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Blogs - 2014 - September

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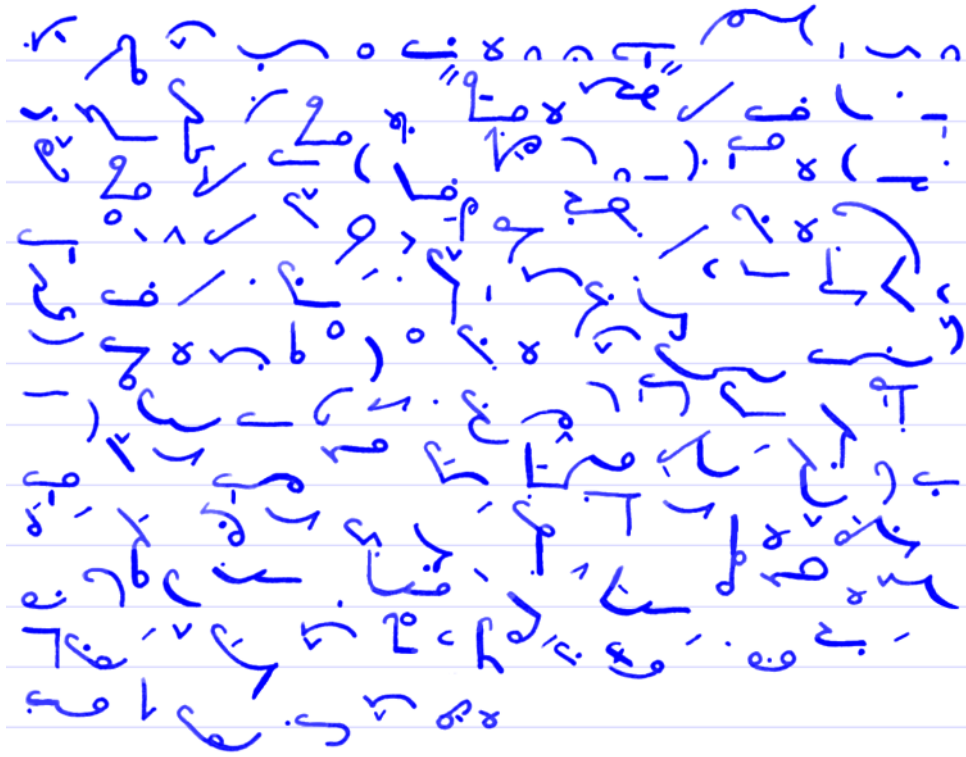
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Eagles and L-Hooks

Hello Readers, My name is Eagle. You met Crow last month, but now you need to practise plenty of the L* Hooks to straight strokes. I am glad to say that* we eagles have a good supply of hooks, but we call them beaks and talons, or you could* say claws. They give you a clue as to how we apply ourselves to the subtle skill of clasping our prey. From their point of view*, eagles are a plague and a blight, but I am completely confident* that I can tackle the job without any glitches. To me it is as easy as playing. My blinking gleaming eyes can see everything equally well, a playful mouse or glossy black beetle scuttling close by in the clumps of grass, plump ducklings* waddling and paddling through clay ponds and puddles, hares in the ploughed field and placid cattle in the distance. I survey the scene from every angle, the tangles of bushes and the

jungle of grasses. I never get complacent and I plunge on my target with deliberate and complete boldness, and a sense of glee and gladness at the pleasing conclusion of my hunt.

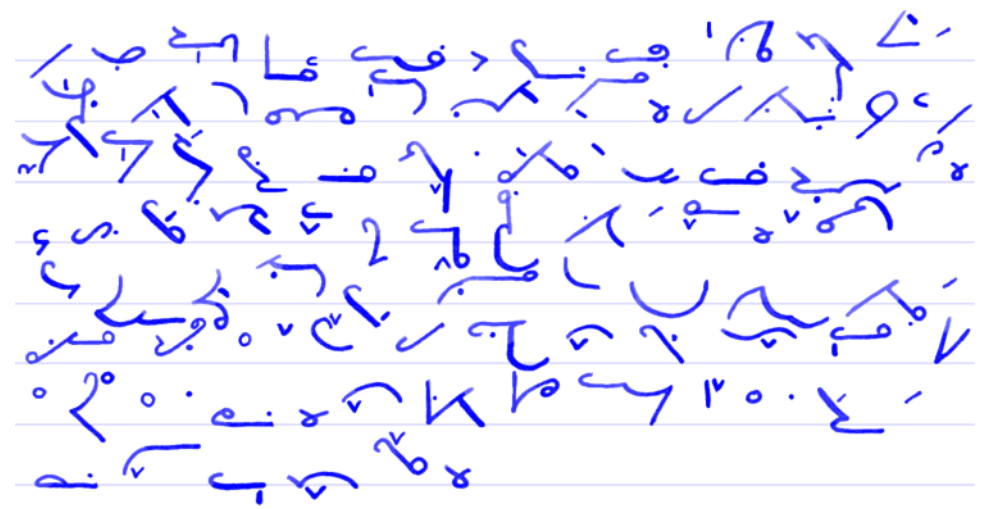
* L stroke on its own is written upwards

* Omission phrases "I am glad (to) s(ay) that" "point (of) view"

* "you could" Not phrased, so that it doesn't get misread as "you can"

* You can use proximity for two con-outlines in succession, if preferred

* Derived from "duck+ling" therefore does not use K + L Hook



Eagles and L-Hooks

Our nest of cluttered twigs clings to the bleak cliffs, on ledges of brittle chalk and unstable rubble, or sometimes glossy* marbled rocks. We replicate ourselves with our annual clutch of blotchy speckled eggs and provide a surplus of new eagles to claim the land. When the wind blows, I am able to glide through the clouds, straddling earth and sky. I hover over the shingle shores and glassy* blue lakes for fish,

leaving ripples and circles of waves as I fly away cradling my prey in my claws, which are as sharp as a sickle. My terrible talons clench tight as a buckle and stick like glue to my prize.

* "glossy" "glassy" Inserting the first vowel is essential, as their meanings are similar



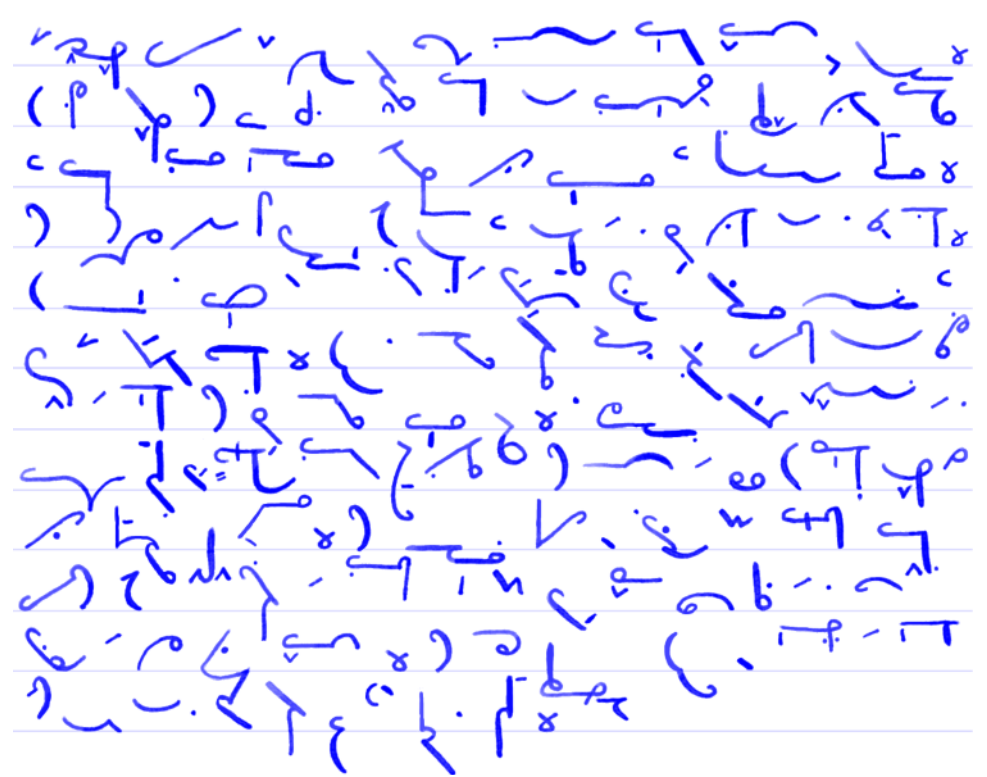
Eagles and L-Hooks

In spring the fields bloom and blossom with purple heather, the birds warble and the gaggles of sheep start to gambol. In summer I search the blank grasslands for the glut of scuttling voles and paddle in the gurgling river for fish. At the end of the year, I redouble my efforts, flying over the clearings and arable fields again, rectangles and triangles of glowing golden stubble. Not a single animal in this place escapes

Blank lined paper for writing practice.

my notice, whether a bedraggled rat snuggled in a mottled bundle of hay nibbling the seeds, a lone sheep dawdling and toddling* along the bridle path across the plateau or a rabbit huddled under a nettle patch underneath the telegraph cables.

* "dawdling" "toddling" Ensure these are written clearly as their meanings are similar



Eagles and L-Hooks

On the mountainside where I live, pupils from the camping club climb to the pinnacle. They settle beside their cold tents, clad in glamorous designer-label clothes with glitzy glass goggles and plastic rain cloaks with dangling toggles. Their meals are not at all frugal and they fiddle with noodles and a soup ladle in a hot kettle. They cook a cluster of apple and plum flavoured bagels mingled with flour on the portable griddle. They have a couple of bottles of clean potable water in their satchels and cuddle their soup cups close to themselves. A squiggly bolt of lightning and a clearly

Blank lined paper for writing practice.

audible blood-curdling clap of thunder rattles their camp and sends them scuttling inside, as the rain tumbles down the rocks. Their giggles turn to complaining about the colder cloudy weather and they prattle and clatter on about blue-sky summer days and a more pleasant and less changeable climate. Their actions disclose the fact that* they have been too cosseted and coddled, and they are now in a battle when they thought it would be a doddle.

* Omission phrase "disclose the (f)act that"



Eagles and L-Hooks

The climbers are now completely gloomy and glum, like skittles that have tumbled over. Their mettle seems to be largely lacking, and their laughable efforts end up bungled and mangled. The storm settles in and in their muddle they dismantle the tangled tent, they "turn turtle" and "pull the plug", driving home at full throttle, or clumsily throwing themselves onto the saddles of their cycles, and seeing if haply they can get home before the stormy* blasts begin. Their memorable holiday, to which they felt entitled, culminates in them

telephoning for help. I am tempted to chuckle and chortle but I can only* conclude that it is a complete riddle why these local people should wish to get in such a pickle, although equally I must pay them the compliment of having the pluck to make the attempt.

* "stormy" Insert the last vowel, as "storm blasts" would also make sense

* "I can only" On its own, "only" is written with full N and L strokes

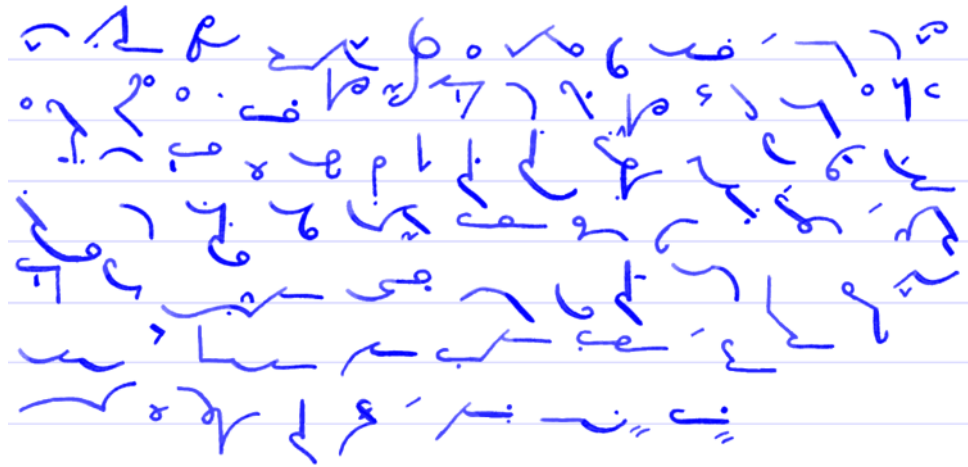


Eagles and L-Hooks

I know I have been blowing my own* trumpet and sounding my own bugle, and declaring my own admirable, noble and almost infallible personality. But I'm no poodle or mythical creature, and as King of the Birds I am as bold in completing my blog article as when I am at home on my cliff in the mountains. I recommend this single-mindedness and boldness as a miraculous and entirely suitable way to clear the blockages that occur when you

find you are struggling and juggling with your own writing scribbles. All these resemble the quarry grasped in my claws and it is reasonable to recall my uncomplicated attitude and not allow these clogging mental intrusions to amplify themselves or strangle your performance for a single minute.

* "my own" Not using N Hook for "own " as that would be the same as "mine"



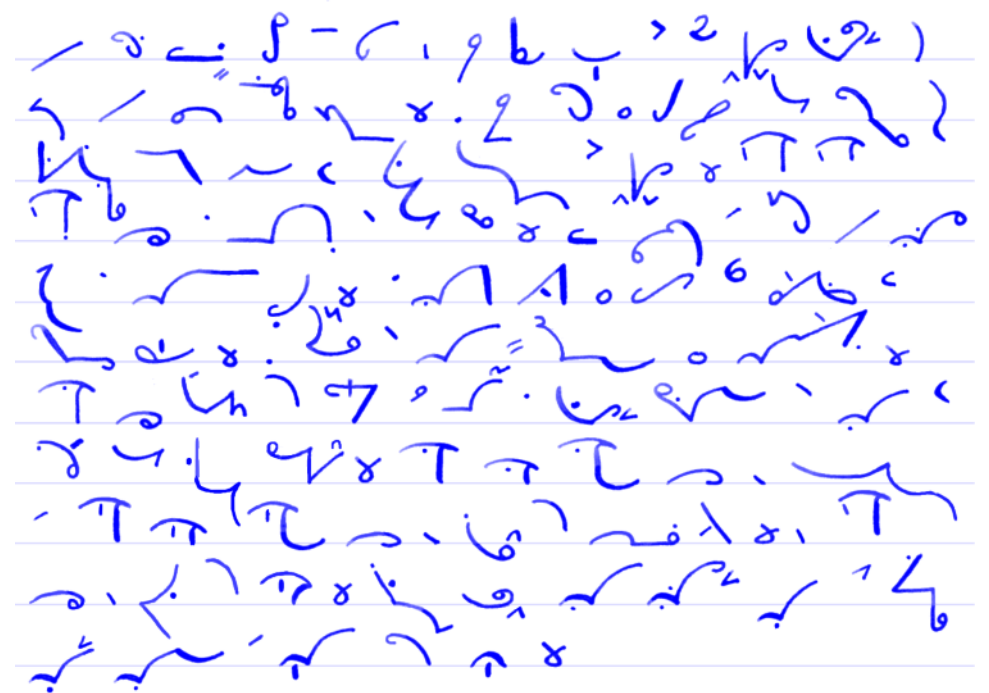
Eagles and L-Hooks

My radical suggestion to clarify this situation* is to replace these niggles and keep your mind as brutally sharp as an eagle's talons and clutch your prey outlines with the pen nib as I do with my claws. Instead of sitting at the table dabbling placidly and feebly over slow vocal babblings, your endeavours in this valuable classic system will blossom and you will be able to gloat over the numerical increase,

maybe even double, in your typical speed of writing, including all the technical, legal, clerical, classical and political material. Yours truly, deeply, boldly, and regally, King Eagle

* "this situation" Uses Ses Circle to indicate the two words, although only one S is actually sounded.

Blank lined area for writing practice.



Eagles and L-Hooks

Our friend Eagle has done quite well but he does not know all the shorthand outline variations, so here are some extras to practise. The hooked version is generally used for the verbs, so that derivatives can be written without changing the form of the outline. Mottle, mottled, mottling means a colouring of spots. Gold, silver and iron are metals, and they have a metallic sheen. A metallised road is one that is surfaced with broken stone. The science of metal-working is metallurgy. Mettle means fortitude or courage, and is actually a variant spelling

of "metal" that arose in the *18th century. Meddle meddled meddling mean to interfere, and muddle muddled muddling mean to confuse or mix up. To model means to shape or mould. Compare the nouns medal, medallion, middle, and the adjectives medial, middling and modal, from mode.

* "18th" Always insert the first vowel and in "tenth", as otherwise these are the same outline

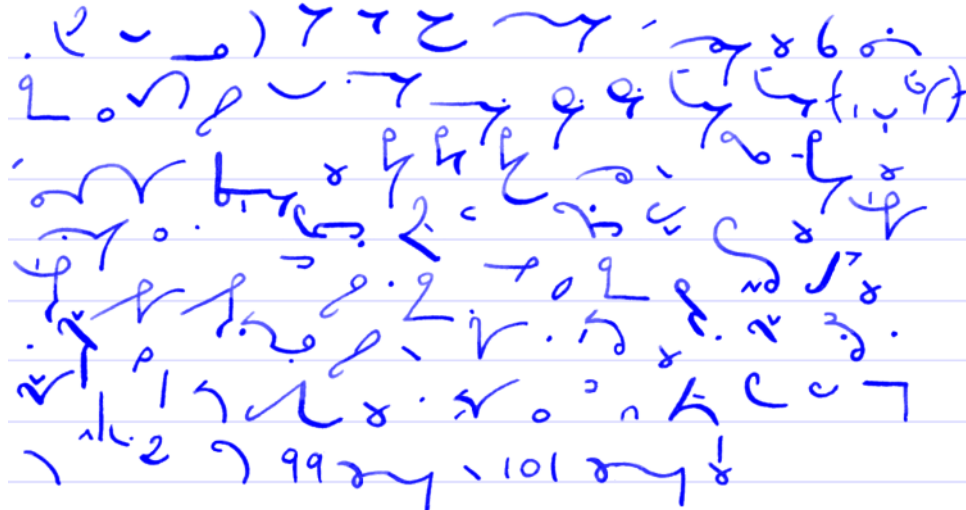
Blank lined area for writing practice.



Eagles and L-Hooks

The following do not use the L Hook. Idle means doing nothing or lazy, and the outline uses full strokes so that the diphthong can be joined. An image that is worshipped is called an idol and a popular

performer may be idolised. Idyll or idyll (two pronunciations) means a charming pastoral scene and the adjective is idyllic or idyllic (also two pronunciations). Swaddle means to wrap or swathe a baby in long cloths, known as swaddling clothes, and the past tense is swaddled.

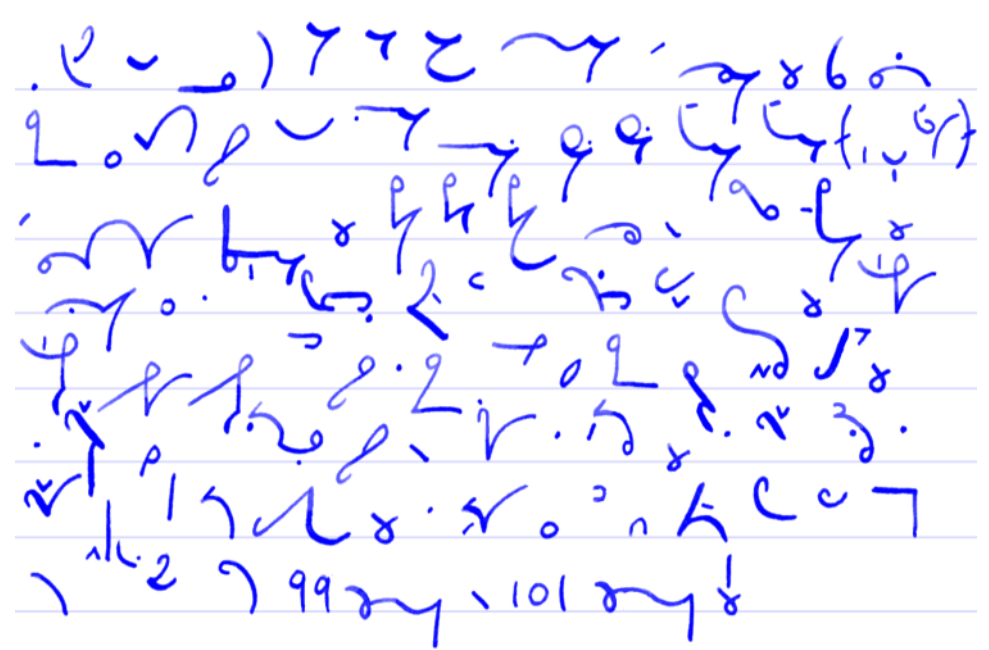


Eagles and L-Hooks

The short form hand gives us handle, handled, handling, manhandle and mishandle. This same stroke is also used in candle, kindle, swindle, swindled, fondle, fondled (but note fondly), and similarly disgruntled. Startle, startled, startling means to surprise suddenly. Myrtle is an evergreen shrub with fragrant white flowers. Unsettle, unsettled, resettle, resettled,

cannot use a hook because the first stroke has to be able to join. A bridle is the harness used to control a horse. A bride wears a bridal outfit at her wedding. A hurdle is what you jump over in order to* get your shorthand from 99 words a minute to 101 words a minute!

Omission phrases "in ord(er) to" "words (a) minute"



Eagles and L-Hooks

The following have distinguishing outlines. Gentle means kindly or easy, and Gentle means a non-Jew. Gentleman, gentlemanly and gentlemen are short forms. Vital, fatal, futile: vital means essential for life or success, fatal means causing death, destruction or complete failure. Futile means an ineffective or useless action and comes from a Latin word meaning easily poured out or melted, just how you feel when the speaking was too fast for your present level of shorthand skill. The nouns are vitality, fatality and futility. It is vital to practise regularly, avoiding the fatal error of hesitation, and remembering that it is quite futile to resist the urge to pick up your pen and write everything you hear in shorthand. (1413 words)

See Distinguishing Outlines pages for these:

www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand.org.uk/distinguishing-outlines-1-vowel.htm "gentle genteel Gentile"

www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand.org.uk/distinguishing-outlines-2-rule.htm "gentleman gentlemen gent"

www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand.org.uk/distinguishing-outlines-2-rule.htm "fatal futile vital"



Apple Trees

When we first viewed our current house over thirty years ago, it was the end of the day and we had decided to look in just one more estate agent shop before going home. We wanted to get the most out of the cost of the petrol to drive out here to the edge of the countryside, from our existing home in south east London. We were given the keys and the information sheet, and we duly sought out the road and the house. The house was empty and newly refurbished, but what struck me most was the garden. Although it was not particularly

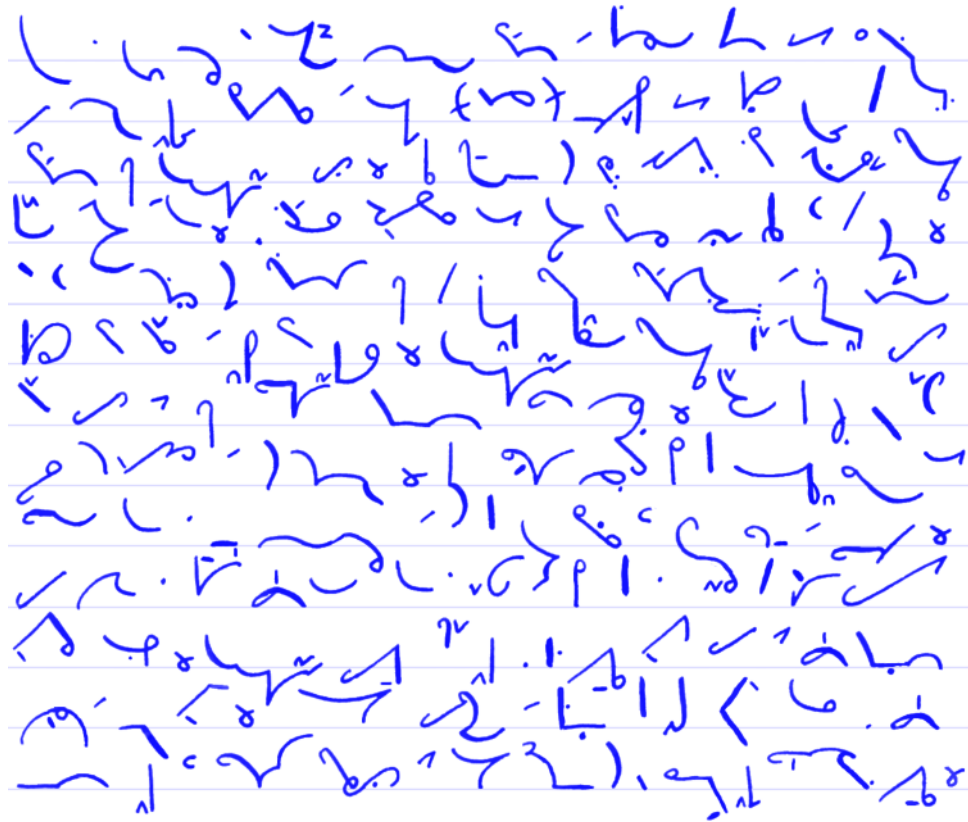
large, being springtime it was a sea of apple blossom spread over the thick greenery below. The garden was not overlooked, and although it was full of weeds and wild tree saplings, it was definitely full of promise for the future. We moved in three months later, in August, and discovered that the information sheet was correct when it said "garden with mature fruit trees". It was a lot longer than we had realised, when we pushed our way through the thicket of nettles, and damson and ash tree saplings.



Apple Trees

There was a large Bramley apple tree (which produces cooking apples) and this was the one that we saw from the upstairs back bedroom, spreading itself over the garden. There was a greengage tree, looking rather ancient but still laden with green plum-like fruit. In the centre further down was a respectable sized pear tree, and near the end was a large tall plum tree. Although the entire garden was filled with dense high weeds, as we cleared it, we discovered even more small apple trees.

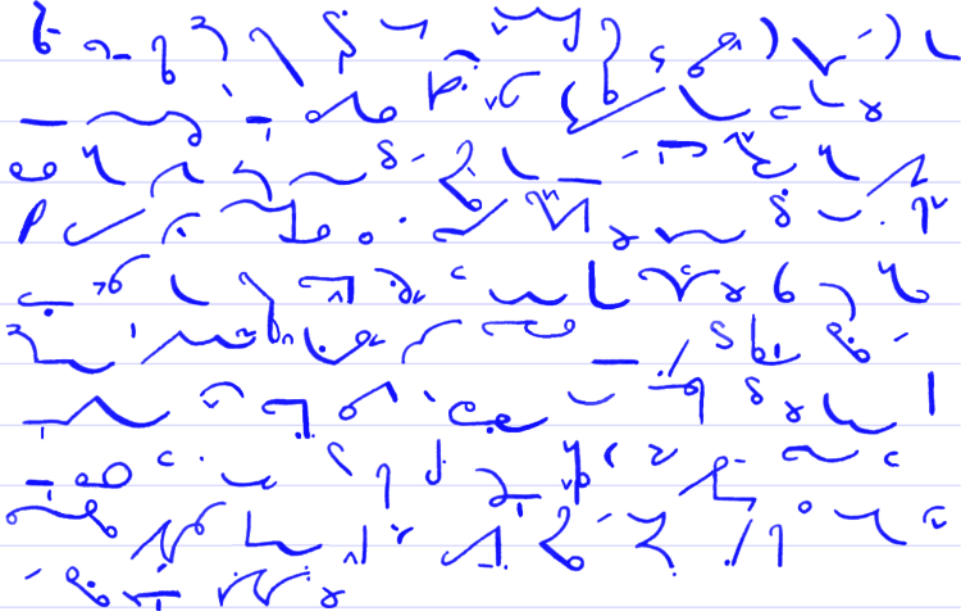
They all bore very small fruit which I assumed were crab apples, but they were most likely poor quality seedlings and also starved through years of neglect. The greengages were harvested, but as the trunk was largely hollow, and soft and rotting at the base, it had to go, before it became unstable and dangerous. One by one the straggly seedling apple trees were removed, as they were producing nothing eatable or decorative.



Apple Trees

After a few years of enjoying making plum and damson jam, as befitted our move out of the suburbs and into the (almost) countryside, at last even the large plum tree eventually went. Its trunk was splitting and weeping sap, and various branches dying and falling off. The abundance of wasps in the fallen plums made the decision that much easier. All that remained was the Bramley tree, which continued producing prolifically and contributed to many delicious apple pies and stewed apple dishes. Eventually the branches died off one by one and the tree gradually became more misshapen. Finally

it ceased to be either use or ornament and was removed. It was sorely missed, as it had introduced spring in the garden for a good many years and had filled the space with flowers, fruit and greenery. We left a tall stump in for a while, as it had a large hole where the robins nested. Eventually the wood dried out, the dead roots rotted away, and the stump became looser and could be rocked. Natural weathering and decay had done the job for us, the stump came out with very little persuasion, and the only work was to scoop out the crumbly roots.

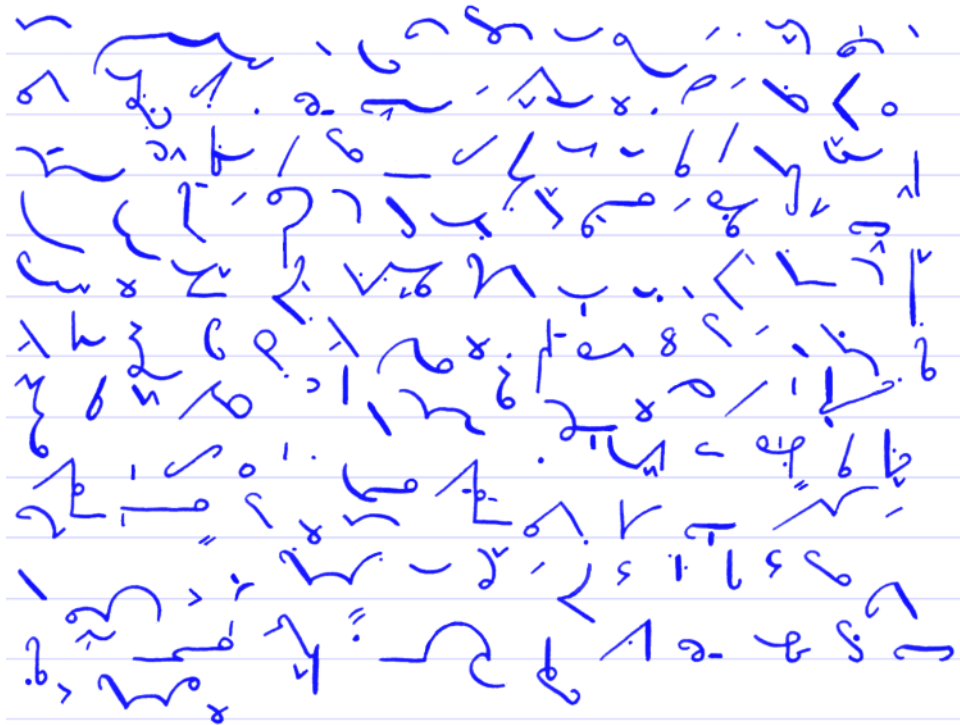


Apple Trees

All those fruit trees were probably planted in the mid 1930's, when the house was built, and so have given many years of good service, at least while they were being cared for. Since I have lived here, many plants and shrubs have come and gone, and finally I have reached the stage where low maintenance is a greater priority. Too many plants in a dry clay soil have produced crowded areas with nothing doing very well. This year I have been working on

renewing various little corners, giving each plant its own space and curbing my greedy habit of squeezing in extra plants. Having had good success with a new apple tree ten years ago, I decided that I would restock the garden with as many as possible*, ruthlessly taking out old woody shrubs and ensuring each tree has enough light and space to grow healthily.

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



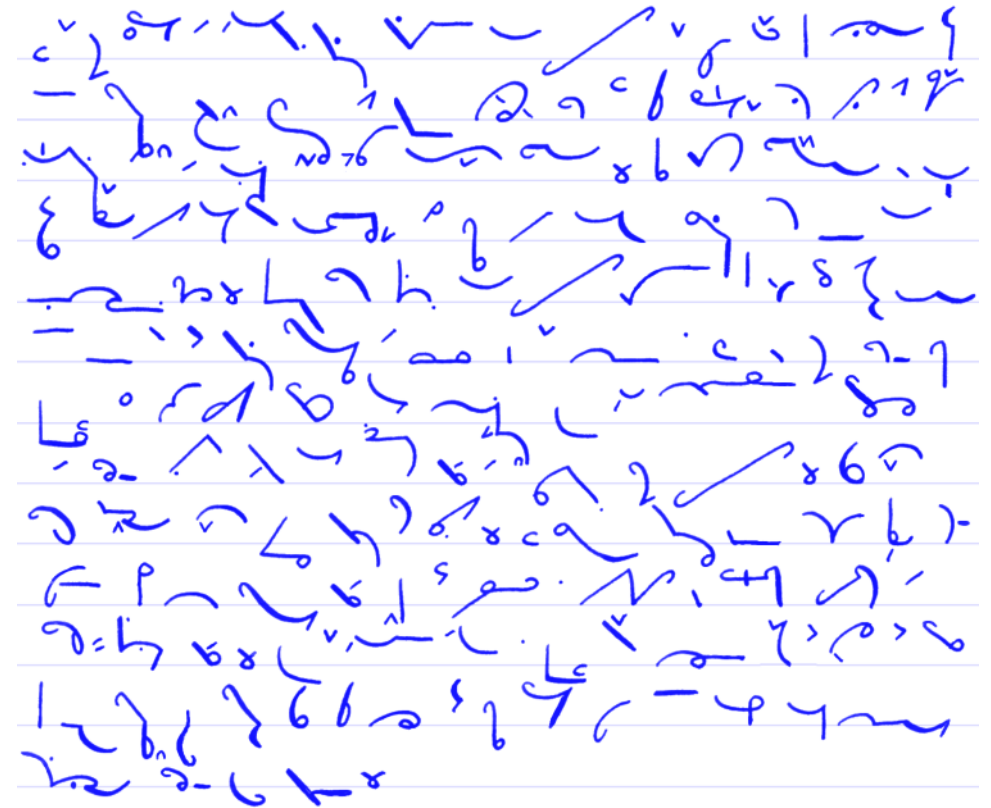
Apple Trees

I am looking forward* to even more blossom in spring, and an entire summer of happy anticipation, watching the fruits growing and ripening. The last and best job is roaming around testing which apples come away gently in the hand, which is much better than finding out after they have dropped and smashed, or been nibbled by the slugs and snails on the ground overnight. Unlike shrubby perennials, there will be no need to chop back or tidy up at the end of the season, other than sweeping up leaves. The total is now eight* apple and two pear trees, and I think this just about replaces what had to be removed all those years ago. Most are

on dwarfing rootstock but one is on a vigorous rootstock, a variety called Sunset which is derived from the Cox apple. I am hoping it will grow rapidly and be similar to the old Bramley in size and shape, with the added advantage that the apples will be eaters and not cookers, and provide a colourful display of red fruits instead of the plain green of the Bramleys.

* Omission phrase "looking f(or)ward"

* Always write 8 as a numeral, not an outline, as the T stroke could be confused with the numeral 1.

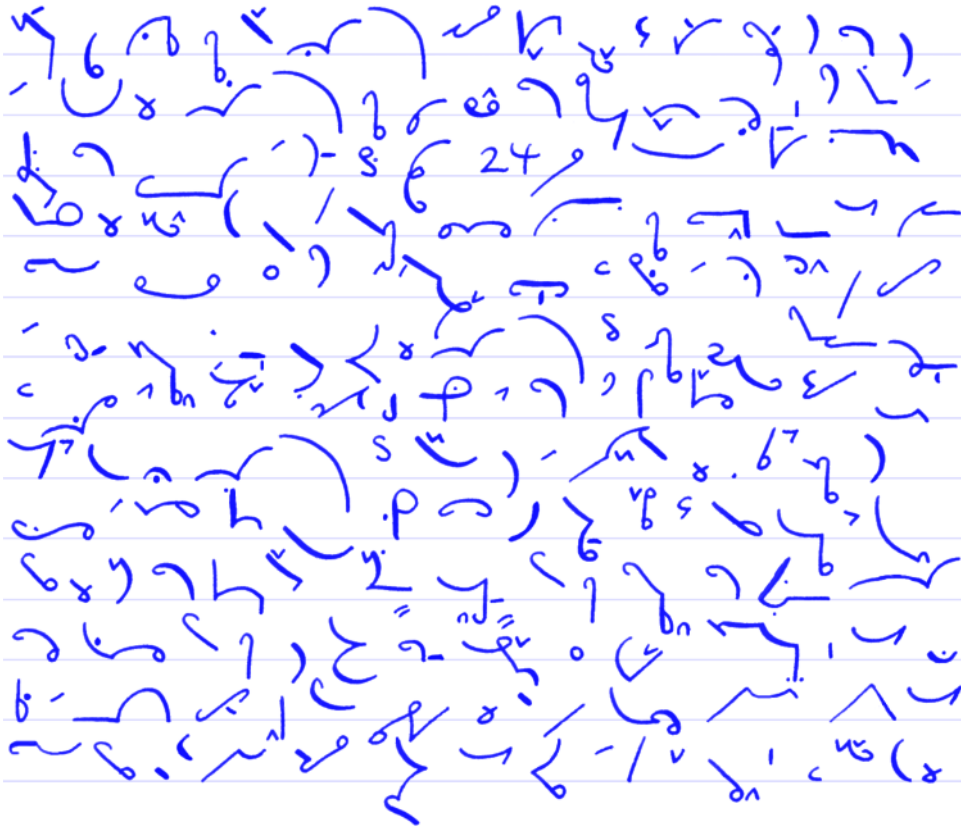


Apple Trees

When I see the gnarled and knobby bare bark in winter, I still find it amazing* that it can produce the beautiful flowers and the big luscious fruit, with just sunlight, air, rain and the highly unappetising and inedible soil in my garden. It is also gratifying to know that these are the only ingredients, as the trees are never sprayed or given any chemical treatment. It can be very tempting in winter to look at old plants and think that nothing can come of all the bare branches and sticks, but I make an effort to see the fruit tree twigs as little storage places for the miniature, if not microscopic, blossoms and fruits, wrapped

up in the waxy buds and sleeping through the winter. This is my version of counting my chickens before they are hatched. When spring appears to come early, it is not so welcome, as it may bring the buds out with the risk of a return to colder weather and frost-damaged buds. If I knock off a twig by mistake, I think of the loss of the apples it could have produced, but then remember that this just means that the tree's energy will go instead into making the remaining fruits even bigger.

* "amazing" "amusing" Always insert the vowel



Apple Trees

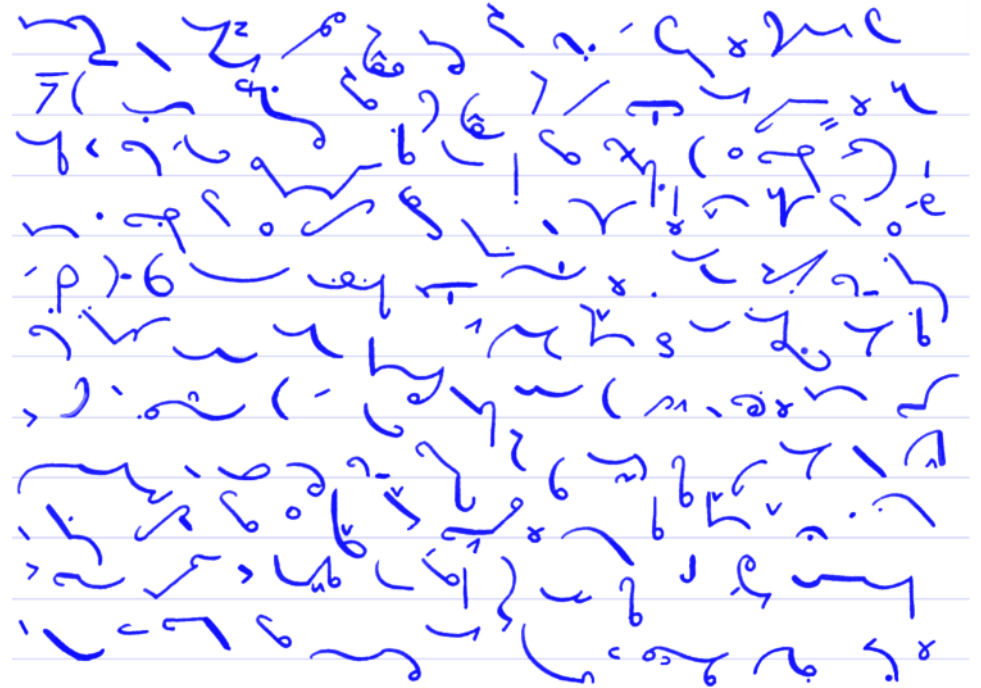
I bought these latest trees by mail order, and was delighted to find that the whole process was very easy and efficient. "Mail order trees" still sounds very strange to my ears, but they are packed and despatched very quickly, and so spend less than* 24 hours in their tall cardboard boxes. I found them to be much better than the sometimes leggy trees crowded together in the local garden centres, as they are obviously grown with space and air around each one, and pruned to produce a good bushy* shape. Mail order plants and trees would not have been practical years ago when emails* and the online world did not exist, and the very short delivery times that we now enjoy have made mail order plant buying easy and reliable. The choice of trees was enormous, and I must admit to being swayed more than usual by those

sites with the best photos of the future apples. I was very tempted by the "Isaac Newton" apple tree, produced from genetic material from his famous apple tree, whose falling fruit inspired his theory of gravity, but in the end taste and colour won out over history. All our favourites are now represented in the garden, plus two that are not always available in the shops and which I pounce on when I find them.

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

* "bushy" Insert last vowel, as "bush" would also make sense

* "email" and "mail" Always insert first vowel"



Apple Trees

I am very glad to be enjoying the results of thousands of years of apple breeding and development. There are now over seven and a half thousand* named cultivars of apples, three thousand* of which are grown in the UK. I have noticed that very often supermarket ads for eating apples portray them as crisp and fresh, but to me a crisp apple is one that has been picked too early! My ideal apple is soft and sweet, so this is another incentive to grow my own. The novelty of watching fruit appear from apparently nothing never diminishes, and the length of time spent in anticipation only adds to the pleasure of consuming them,

and, even better, handing them round to friends. I am greatly looking forward to next year's fruit production, although these newest trees will only be allowed to bear one or two apples, as advised by the growers. Maybe it is time I made a map of the garden to record all the varieties for posterity, so that the new trees do not suffer the indignity of being called crab apples many years in the future when someone else lives here. (1517 words)

* "thousand" Stroke Ith is only used after Arabic numerals

Money

During the summer I visited several museums around London, showing the history of the area over the last few thousand years. As well as fragments of everyday life, there were lots of coins. Some of the dull ones must have been* barely discernible from the soil, and some were of glorious shining gold. In one museum case there was a mound of grey slate coloured coins, a hoard that had been buried for safe keeping, maybe when the area was under attack. In other glass cases were collections of gold coins, laid out carefully in rows, gleaming just like the day that they were struck. My first thought was that this money was not spent on anything

by its last owner, who obviously did not come back again to dig it up. Of course, as the gold never deteriorates, it will always outlive its owner, regardless of the circumstances that surround its hiding place. The second and probably more relevant observation is that the money is now worth nothing as money, and it has changed its value to that of an antiquity or the lesser value of its raw metal. They were a reminder that money is only of value when all concerned agree to abide by the rules of its creation, circulation and use.

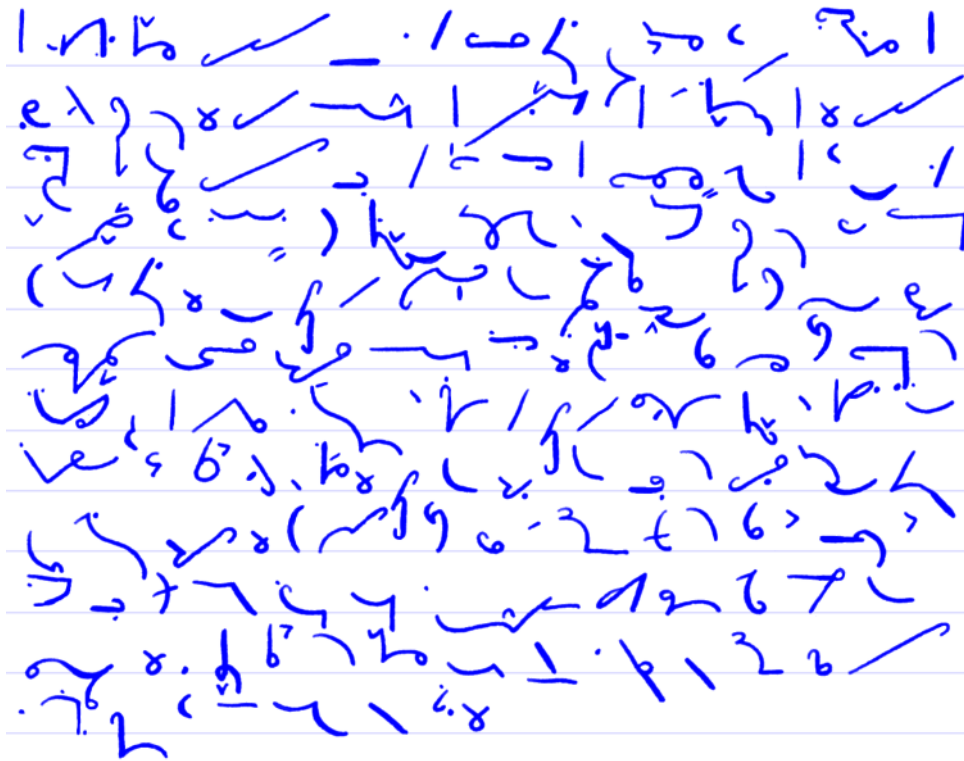
* Omission phrase " mus(t have) been" in order to make a good join

Money

As children, we were once given a large quantity of farthings, which had ceased to be legal tender a few years earlier in 1960. There were four farthings to the old penny (hence the name "fourth-ings"), 12 old pennies made a shilling, and 20 shillings made a pound. This was before the decimalisation of the UK currency in 1971, when the pound became a hundred new pence. In fact I remember that people not only talked about five new pence but also one new pence, a slight contortion of grammar, which fortunately only lasted a short while, until the word "pee" replaced it and its name was one P. We played with the pile of farthings regularly, mostly using

them as counters, or for shopping games, or laid out in lines and patterns on the carpet. We eventually buried most of them at the end of the garden, and in our imagination someone would dig them up in the distant future and be suitably delighted with their find. I hope that some archaeologist in the future does not puzzle over why the owner would want to stash* such valueless coins in the ground.

* "stash" Not in dictionary. Full length Ish goes down after T and upwards after D, and also upwards after these if halved, in order to show the halving

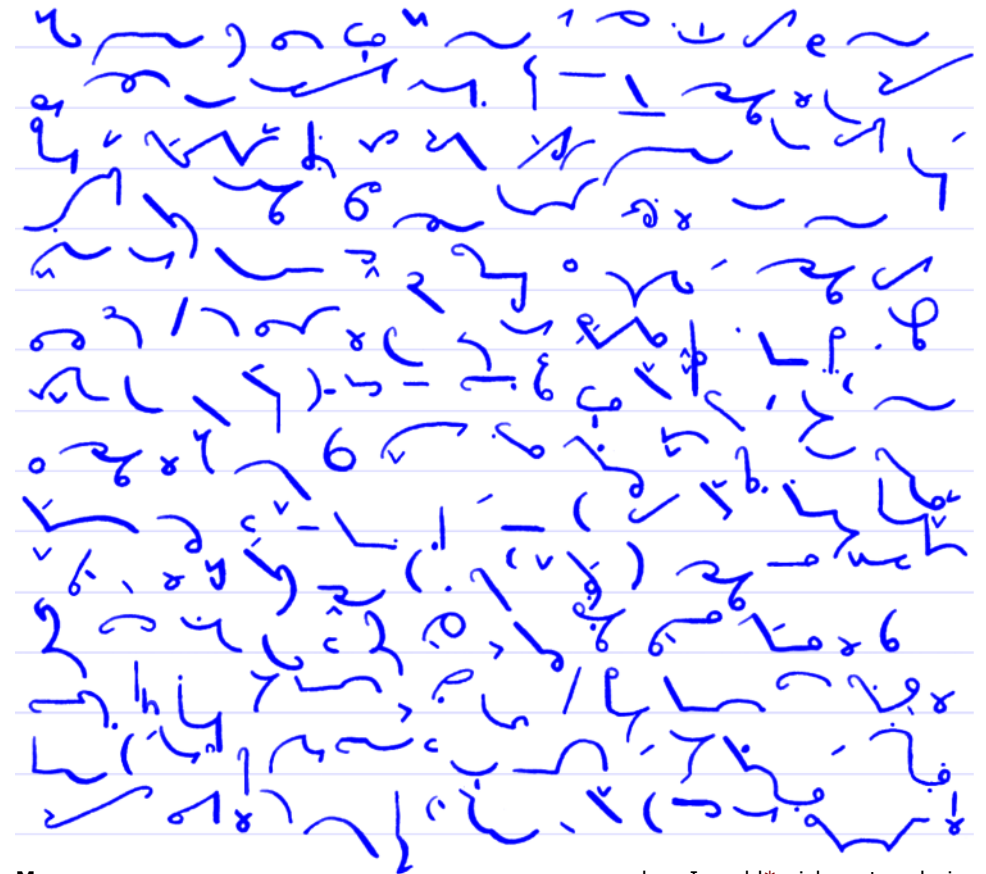


Money

At holiday times we were given a large glass jar full of coins that our grandparents had saved up throughout the year. We counted it, rearranged it, and admired it. We were grateful for this wonderful gift, which occurred again at Christmas, and even at that young age I realised that Nanny was depriving herself of bits of cash throughout the year in order to* collect them in the jar. Young children are well known for endlessly* counting their money, as if it would mysteriously increase if it was counted again. I don't think this means that they are greedy or avaricious, but that it represents a form of control, which children are sorely deprived of, at least* in comparison with the choices open to adults. Children have to wait for gifts or ways of earning, which may be few and far between. They learn that their efforts and work (or

those of the giver of the cash gift) can be converted into a numerical storage system and then exchanged for something else. The desired toys or items now become a possibility* to be worked towards, rather than an empty dream that can never be achieved.

- * Omission phrase "in ord(er to)"
- * "endlessly" Note that "needlessly" which uses full N and D strokes to provide a distinguishing outline
- * "at least" "at last" Always insert the vowel
- * "possibility" Optional contraction

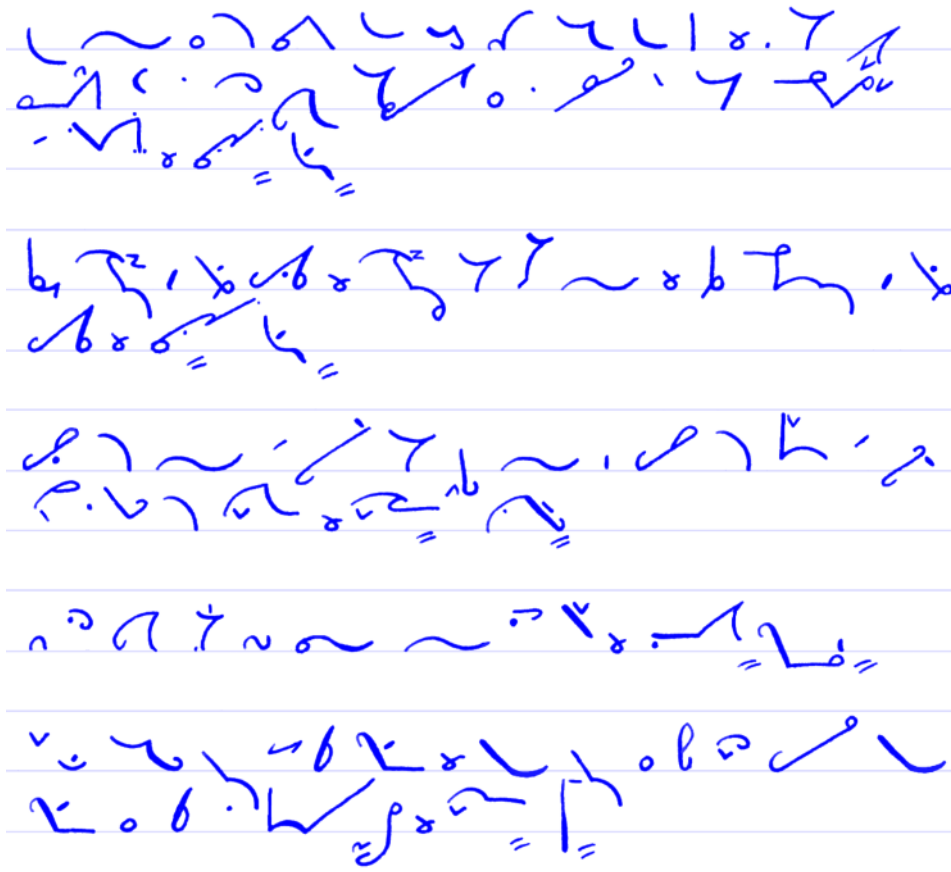


Money

I have been looking through some quotes about money, and the most common one is that money is not the most important* thing in the world and indeed that it can become meaningless. If I were stranded on the proverbial desert island, I would be urgently looking for water, food and shelter before anything else, as well as missing family and friends. Any money lying in the bank account would be forgotten as irrelevant and meaningless, whether the sums were large or small. However, here in the suburbs outside a big city, the necessities of life have to be bought, so I cannot quite agree with those quotes by people who feel that money is meaningless. I think maybe this is like the apples and pears on my trees in previous bumper

years, when I could* pick, eat and give them away by the bagful at any time I chose to. I did not bother counting them, the number that I possessed was meaningless because I knew that there were more than enough, even when there were losses to the birds, snails, slugs and bugs. This carefree attitude continued until I came to the last few, which suddenly became more precious. Taking them off the tree left the garden with no colour and only the bareness and emptiness of winter ahead. Or maybe it was the thought of having to buy them again in the supermarket!

- * Omission phrases "mos(t) important" "in (the) world"
- * "I could" Not phrased, so it is not misread as "I can"



Money

If money is your hope for independence you will never have it. The only real security that a man will have in this world is a reserve of knowledge, experience, and ability. Henry Ford

It is not the employer who pays the wages. Employers only handle the money. It is the customer who pays the wages. Henry Ford

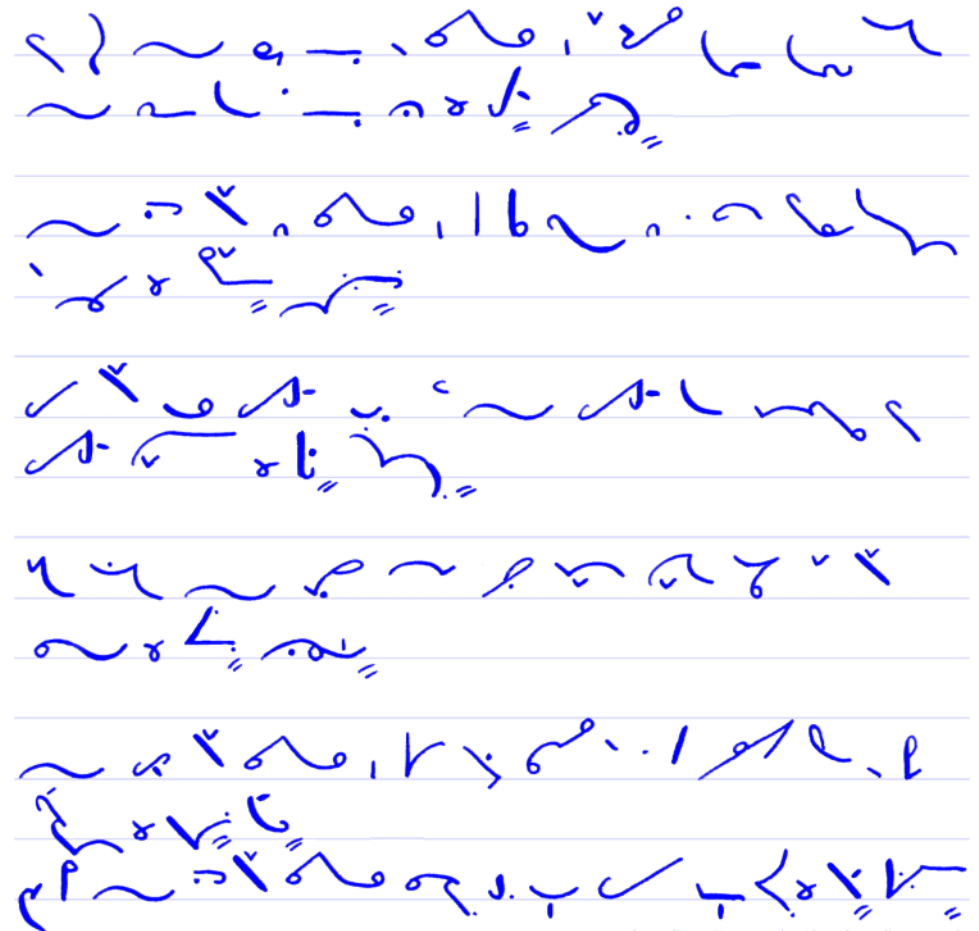
Waste your money and you're only out of money, but waste your time and you've lost a part of your life. Michael LeBoeuf*

You aren't wealthy until you have something money can't buy. Garth* Brooks

I ain't never been poor, just broke. Being poor is a state of mind, whereas being broke is just a temporary situation. Mike Todd

* "LeBoeuf" This French vowel, similar to the one in "turn", is represented by a second place dash parallel to the stroke

* "Garth" The similar name "Gareth" would need the second vowel written in



Money

People say that money is not the key to happiness, but I always figured if you have enough money, you can have a key made. Joan Rivers

Money can't buy you happiness but it does bring you a more pleasant form of misery. Spike Milligan

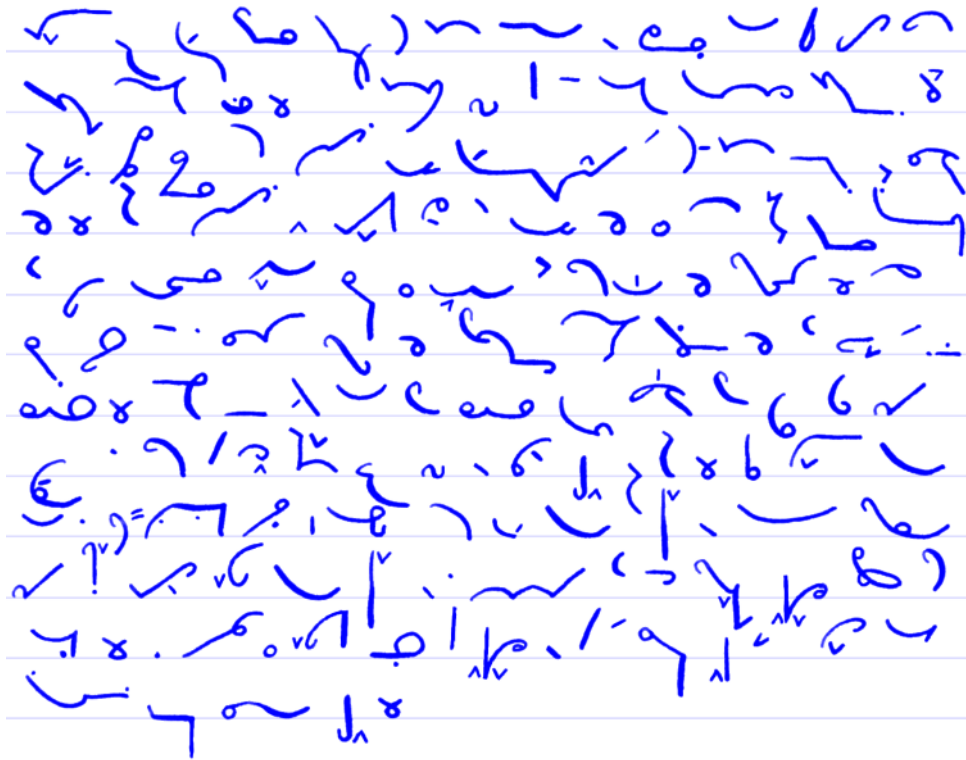
We buy things we don't need with money we don't have to impress people we don't like. Dave Ramsey

I have enough money to last me the rest of my life, unless I buy something. Jackie Mason

Money won't buy happiness, but it will pay the salaries of a large research staff to study the problem. Bill Vaughan

Whoever said money can't buy happiness simply didn't* know where to go shopping. Bo Derek (1075 words)

* "Didn't" is a contracted outline, in effect it reads "dint" and must have the vowel. Without the vowel, it is "did not".



Something Easy

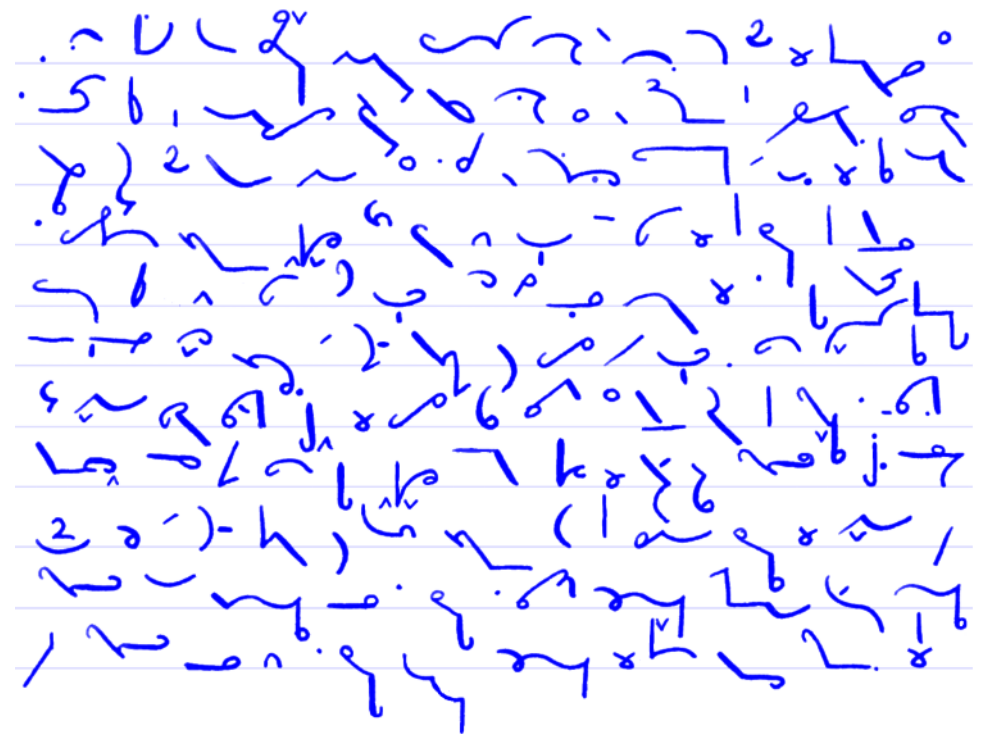
I like to have four blogs per month so I am going to squeeze in just one more before the month ends. I am sure you have had quite enough for the moment* of practising points of theory such as the hooks or learning new vocabulary and so I am keeping to the simple words. Although learning how to write lots of new words is important, I think the biggest factor* that will increase writing speed is knowing all the very common words perfectly. Most speaking uses quite a small number of words over and over* again, mainly the basic words that create and connect sentences. Because they come up in every sentence, if you stumble over these, then you are losing a very large amount of time whenever you have to slow down to think

of them. It is like being in a three-legged race, but instead of your foot being tied to another person, you are trying to run while being tied to a memory that cannot provide the outlines as fast as they are needed. The result is wild guesses at outlines, too large and spread out on the line in the panic to get something down.

* Omission phrase "for (the) moment"

* "factor" Keep the R Hook clear, as "fact" has a similar meaning

* Omission phrase "over (and) over again" The second "over" is reversed to make a good join



Something Easy

The mad dash for high speed should not be the normal method of improving your shorthand. It can be used as an occasional test, but in between I believe the best method is to work on reasonably* simple passages, so that the shorthand being written has a chance to remain correct and neat. It is never a waste of time* to practise outlines that you believe you know quite well. At speed, it becomes clear just how well they are known, or not as the case may be. A difficult part of the dictation can cause the mind to freeze, and so the better the easy ones are known, the more likely it is that the writing will not be slowed down. Once this habit has become established, it provides a solid background against which the more difficult outlines can be dealt with. Both of these paragraphs

contain exactly 200 words and so it should be easy for you to practise them at certain speeds. Writing each paragraph in two minutes gives a speed of a hundred words a minute, and taking four minutes on each paragraph gives you a speed of fifty words a minute. Time to begin* practising! (400 words)

* "reasonably" Insert the last vowel, as "reasonable" could also make sense

* Omission phrases "was(te of) time" "words (a) minute"

* "to begin" Based on the short form phrase "to be", similarly "to become"