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Blogs - 2016 - January

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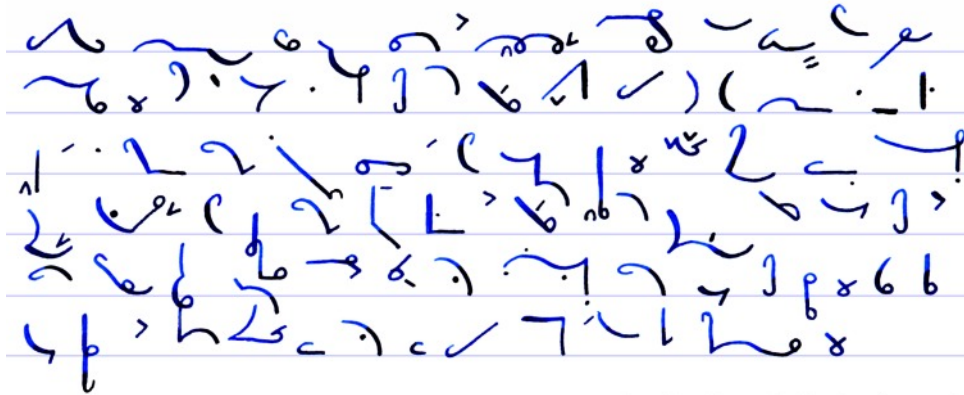
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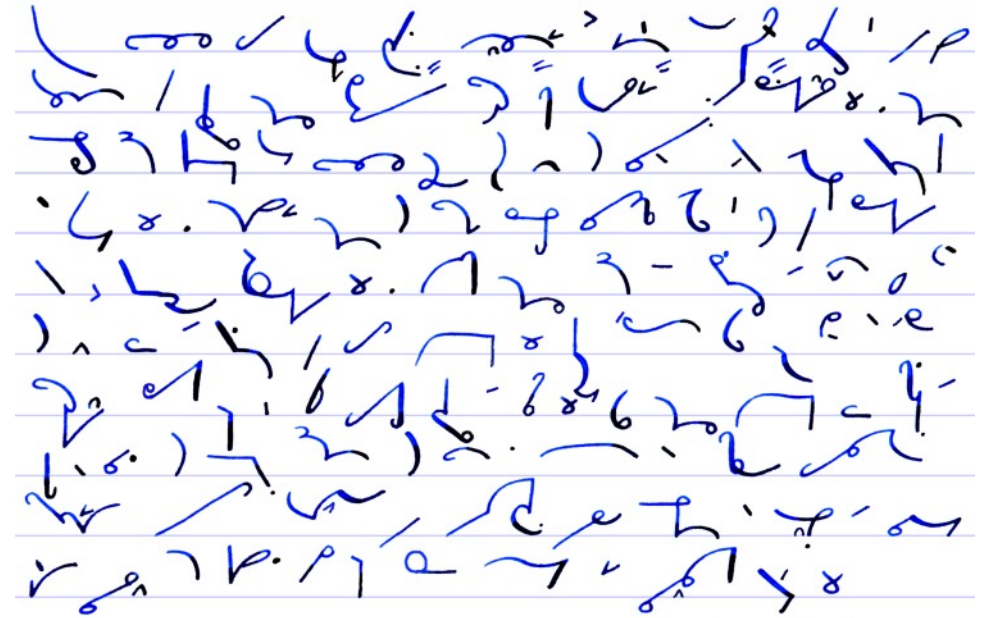


Rooms

We have been making efforts to visit some of the museums and exhibitions in London over recent months. They are all only a train or bus ride away, so they make a good day out and a break from the computer screen and other indoor duties. I find the journey equally interesting, seeing

various other districts from the top deck of the bus or zooming past in the train, all the more pleasant at this time of year because of the hot air emanating from under the train seats. This does have the disadvantage of the shock of the cold air when we get off at the terminus.

Blank lined paper for writing.



Rooms

After Christmas we visited the Geffrye Museum of the Home in Shoreditch, which has been on our list for some time, which displays rooms as they were furnished during various centuries. The room exhibitions were decorated for the Christmas season, so that made us hurry up and visit before it all changed. The earliest room was from the sixteen hundreds, and then on through each century, up to the beginning of this century. The older rooms were quite sparse and my first thought was how cold and bare each one looked. It was not the norm then to have lots* of soft furniture as we do today, but just wooden tables and chairs. These rooms looked cold, draughty and difficult to heat, so keeping warm was more a matter

of dressing oneself appropriately*, rather than following our relatively recent custom of insulating and heating the whole house, or at least* as much of it as we can* manage on the household budget.

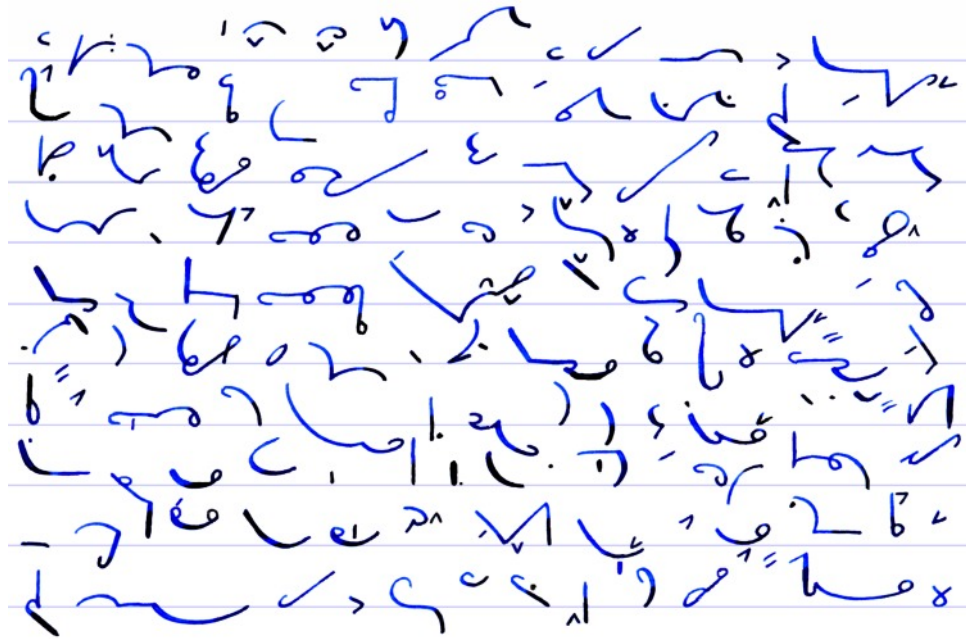
* "lots" and "masses" Insert vowel as these are similar in outline and meaning

* "appropriately" and "properly" Insert vowel as these are similar in outline and meaning

* "As we can" SW circle used for "as we"

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

Blank lined paper for writing.



Rooms

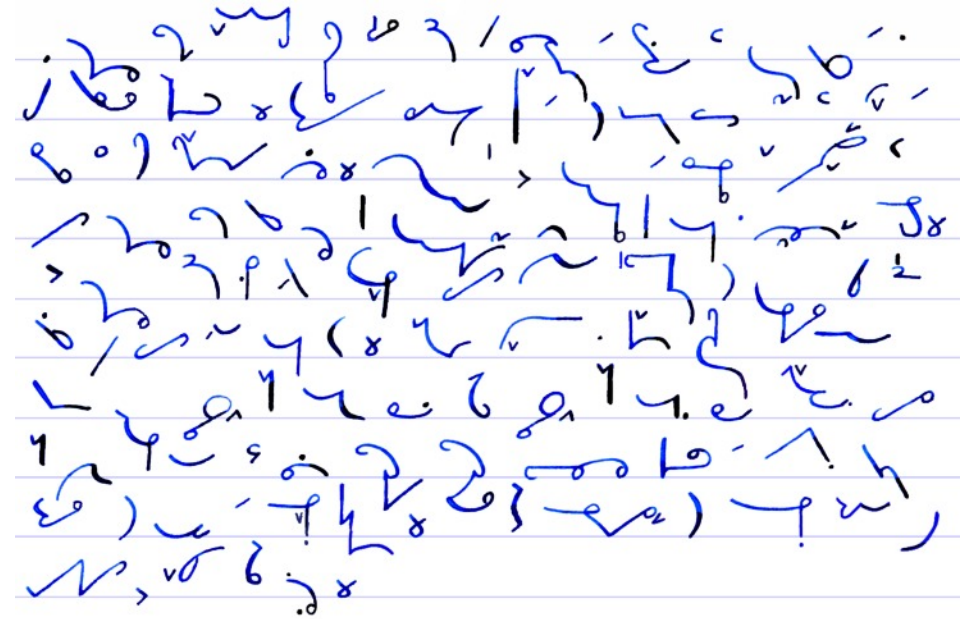
With chilly rooms on my mind, I was relieved when we came to the Victorian drawing room, with its thick curtains, carpet, and heavy velvet tablecloth, and at last* I felt this was somewhere that would keep the winter cold out and enable the family to enjoy Christmas in front of the fire. It was in this era* that houses began to have decorated Christmas trees, popularised by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, so this was the first room to show the beginnings of this tradition. Cleaning up the dust and the crumbs from afternoon tea would not have been so easy, without the convenience of a hand-held vac to speed things along, but it did have a cosy

and friendly atmosphere and one could imagine songs being sung around the upright piano and the Noah's Ark toys on the table making their way to the floor in order to* play out their stories and adventures.

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

* "era" Insert vowels to prevent misreading as "year"

* Omission phrase "in ord(er to)"



Rooms

The rooms from the nineteen thirties onwards were much simpler and plainer, with fewer pieces and a general absence of decoration. They were certainly tidy and easy to keep clean, with light and space as their primary aims. Moving on to the fifties and sixties, I realised that our own rooms from past years had eventually made it into a museum exhibition. All the rooms were set up alongside one long corridor, so visitors just walked past each one, not into them. I felt like a time traveller going back

to visit houses I had never seen and then houses I had indeed seen, and finally ones I had lived in, with the same furniture, furnishings, Christmas decorations and wrapping paper that was so new and exciting at the time. Although the experience was interesting, I would not wish to return to the style of those eras*.

* "eras" Insert vowels to prevent misreading as "years"



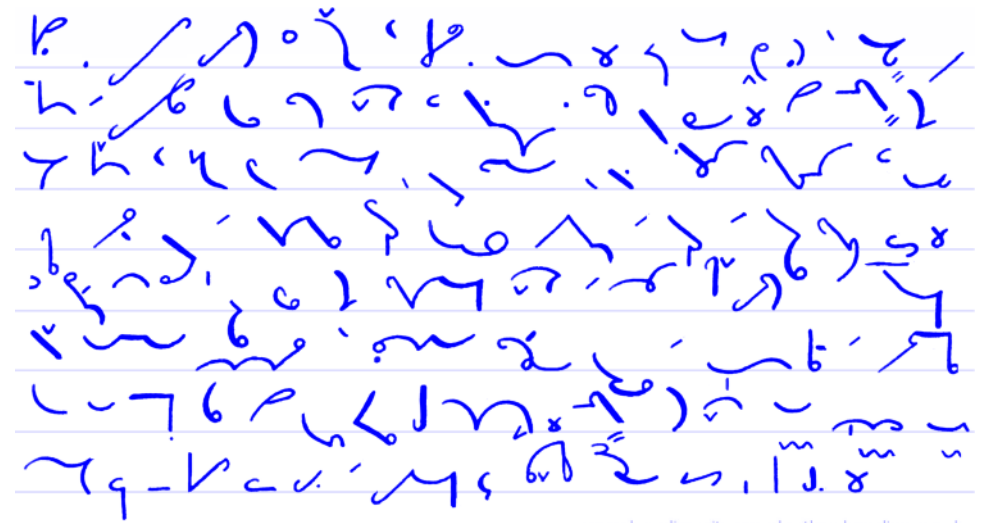
Rooms

Now that we have such a wide variety of styles to choose from, and considering the ease with which we can re-create past styles according* to our own taste, it is difficult to know what a future museum might exhibit to typify our current possessions. I am sure they are at this very moment acquiring items for future displays, as once a style goes out of fashion, it is generally shunned for a while, resulting in loss and destruction, until it is far enough back in time to become someone's exciting retro find, a fond reminiscence or item of

nostalgia. The few remaining pieces suddenly gain in desirability and value, because the majority have been disposed of as outdated and unwanted. I like to see these historical re-creations, using real pieces from the past, but I am glad to be able to return to convenient, clean, warm modernity. (721 words)

* "according to" Write both outlines. Compare with the omission phrase "according (to) the"

Blank lined paper for writing practice.



Finally Winter

At last the winter weather has arrived that deserves the name. Here in the south east of England our autumn and winter months have been very mild, with barely a frost to be seen. Last October was the only time that I have ever managed to put the garden to bed absolutely perfectly, with new trees, rose bushes and bulbs planted, fences repaired and painted, and paths pressure cleaned. What spurred me on to these efforts was the prolonged* mild and mostly dry weather, accompanied by nagging memories of smarting frozen* fingers and numb toes, and regrets for not

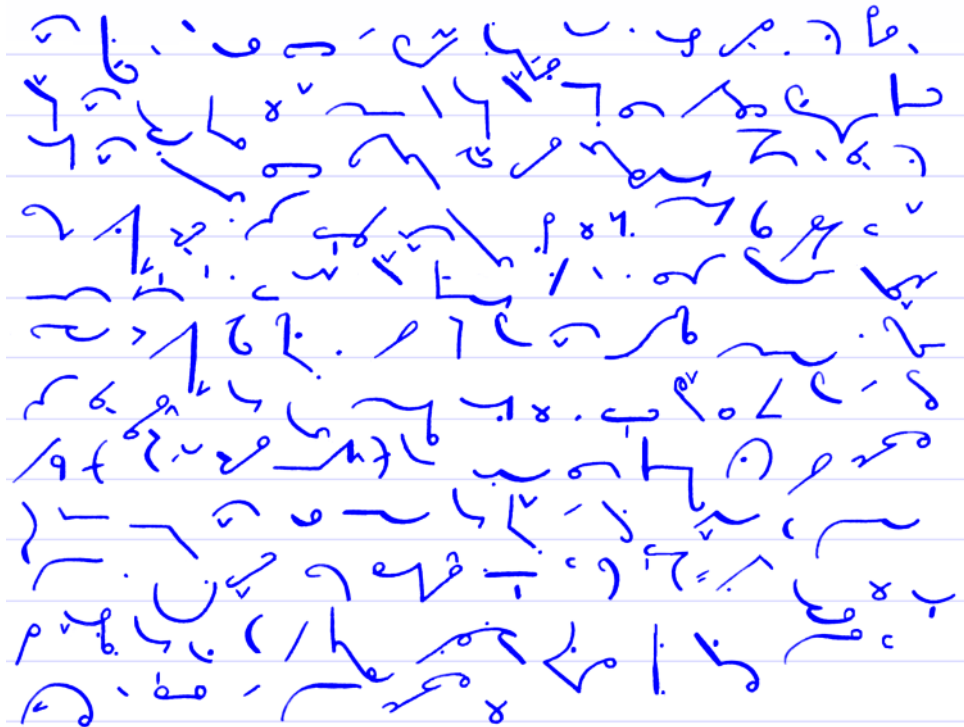
getting those last few jobs done earlier. October was my "any moment now" month, when it could turn cold, wet and windy without the slightest warning - but it didn't*.)

* "prolonged" Stroke Ing cannot be halved

* "frozen" and "freezing" Insert vowel to prevent misreading

* "didn't" Inserting the vowel is necessary. Without the vowel it is "did not"

Blank lined paper for writing practice.

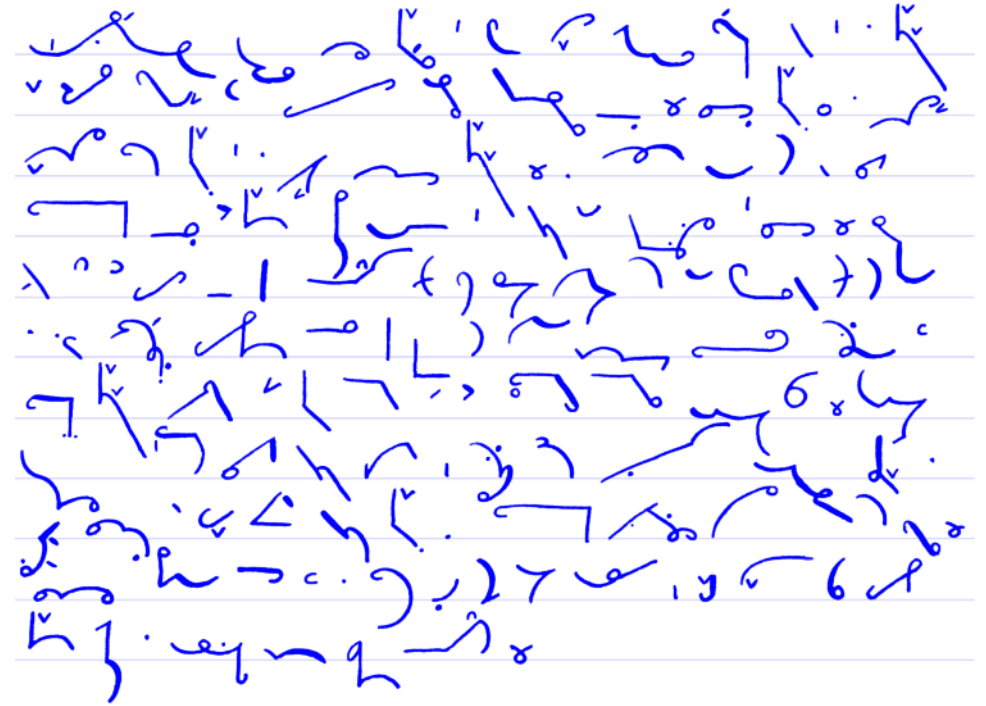


Finally Winter

My devotion to all things green and flowery evaporates in an instant once the air starts to bite my fingertips. I make up for it by getting some replacement floral decoration onto my computer screen wallpaper and find ways of persuading the column of hot air from the radiator to waft a little closer to my computer seat. I did manage this recently, when I came home on a cold night, by tucking the edge of a small blanket behind the corner of the radiator and then draping the rest of it over my shoulders, making a perfect little hot house for the few minutes needed. The glove

supply is checked over and plans are considered (although not always carried out*) for knitting some decorative lacy wrist warmers so that I can keep my hands going for the typing and pen writing without looking like a fishwife from centuries ago with their cloth-wrapped fingers. No such niceties for the feet, though, which at present resemble shapeless teddy bear's legs, with layers of socks and leg warmers.

* "carried out" Halving to represent the T



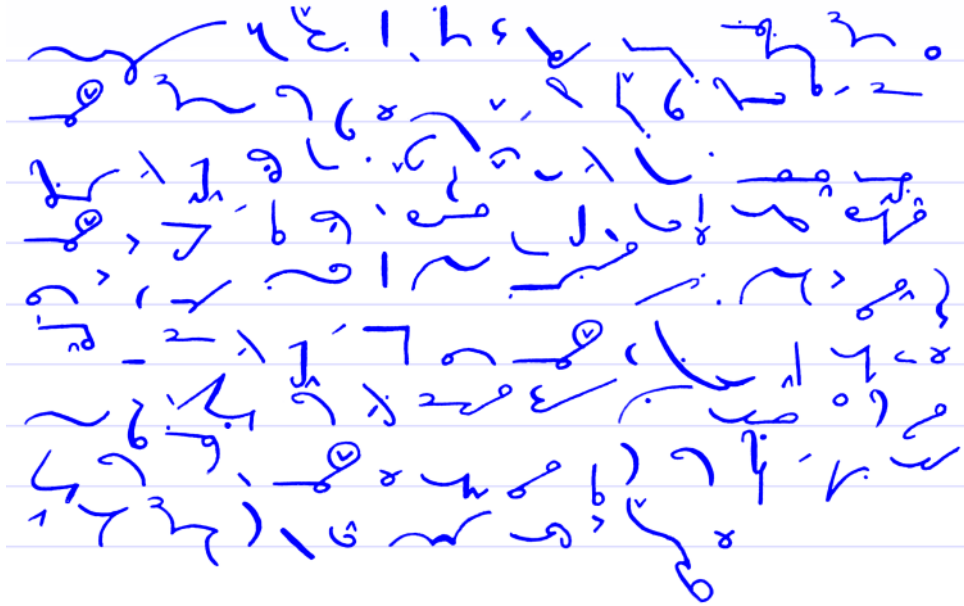
Finally Winter

Unresponsive fingers means typos on every line and, having been brought up on a typewriter, I always appreciate that wonderful indispensable backspace key. Screen typing is a million miles from typing on a real mechanical typewriter. The most important* thing was to hit the correct keys all the time, as it was ink on paper, not pixels on screen. Speeding up beyond what one could do accurately (through skill level or hand flexibility) was a complete and frustrating waste of time*, because it took so long to make the corrections, erasing with a gritty typewriter rubber on the top copy and all the carbon copies

underneath as well. Fortunately the firm's glossy headed paper helped, but erasures were rarely* invisible, despite a judicious smear of white chalk before typing the correct replacement letters or numbers. Sometimes starting again with a fresh sheet was the only answer but I did not like this wasted time and it was an incentive to improve first-time accuracy.

* Omission phrases "mos(t) important" "was(te of) time"

* "rarely" Vowel advisable, as it is similar to "really"



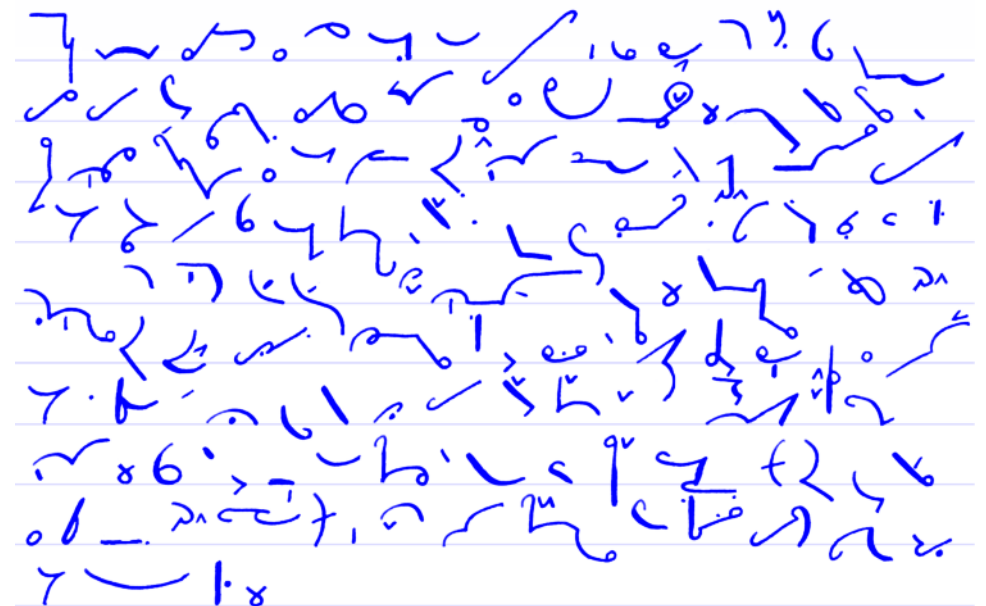
Finally Winter

Many years later, I have finally had to admit that the best way* of keeping extremities warm is exercise, warming from within. Maybe I should stop typing this paragraph and walk briskly up and down the stairs for a while, but that might end up being an excuse to extend* the exercise to the kitchen and its store of snacks, if done too often! In past centuries, some of the old country mansions had long galleries running the length of the house, so that the occupants could walk up and down and get some exercise without venturing out into the cold. Many of these

originated from open walkways that were later enclosed, as their use changed from access to exercise. No doubt the house itself was very draughty and chilly anyway, and the only warmth was to be found immediately in front of the fireplaces.

* Omission phrase "bes(t) way"

* "extend" Keep the T vertical, so it does not look like "expand" which has a similar meaning



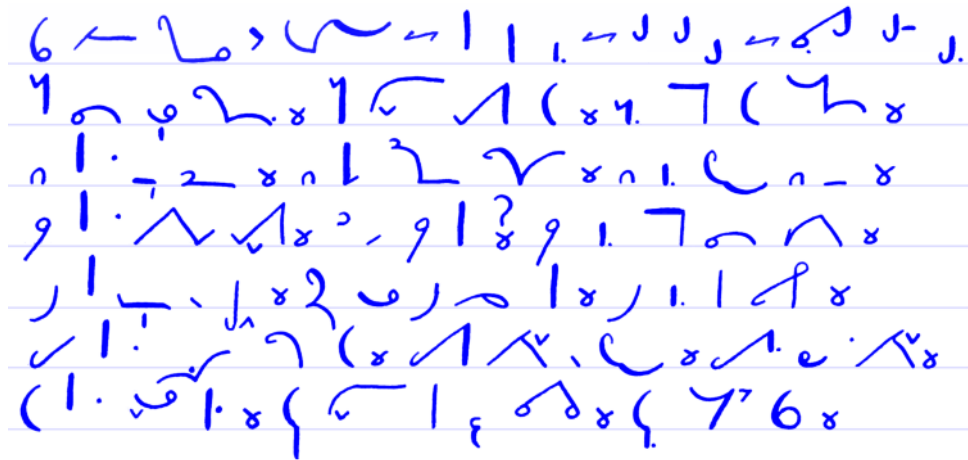
Finally Winter

Activity to improve the circulation is most needed in winter but if it is snowy or icy, then picking one's way over the slippery surfaces hardly counts as sufficient exercise. Maybe the best place to stretch the muscles properly is in the local shopping mall, walking up and down the galleries where the only falls are those into the temptation to buy a big fleecy scarf, a well padded hat with added earmuffs, or cosy faux fur lined mukluk boots. Backdrops and posters around the shop showing wintry landscapes add to the sense of urgency*, despite the fact that the* snow outside is really only a dusting and may even be rained away by the time I emerge

from the mall. This is all to the good in terms of being able to stride energetically (especially if the bus is just coming around the corner), but my little triumphs over adverse weather will have to wait until another day. (771 words)

* "urgency" Optional contraction. Full outline has N stroke, not a hook

* Omission phrase "despite the (f)act that the". Keep the "fact" part very close underneath, so it is clear that it is not an outline from the line below.



Had Do Did

This article practises all the following: had, do, did - had not, do not, did not - hadn't, don't, didn't

I had some notes from him. I do like to read them. I did get them in time.

You had a good week. You do the work very well*. You did everything you could.

He had a report to write. What should he do? He did get some help.

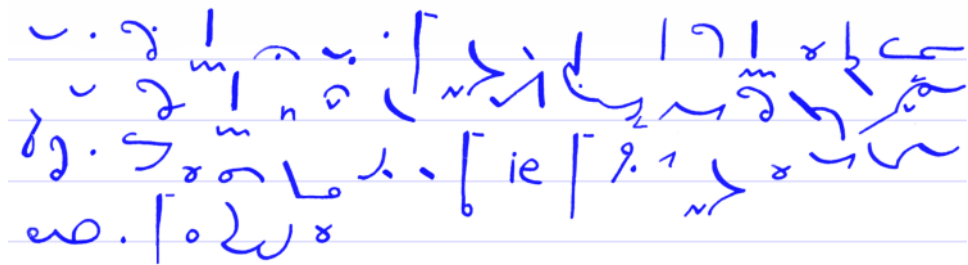
She had to go to town. There were* things she must do. She did it yesterday.

We had an email* from them. We do reply to everything. We did send a reply.

They had a nice day. They do like it when that happens. They did enjoy themselves.

* Omission phrases "very (w)ell" "there (w)ere"

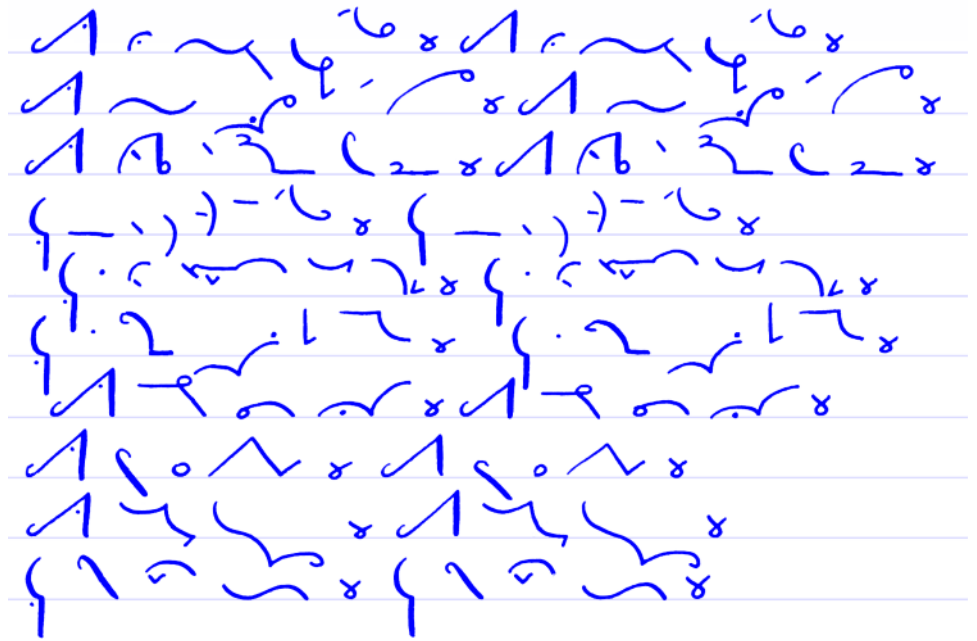
* "email" and "mail" Always insert the first vowel



Had Do Did

In a phrase "had" may need a dot vowel to differentiate it from "do". It would be quicker to just not phrase the "had" but you might have already written the phrase

before realising there is a clash. Some books show two dots i.e. dot hay and the vowel. In the following sentences, the dot is essential.



Had Do Did

We had let many people visit the office. We do let many people visit the office.

We had many emails and letters. We do many emails and letters.

We had loads of work every week. We do loads of work every week.

They had come to see us quite often. They do come to see us quite often.

They had a lot of crime in the area. They do a lot of crime in the area.

They had a very good meal at the café. They do a very good meal at the café.

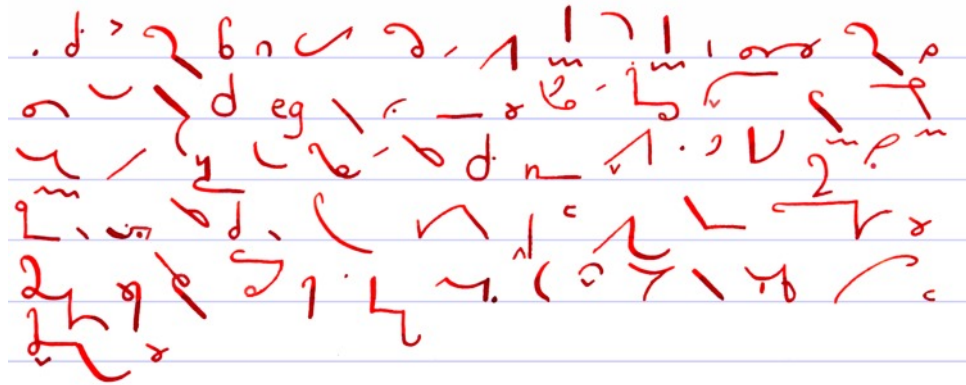
We had expected some mail. We do expect some mail.

We had believed his report. We do believe his report.

We had informed the foreman. We do inform the foreman.

They had remembered my name. They do remember my name.

Five horizontal lines for handwriting practice.



Had Do Did

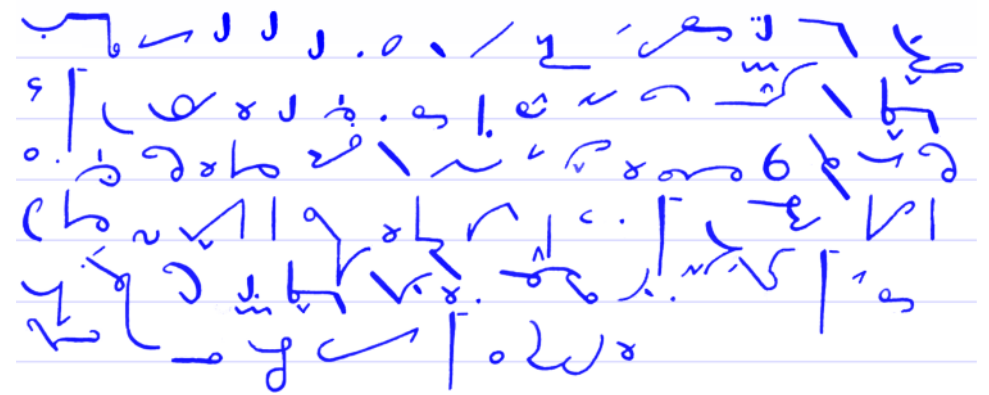
The tense of the verb tells you whether the phrase should read "had" or "do" but sometimes the verb is the same in both tenses e.g. put, let, come. Short forms and contractions like "believe" "expect" "inform" are identical for present and past tenses, but you can write a short dash through the last stroke to indicate the past tense, to further help out with reading back correctly. There is no time to consider* possible clashes during a dictation, and indeed they might only be noticed later on when transcribing*.

* "past tense" This method should only be used on contractions or short forms, or alternative write the outline in full strokes. See https://www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand.org.uk/contractions-intro.htm#past_tenses

* Omission phrase "to (con)sider"

* "transcribing" This and its derivatives omit the second R, so it does not look like "describe"

Blank lined paper for practice.



Had Do Did

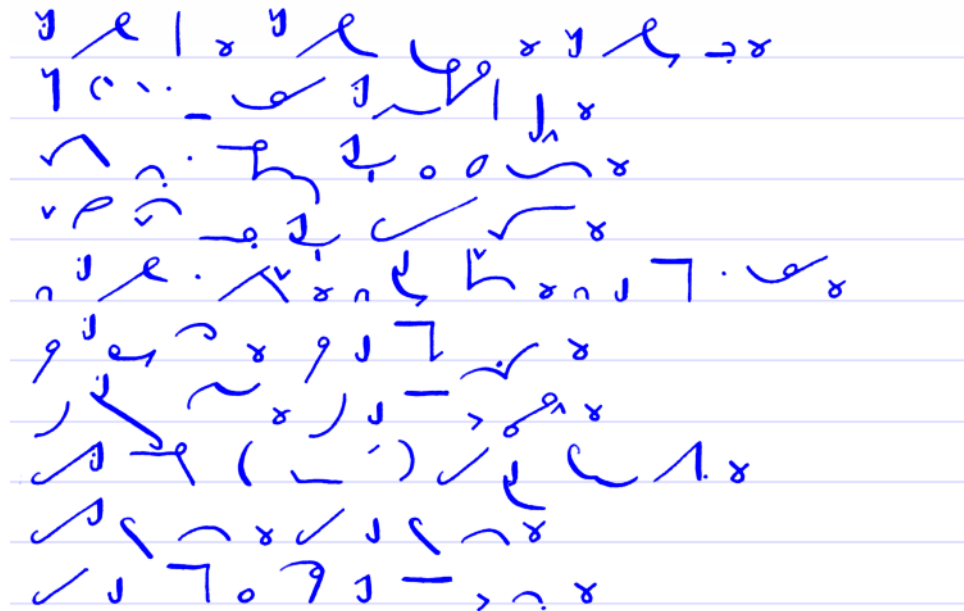
NEGATIVES "had not, do not, did not". The first two are identical, and once again* "had not"* can be vocalised with the dot if necessary. "Did not" omits the second D sound and would more accurately be described as an omission phrase. It must always be written on the line. Sometimes this is possible in the phrase, other times you have to write it separately. It cannot be helped out with a dot vowel, because

that would turn it into the apostrophe version "didn't" described below. The examples show the optional dot and the second paragraph gives instances where the dot is essential.

* Omission phrase "wun(s) again"

* "had not" Showing the two dots

Blank lined paper for practice.



Had Do Did

I had not received it. I do not receive visitors. I did not receive the gift.

He had not seen the man. He did not get the email.

I had thought of a good answer and had not written it down.

She had not been there* long. She did not go to the house.

I will be meeting a customer and do not know his first name.

We had not expected them to come and so we did not have everything ready.

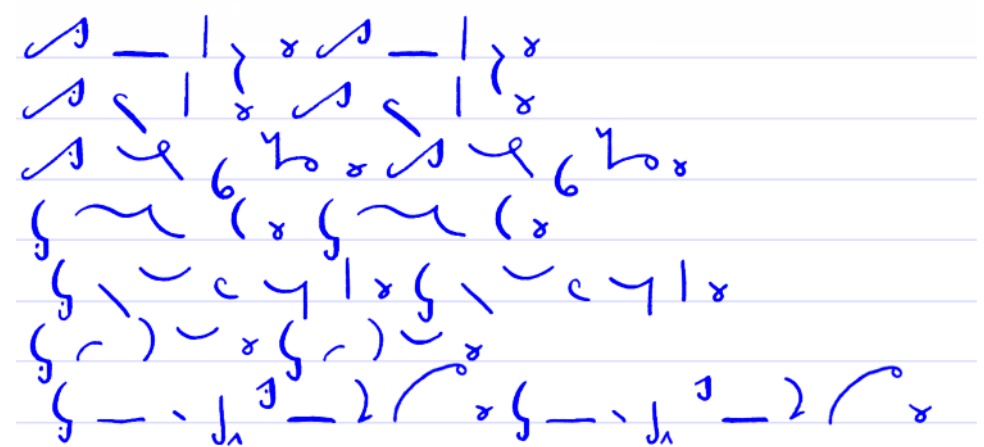
I lost my keys and did not know where to look.

We do not believe him. We did not believe him.

You had not received a reply. You do not have the time. You did not get an answer.

We did not get his message and did not go to the meeting.

* "been there" Doubling for "there"



Had Do Did

We had not given it to them. We do not give it to them.

They had not put any effort into it. They do not put any effort into it.

We had not believed it. We do not believe it.

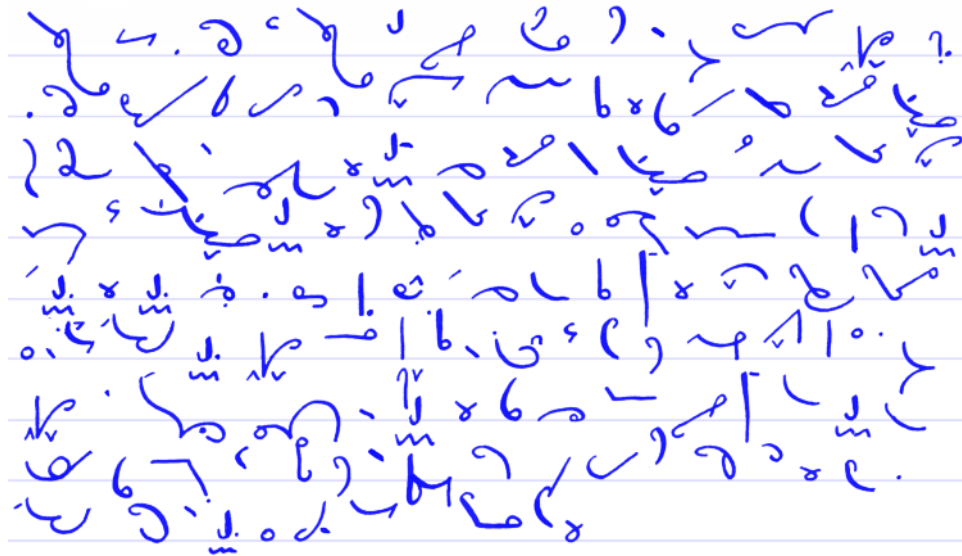
They had not let us in. They do not let us in.

We had not inspected these items. We do not inspect these items.

They had not come to town and had not given us the letters. They do not come to town and do not give us the letters.

They had not manufactured them. They do not manufacture them.

Blank lines for additional notes or practice.



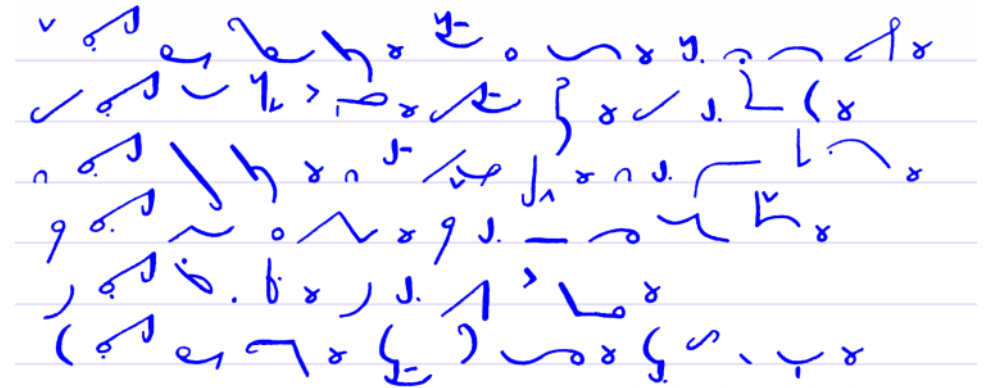
Had Do Did

APOSTROPHES The versions with apostrophes do not use the short forms, they are all full normal outlines, treating the phrase as if it were just one word, like the longhand does. These are best always vocalised, so that there is no possibility* of misreading. "Don't" must always be vocalised and is written above the line to match with the unvocalised "do not". Their position above the line is simply to make them different from "did not" and "didn't". "Didn't" omits the second D sound and must have its dot. My personal preference is to avoid* the official "didn't" outline because

it adds to confusion with the other three and instead write it as a full outline, a formation similar to "trident". This means I can use the dot for "did not" if necessary, thus keeping that set of three all distinct from each other whether they are phrased or not. However, the official version of "didn't" is shown in the blogs.

* "possibility" Optional contraction

* "avoid" and "evade" Always insert the second vowel, as these have similar outlines and meanings



Had Do Did

I hadn't seen the person before. I don't know his name. I didn't meet him yesterday.

He hadn't written his report. He didn't give himself enough time.

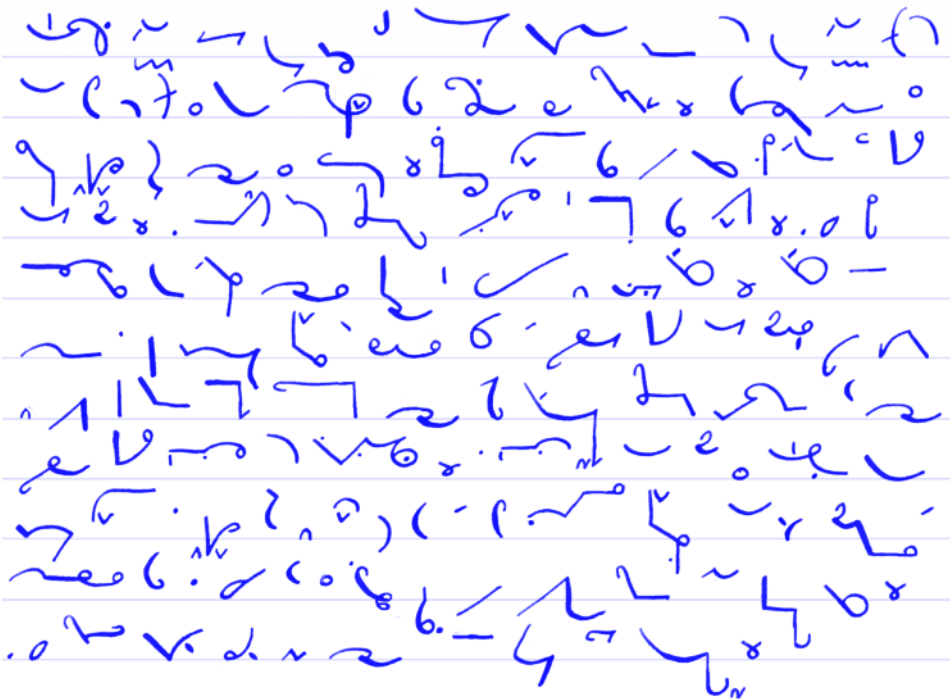
We hadn't any idea of the cost. We don't know what it was. We didn't ask them.

She hadn't passed the test. She didn't read all the books.

You hadn't been there* before. You don't recognise the town. You didn't look at the map.

They hadn't seen the group. They don't know their names. They didn't want to know.

* "been there" Doubling for "there"



Had Do Did

UNPHRASED "NOT" If the two words do not naturally belong together, or if the "not" (or any other word) is being emphasised, then phrasing is not appropriate*. They must be* written as separate outlines so that the meaning is clear. Constructions like this are best set off with dashes in the shorthand. The accuracy of your transcription relies on getting this right. The first set of examples have opposite meanings, depending* on where you indicate the pauses. Pauses can make a difference to many other* types of sentence as well, and using the dash in the shorthand notes will help you read it back, get the correct meaning and then punctuate the transcript to reflect that meaning, using dashes, commas or parentheses. A comma in shorthand is unsafe, being too much like an outline, although you might see them and other marks typeset in old shorthand books and magazines within a story that has conversations, but these are reading practice and not dictation pieces. The first

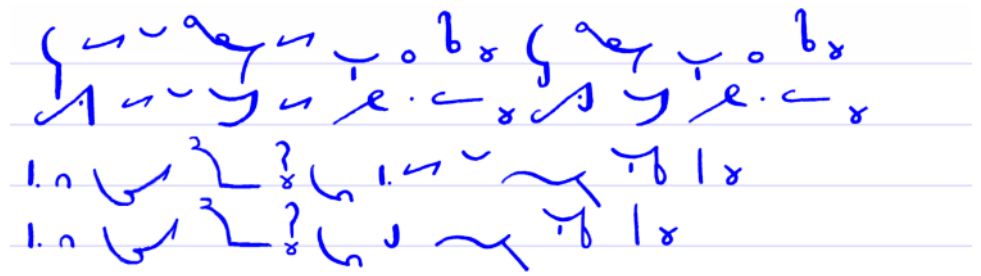
paragraph below shows how the meaning can change according to the* punctuation.

* "appropriate" and "proper" Insert vowel as these are similar in outline and meaning

* Omission phrases "they mus(t) be" "many oth(er)" "accord(ing to) the"

* "depending" Keep the Ing clearly full length, to prevent misreading as "dependent"

- dependent = adjective, hanging down, or relying on for support
- independent = adjective, not relying on anything or anyone
- independence = noun, freedom of action
- dependant = noun, a person who depends on another



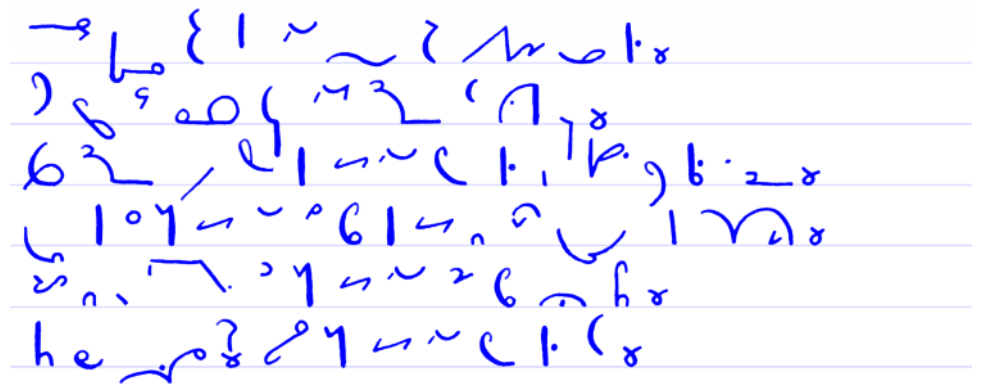
Had Do Did

They do, not surprisingly, know his address.
They do not, surprisingly, know his address.

Did you finish the work? If you did, not many people noticed it.

We had, not unusually, received a call. We had not, unusually, received a call.

Did you finish the work? If you did not, many people noticed it.



Had Do Did

Because of the difficulties that they had, not many of them returned the next day.

I want you to copy what I do, not what the others may tell you.

They are pleased with the success they had, not the work that led to it.

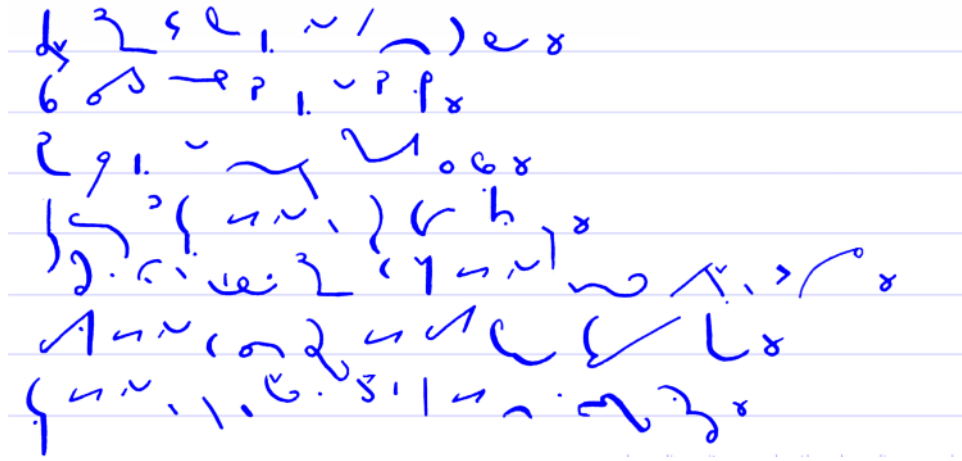
Do you send emails? Yes, I do, not every day though.

This is the work our staff do, not every day but at least* three days a week.

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

If you do as I do, not as the others do, you might* finish it earlier.

* "might" is best not phrased, to prevent misreading as "may"



Had Do Did

Despite the work that the staff did, not much improvement was seen.

There is a lot of unseen work that I do, not to mention replying to all the letters.

This happened because of what he did, not what he said.

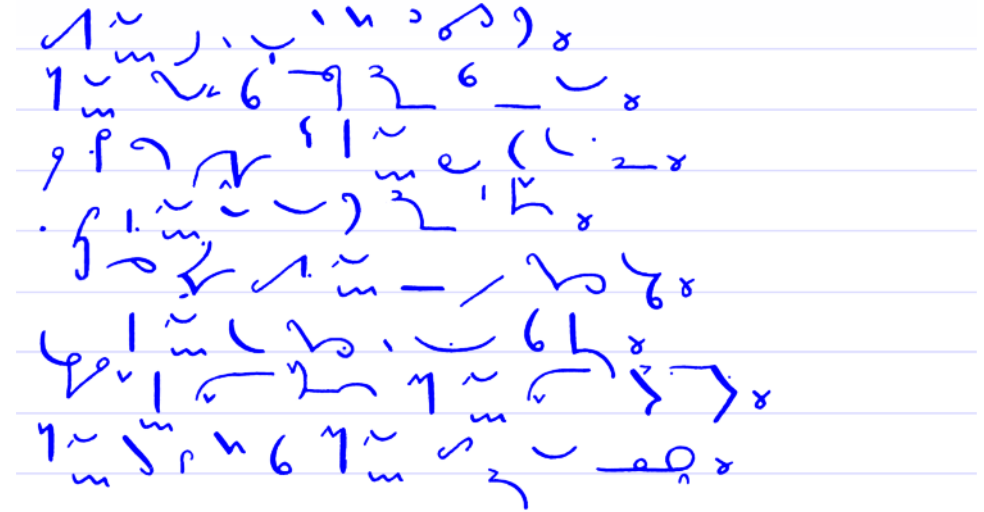
We had, not without some suspicion, watched everything they were doing.

Whatever he did, not many people appreciated his efforts.

They had, not to put too fine a point on it, made a great number of errors.

It was clear what they did, not to say that they will admit to it.

Blank lined area for writing.



Had Do Did

We do NOT wish to know all about what happened there.

Most assuredly we did NOT give our permission for this.

I do NOT appreciate this extra work that has come in.

Visitors do NOT have permission to enter this door.

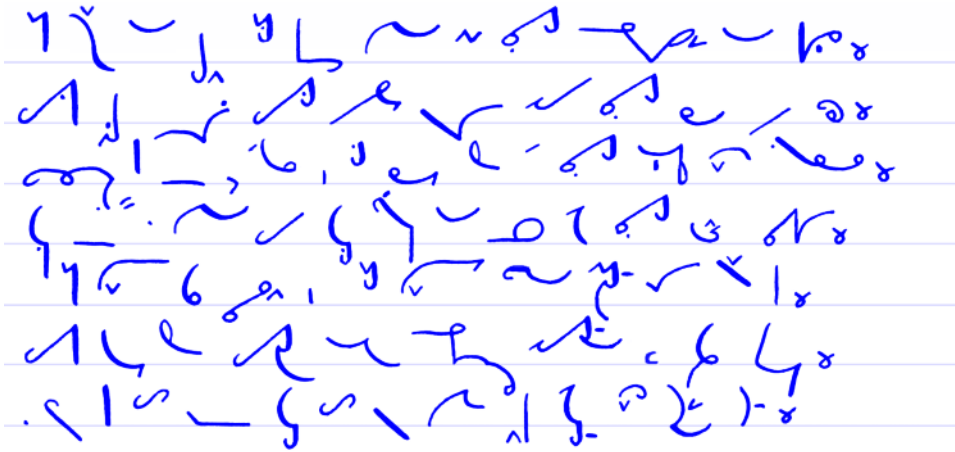
He said very loudly that he had NOT seen them for a week.

I DO like ice cream and I do NOT like boiled cabbage.

The children did NOT hand in their work on time.

I had NOT been told about this and I do NOT want to hear any excuses.

Blank lined area for writing.



Had Do Did

Miscellaneous practice:

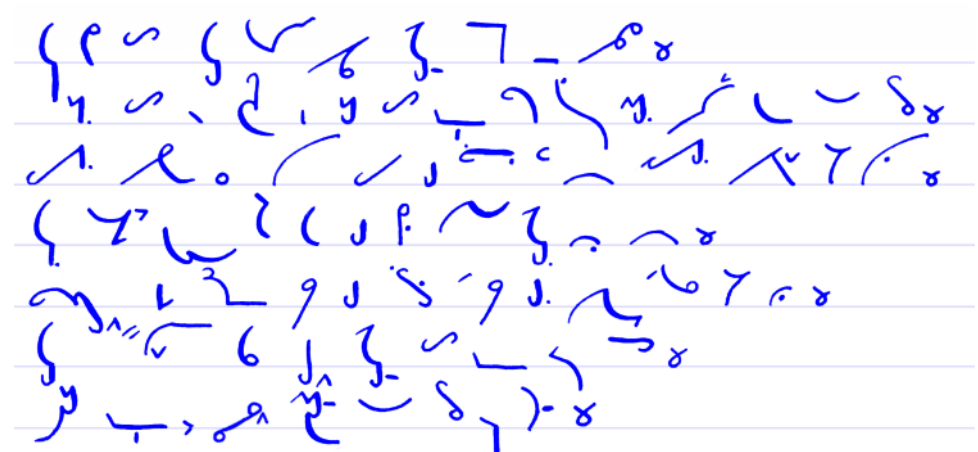
I had arrived in town, I had not taken long, and I hadn't experienced any delays.

We had eaten the meal, we had not received the bill and we hadn't seen our friends.

Mr Smith had come to the office but had not seen the staff and hadn't noticed my absence.

They had come a long way, they had not brought any cases and they hadn't found the hotel.

Horizontal lines for handwriting practice.



Had Do Did

They do as they want, they do not follow the rules and they don't get good results.

I did want to travel, but I did not want to go very far and I didn't really have any plans.

We did receive his letter, we did not agree with him and we didn't reply until later.

Horizontal lines for handwriting practice.

They did enjoy the evening although they did not stay long and they didn't meet him.

Mr Brown did the work, he did not complain and he didn't leave the office until late.

They do not like this town and they don't want to come here again.

I do not wish to go to the house and I don't have any plans to do so.



Had Do Did

If you do not see the staff this morning, they might think you don't care about them.

Do not lose any time and don't forget to take your books.

If you do not understand, then don't hesitate to ask me and don't forget to write it down.

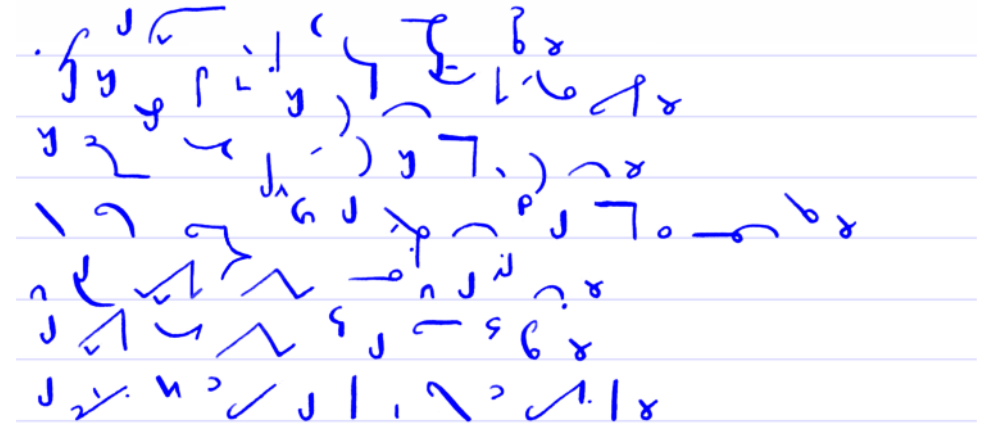
We do not have a lot of time and I don't believe we should stay too long.

We do not have to come to the office tomorrow and we don't think it will be necessary.

The people do not speak the language and they don't know what is being said.

The men do not want to work there and we don't know what we should do about it.

Blank lined paper for writing practice.



Had Do Did

The children do not like to eat that food because they don't know what it is.

You do not have to write the report because you did not attend the meeting.

I do not understand at all why I did not see him at the office yesterday.

Do not write in the report that he did not agree with the others.

I do not work in that town and so I did not get to see him.

Do not worry about what we did not do, but remember what we did do. (1958 words)

Be very careful that you do not upset him, as he did not get his exam pass.

Blank lined paper for writing practice.

Handwritten shorthand notes in blue ink on lined paper. The notes are dense and cover most of the page. Some legible words include "1990" and "just".

Just Checking

A little while ago I watched a television programme about the Hubble Space Telescope, going through the history of its design, construction and launch, but the most memorable part of the programme was the discovery of the fault with the primary mirror. I saw the looks of puzzlement on the faces of those gathered around the monitor, way back in 1990, who were waiting for a wonderfully* crisp view of the stars, when the picture showed up fuzzy and indistinct, and then the incredulity and realisation that something somewhere was very wrong. The press conferences were polite but strained, and the voices of those explaining were thin and subdued, attempting to speak in unemotional flat tones to cover their

dismay, which had completely replaced the former bubbly enthusiasm. After the blame finding and blame shifting had died down somewhat, ideas for correcting the distortion were invited, discussed and decided upon. Three years later, correcting mirrors and other optical instruments were installed and the scientists finally had their long-awaited sharp focus pictures of deep space in all its glorious detail.

* "wonderfully" The short form covers both "wonderful" and "wonderfully" but as both make sense here, the L stroke needs to be added. When an adjective comes after the "wonderfully" then it will always need clarifying in this way.

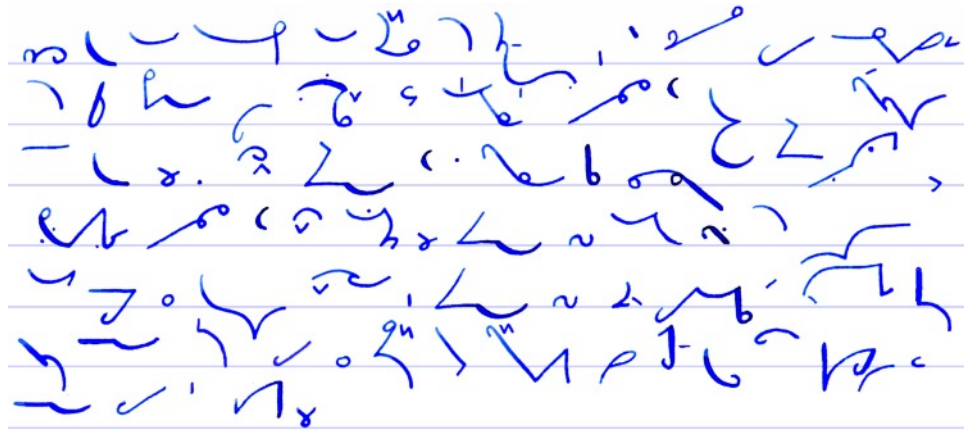
Handwritten shorthand notes in blue ink on lined paper. The notes are dense and cover most of the page. Some legible words include "25", "just", and "WST".

Just Checking

What reminded me of this was an article I found today about the new telescope that will replace the 25-year-old Hubble, showing lots of pictures of engineers hard at work, assembling parts and running their tests. I am quite certain that at the top of their list are the tests and checking, this time with more than just one instrument and with absolutely no assumptions being made about the accuracy of the results. This will be the most checked and tested piece of space equipment there ever was

and there will be no repeat of the previous blunders and embarrassment. The new telescope is called the James Webb Space Telescope, or JWST as the scientists themselves are calling it, at least* in print, like they do with all the other instruments. I have a suspicion that the names of some of the instruments are tweaked slightly to make them into pronounceable acronyms.

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



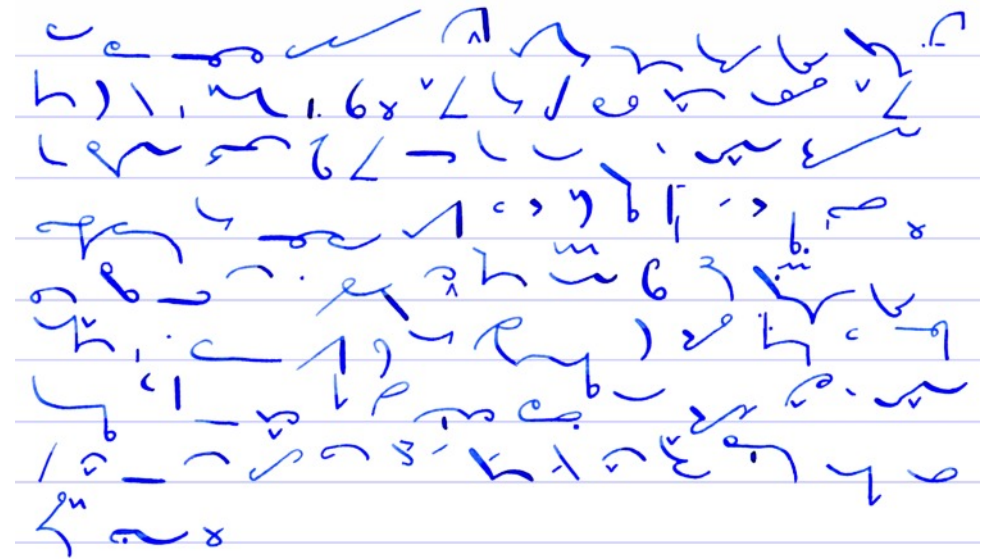
Just Checking

You may not have any interest in science or astronomy, but all shorthand writers*, whether experienced or just starting, will empathise with the unpleasant results that failing to check properly* can have. The amount of checking that a person does seems to be* related to the severity of the results that might ensue. Checking you have enough bread or milk in the kitchen is fairly minor, but checking you have shut the windows and locked the door before

going on your way is higher up the priority list, and done even more diligently when going away on holiday.

* Omission phrase "short(hand) writers" "seems (to) be"

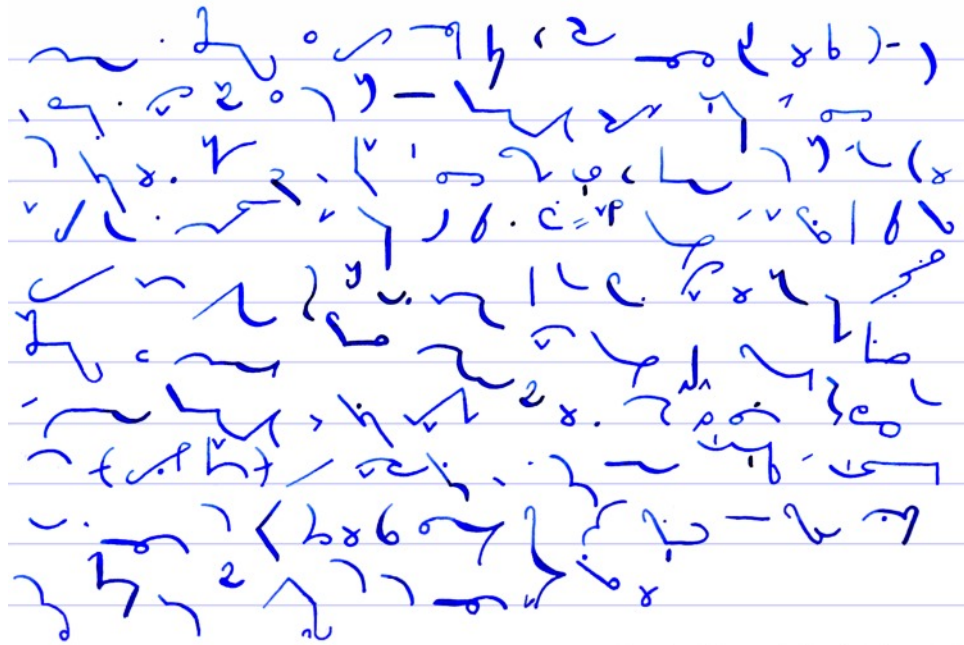
* "properly" and "appropriately" Always insert vowel as these are similar in outline and meaning



Just Checking

In our school exams we were allowed to leave the room if we finished before the allotted time was up, but I never did this. I checked for the general sense of my answers, I checked for spelling and grammar, and then checked again for any bits of handwriting that were not crystal clear for the examiner to read, with all the I's dotted and all the T's crossed. Some

subjects gave me a reasonable amount of time in hand, others were barely finished in time, but a quick read through in the last few minutes was always attempted, with extra facts that had come to mind at the last moment squeezed in between the lines of handwriting, which might give me one more point and bump up my final score into the next higher grading.



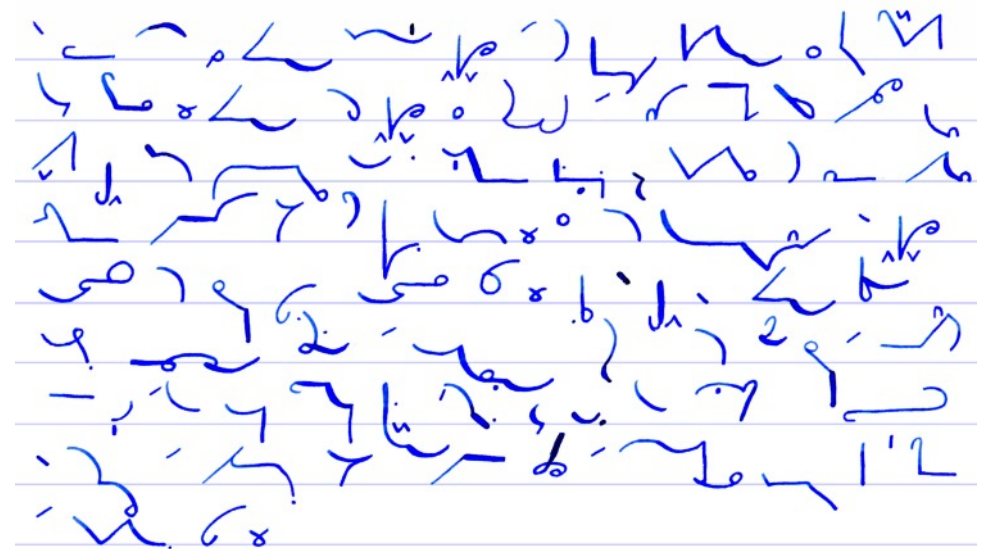
Just Checking

Making a transcription* has one extra danger that ordinary exams do not have. It is so easy to skip a line of shorthand as your eyes go back and forth* between the notepad and the screen or paper. The ideal would be to type on screen from the notes without taking your eyes off them. I generally have a marker on the pad, usually just a flat sided pencil, and I place it just above where I am reading, so that I do not need to move it for every line. I have to do the reverse of transcription* when making the blogs, moving my pencil down the printed text and looking back and forth* to the paper to write the shorthand.

The method is the same, although the consequences for me (wasted time) are minor compared to an error going unnoticed and uncorrected in an exam or job assignment. This seemingly trivial little precaution can prevent major errors and damage to your shorthand reputation or your exam pass.

* "transcription" This and derivatives omit the second R, to prevent misreading as "describe/descriptions" and derivatives

* Omission phrase "back (and) forth"



Just Checking

Of equal importance is the checking of my own outlines and so dictionary delving is top priority for the blogs. Checking your own outlines is essential and you will get the best results if you write down all your lookups in a notebook dedicated* to that purpose, so you can review and practise regularly until they are totally familiar. As your vocabulary of outlines increases, your speed will increase as well. It's all down to checking, testing, inspecting, examining, assessing and investigating*, so that your

shorthand speed and accuracy can shoot off into gravity-defying orbit, without the need for major correction of errors, and requiring only regular adjustments and maintenance to keep it on track and performing well. (852 words)

* "dedicated" "deducted" Insert vowels as these have the same outline, also the similar "educated"

* "investigating" omits the first T
