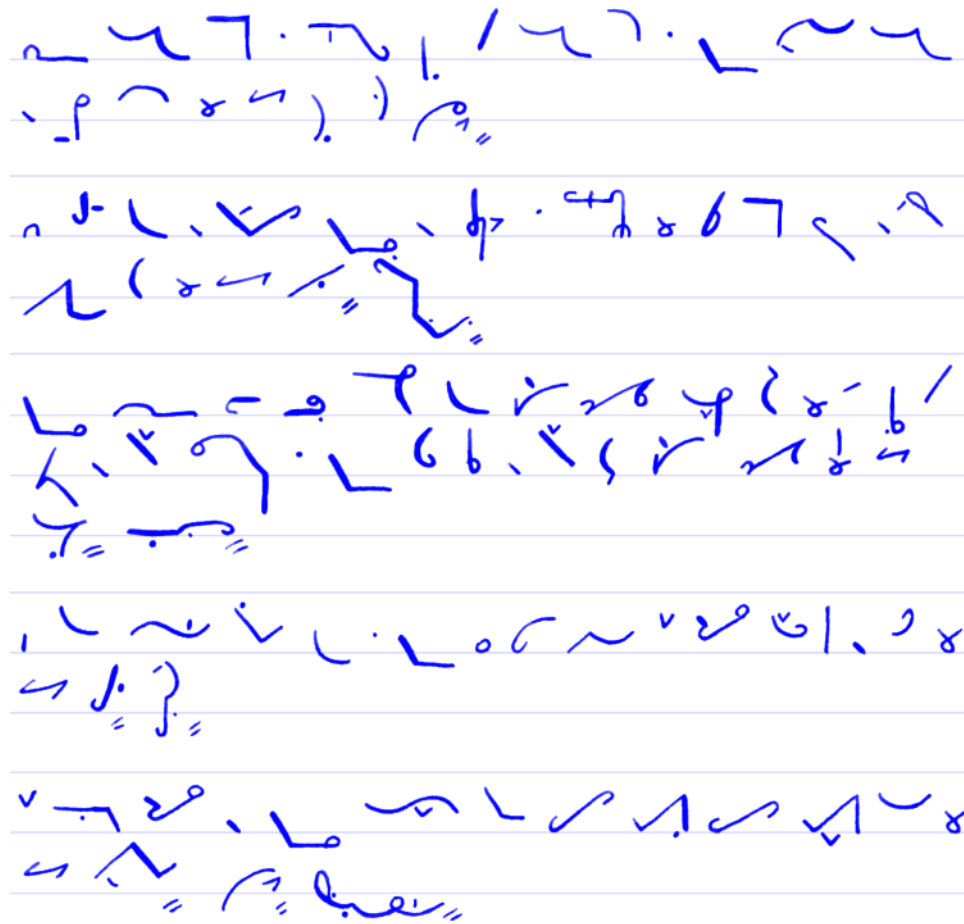
\* "meant" Keep the halved M small, as "mean" would make also make sense here











**Books**

You can never get a cup of tea large enough or a book long enough to suit me. C.S. Lewis

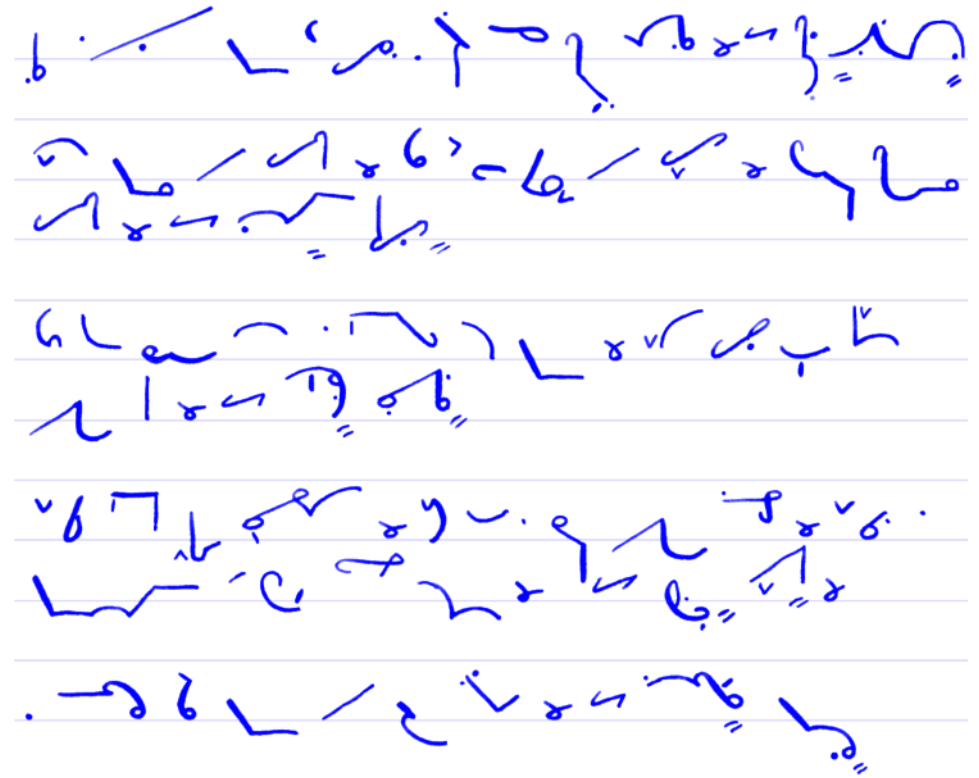
You don't have to burn books to destroy a culture. Just get people to stop reading them. Ray Bradbury

Books make great gifts because they have whole worlds inside of them. And it's much cheaper to buy somebody a book than it is to buy them the whole world! Neil Gaiman

But for my own part, if a book is well written, I always find it too short. Jane Austen

I kept always two books in my pocket, one to read, one to write in. Robert\* Louis Stevenson

\* "Robert" Written thus to distinguish it from "Albert" (Upward L + halved Br), see also "Alberto" in the first quote



**Books**

It's a rare book that wins the battle against drooping eyelids. Tracy Chevalier

My books are water; those of the great geniuses are wine. Everybody drinks water. Mark Twain

Thank you for sending me a copy of your book. I'll waste no time reading it. Moses\* Hadas

I just got out of the hospital. I was in a speed reading accident. I hit a book mark and flew across the room. Steven Wright

The covers of this book are too far\* apart. Ambrose Bierce (1353 words)

\* "Moses" Written with full strokes, likewise "Jesus" has Circle S and stroke Ess.

\* "too far" Note that "far" on its own uses full strokes F + Ar





**Crows, Ravens and R-Hooks**

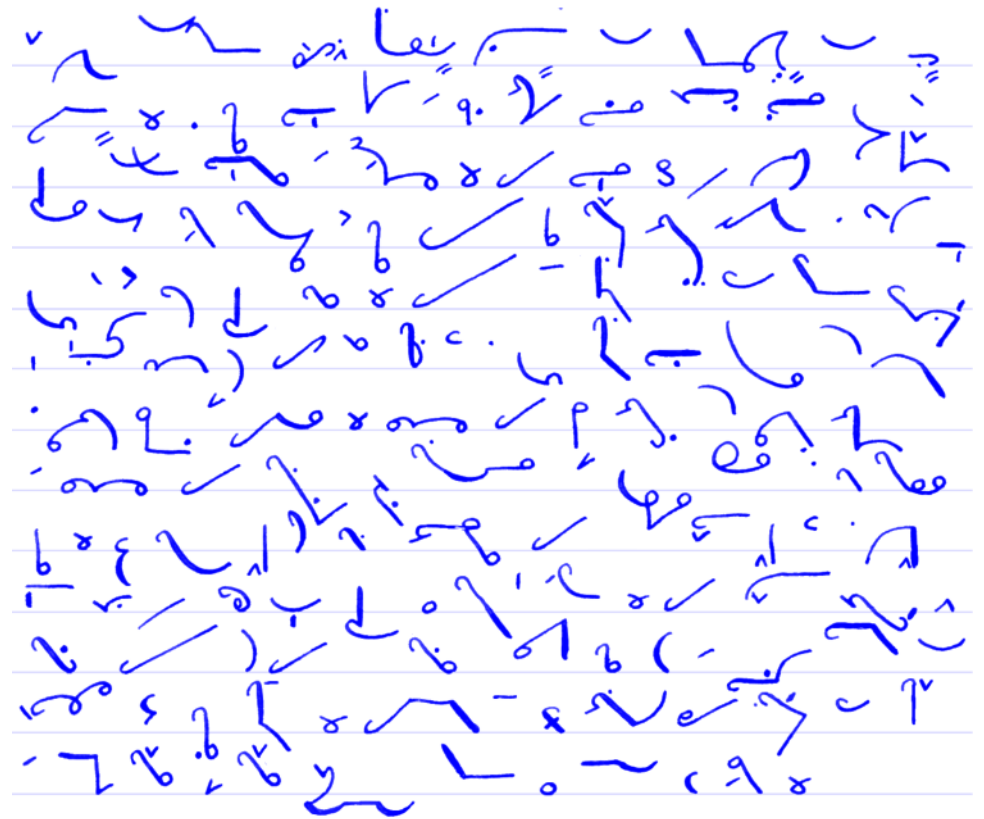
Hello readers, I'm Crow. I have been asked to give a brief description of our daily life so that you can practise your R-Hooks. I am glad that she didn't bother to ask the ravens or rooks to contribute, as they are not as smart as me, and I am sure you prefer to hear about us clever crows. I have been given a word list that needs to be practised, which I propose to follow perfectly, and if you are even a quarter\* as clever as a crow, you will soon be producing your cursive curly scribbles at a

Blank lined writing area for practice.

hundred birds a minute. At least\* I think that is what she said. In any case, after lots of persistent and eager practising, you will be flying along towards your grand goal as fast as we do, as the crow flies, in fact.

\* "quarter" can also be written as an optional contraction, as Doubled Kway above the line

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



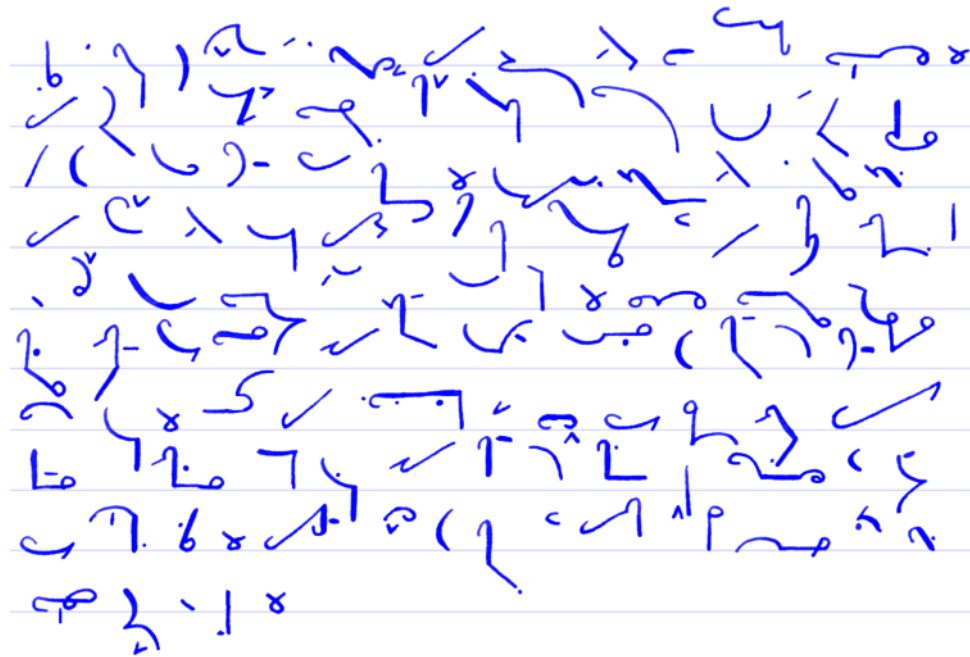
**Crows, Ravens and R-Hooks**

I live in the park surrounding Danson Lake in Bexleyheath in Kent, UK. The trees grow tall and straight, and there are acres of green grass full of dinners in the form of\* grubs and worms. We crows spend our leisure time in the upper branches of the trees, where it is bright and breezy, and we have a particularly good view of all the free dinner opportunities. We are quite dapper in our black plumage but occasionally you may see one of us dressed with a few drab grey feathers, or maybe a silver streak on the wings. Sometimes we sit and preen, or sleep and dream, and sometimes we prepare to play pranks on the visitors as soon as an opportunity presents itself.

When they bring out their bread and crisps, we cry out with a loud "caw" to let our friends know dinner is probably on offer. We like to prove how brave we are, so we press ahead towards them, and eagerly grab any morsels that the eaters drop. We can be quite bold and brash, as we approach in order to\* try and get the prize\*, but the price\* of shrinking back is going without supper.

\* Omission phrases "in (the) f(orm of)" "in ord(er to)"

\* "prize/price" have the same outline



**Crows, Ravens and R-Hooks**

It's a pretty easy life and a brilliant way to clear up the great quantity of crumbs. We especially enjoy the crispy\* dry batter from their fish and chip dinners which they often throw in our direction. If we need to break up a piece of bread, we fly up into one of the larger tree branches with our treasure and trim it to size, being careful not to drop any of it. Sometimes groups of visitors traipse and trudge over the grass and we follow in case they drop or throw more food.

Occasionally we congregate on the ground near the stream and bridge where the ducks and drakes get fed, and we draw or drag out fragments that fall near the muddy edges. We don't mind them dripping with water, as it makes the hard bread crusts easier to eat.

\* "crispy" Insert the last vowel, as "crisp" would also make sense

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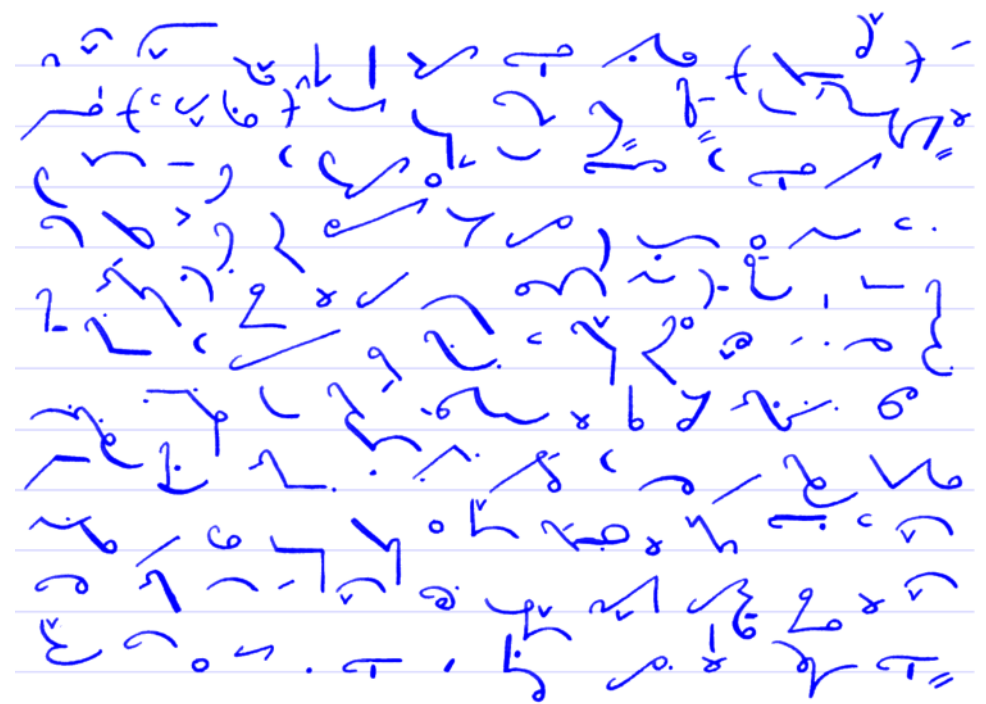
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**Crows, Ravens and R-Hooks**

You might\* like to find out the difference between crows, ravens (bigger size) and rooks (with white face) in the video from the British Trust for Ornithology. However, I am quite sure that everyone is in agreement that crows are the very best of the three, especially as we are the only ones whose name is written with a true and proper\* R-Hook. We may be smaller and not so strong, but I can truthfully brag that we are super brainy, with bright sharp minds, and a most impressive capacity for problem solving. It is intelligence and bravery, as well as regular training and practising a rapid response, that improves our personal performance and enables our

efforts to get better as time progresses. I hope you agree with my remarks and remember me and my friends next time\* you write one of those hooks. My final remark is, the crow who dares wins! Yours truly, Crow. (642 words)

\* "might" Always write separately, so it cannot be misread as "may" in phrases

\* "proper" Always insert the first vowel, and the diphone in "appropriate", as they are similiar in outline and meaning

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

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