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Blogs - 2016 - June

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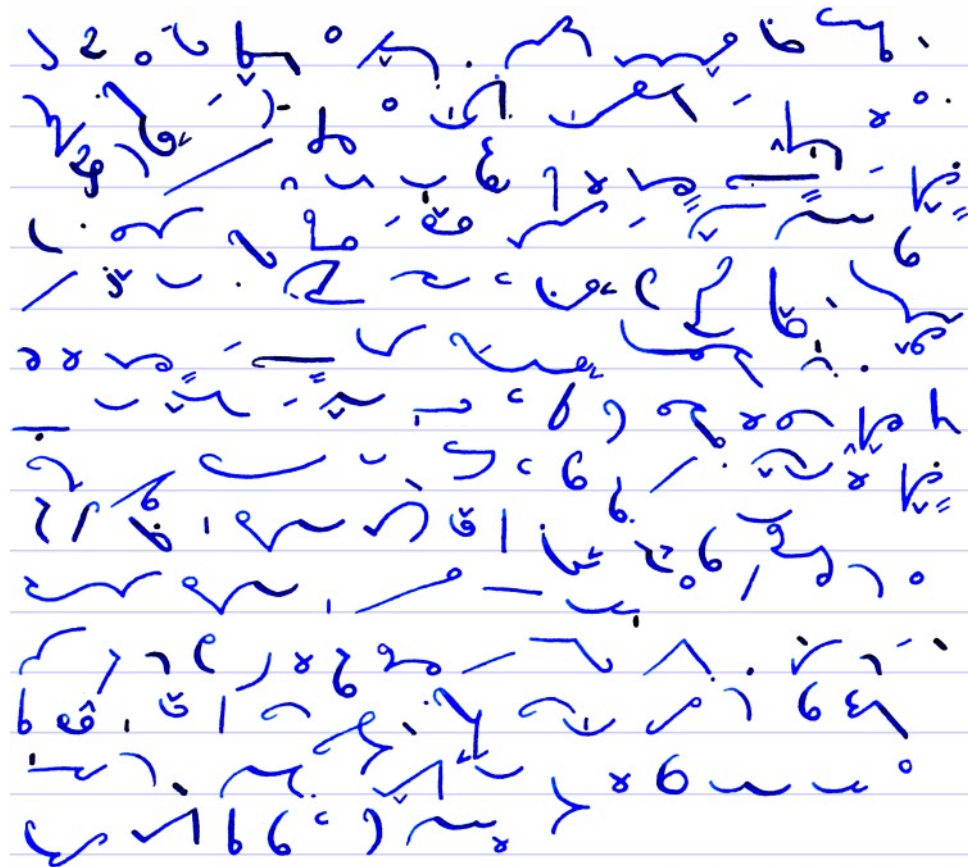
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PDF Date: 22 November 2020



We Like To Abbrev

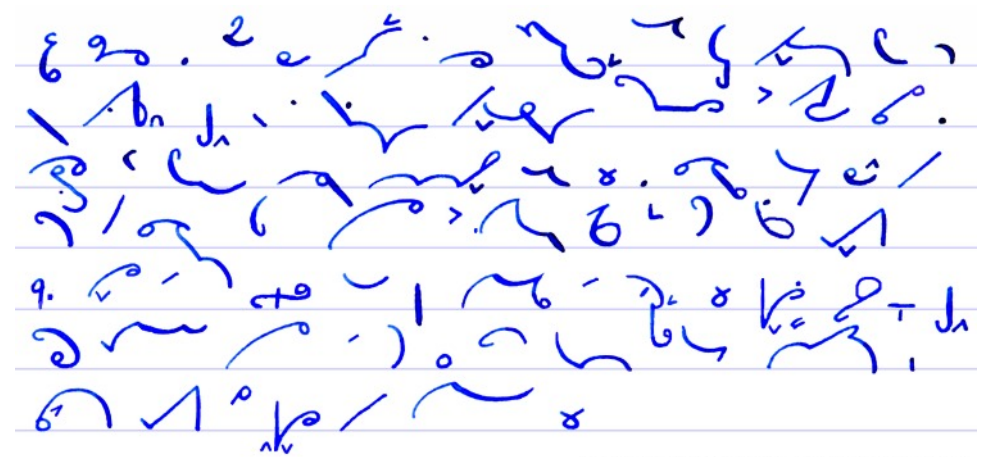
Pen shorthand is often described as requiring the learner to memorise vast quantities of arbitrary abbreviations and so dismissed as unwieldy, unreasonable and outmoded. As a shorthand student* or writer, you now know that this is not true. Pitman's, Gregg and Teeline* have a small number of* strokes and signs to learn, and like longhand, these are combined in a logical manner, with various other shortening devices, to form the words. Pitman's and Gregg follow pronunciation, for example omitting the silent K in "knife" and writing "cough" with just three symbols. Some outlines depart from the rules in order not to clash with others but these are a minority. Teeline, although largely based on spelling, also finds it convenient to avoid these inconsistencies of normal spelling,

but writers can include as much or as little of each word as they wish. All these systems are capable of representing the whole word and all its sounds, but find it more useful to abbreviate the more common ones, or those that would be awkward or too lengthy to write in full. This is nothing new as everyone already does this with their longhand.

* Omission phrase "shorthand s(t)udent"

* "Teeline" Insert the dot vowel, as this has the same shape as "outline", although the caps marks helps it to be read correctly

* "number of" This is the same outline as "brief" so always insert the vowel in the latter



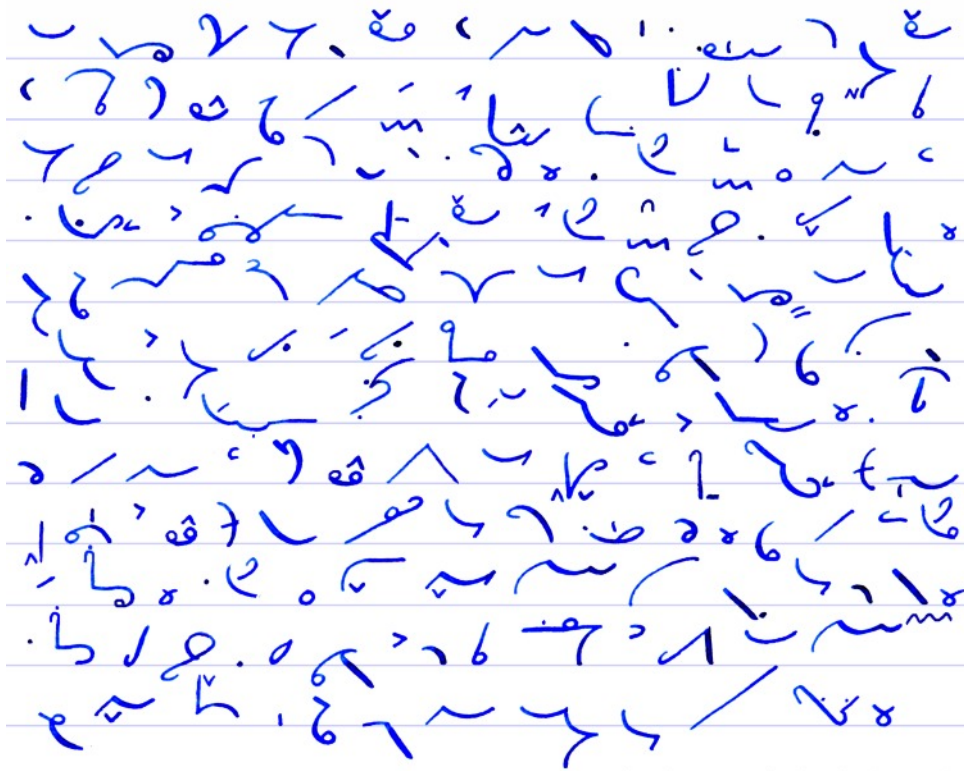
We Like To Abbrev

With these systems, the shorthand is not really a means of abbreviation in that they do not require every word to be reduced down to a barely recognisable fragment of the original, hence the misconception that everything must be* memorised individually. The symbols for each sound are very much simpler than letters of the

alphabet, and this is why they are faster to write, straight lines and curves in different lengths and orientations. Teeline uses cut-down versions of longhand letters and so is more familiar for the learner, but slower to write as the outlines are longer.

* Omission phrase "mus(t) be"

Handwritten practice lines for the shorthand notes, consisting of several horizontal lines.

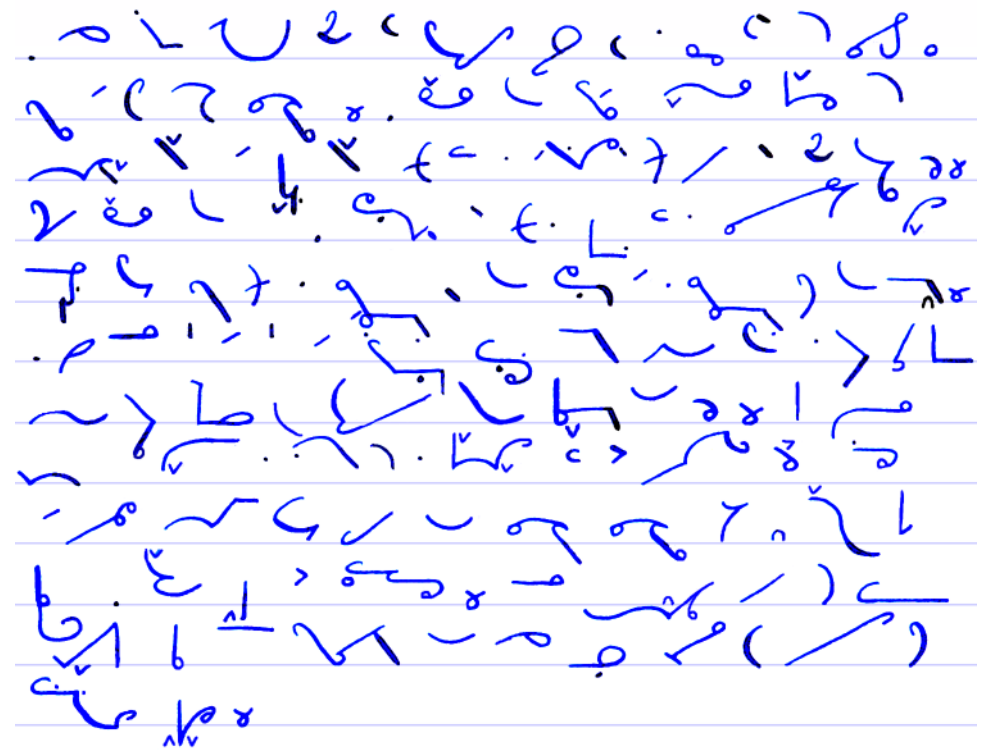


We Like To Abbrev

In Pitman's there are only two signs that are not based on a consonant or vowel sign that matches their sound and these are "and" and the downward thick dash for "he" which is only used in the middle or end of a phrase. The short form "why" is written with a variant of the semicircle W sign, and the short form "beyond" uses the Y diphthong. Both of these marks were replaced early in the development of Pitman's in favour of the full Way and Yay strokes to begin* a syllable. So these latter two do have a phonetic rationale, although not obvious to the beginner. The majority of words are written with all their sounds

represented* in the outline, with true abbreviation (cutting out some of the sounds) being reserved for the very commonest words. These are called short forms and contractions. A short form is like writing the longhand letter B for the word "be". A contraction generally uses the first syllable of the word, which is exactly what we do in longhand to save writing time, but all these could be written in full if the writer preferred.

* "to begin" Based on the phrase short form "to be" therefore through the line



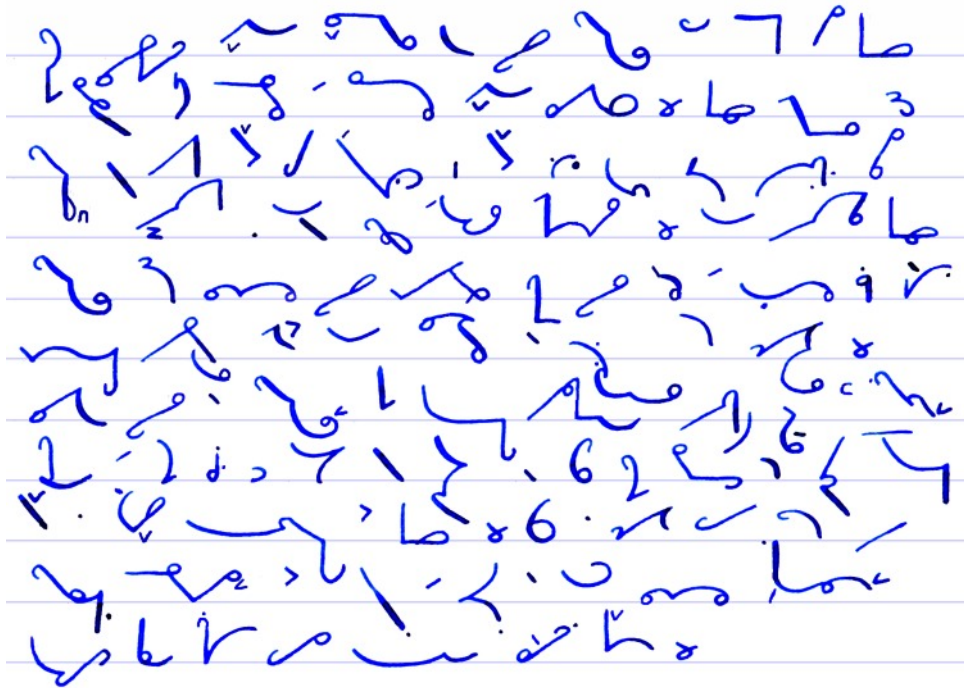
We Like To Abbrev

The most compact and efficient shorthand that everyone uses without a second's thought or hesitation is numbers and other mathematical* symbols. The signs for plus, minus, times or multiplied by, and divided by (called an obelus), are all shorthand for these words. There are signs for "the squareroot* of" (a tick with a horizontal line extended over the number), a superscript two for "squared", and a superscript three for "cubed". The list goes on and on, and complicated equations can be written over a page which would take many pages of text if they were being described in words. It looks to me like a map or a timeline with all the relevant

points, actions and results marked along the way in simple symbols, until you arrive at the destination, the final outcome of the calculations. Because numerals are so quick to write, it is preferable in most cases to use them rather than their equivalent outlines.

* "mathematical" The shorter words "maths" and "math" are normal outlines, above the line and vocalised

* "squareroot" Note that Ray is never halved when it stands alone

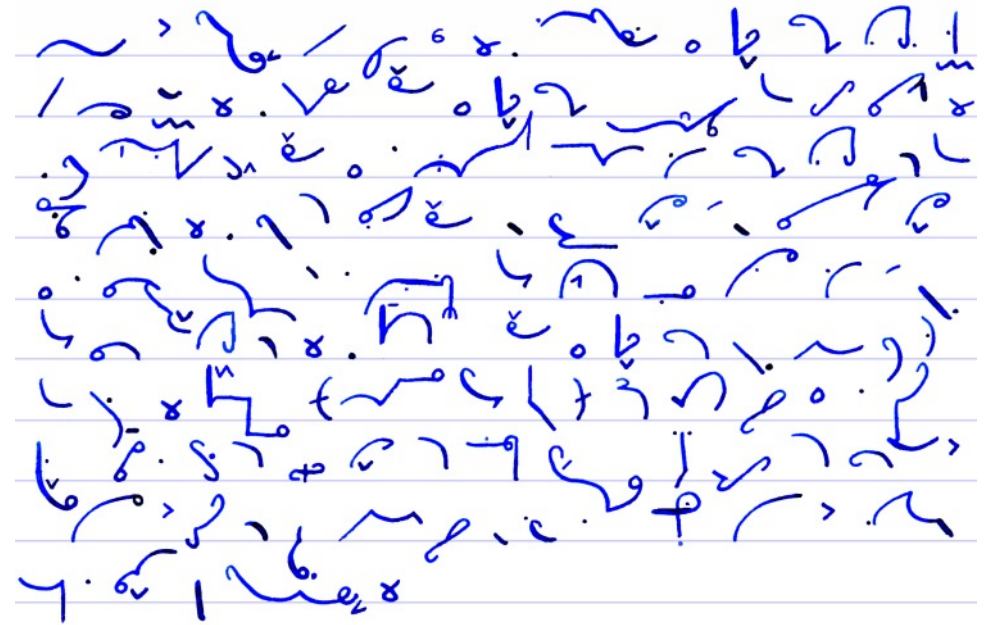


We Like To Abbrev

Throughout the history of writing, scribes have used abbreviations in order to* get as much text as possible on their expensive and scarce writing surfaces. Texts and books were not produced to be read by the general population but by the elite few who were literate, such as royalty, the nobility, priests, officials and administrators. In religious texts, abbreviations were sometimes used to replace the direct use of words and names considered holy, to maintain respectfulness and avoid any semblance of irreverence or worldliness. Heavy use of abbreviations had the effect of restricting readership to those with appropriate* training, and so the contents would only be available to others through

the spoken word, which would be accompanied by an authorised interpretation of the text. This is a world away from our present-day experience of the publishing and sharing of information, sometimes ad nauseam* if one does not control one's internet surfing time.

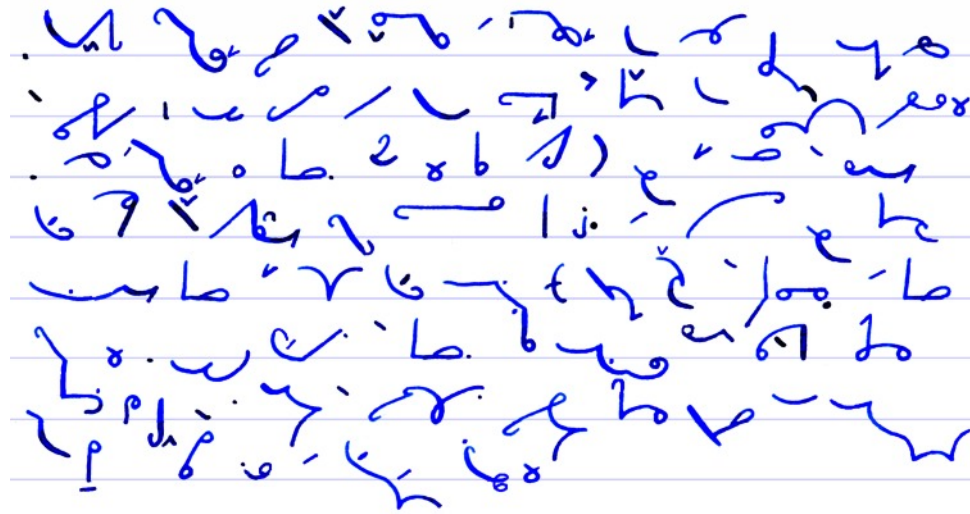
- * Omission phrase "in ord(er to)
- * "appropriate" Insert the diphone, and the first vowel in "proper", as these two are similar in outline and meaning
- * "ad nauseam" Note the spelling, sometimes wrongly shown as -um



We Like To Abbrev

Many of the abbreviations are still with us. The ampersand is derived from the Latin "et" which means "and". The percent sign is derived from the numerals for one hundred. The British monetary pound sign is an embellished capital L, from the Latin word for scales "libra". The number or hash sign, two vertical lines and two horizontal lines, is a simplified form of a ligature for the lower case letters L and B, for the same

Latin word. The dollar sign is derived from P written through S for peso. Diacritics (marks over the top) were also used as a shortening device, such as a plain or curved line, or extra flourishes attached to one or more of the letters of the shortened word, but these are now used to convert an existing letter of the alphabet into a slightly different pronunciation.



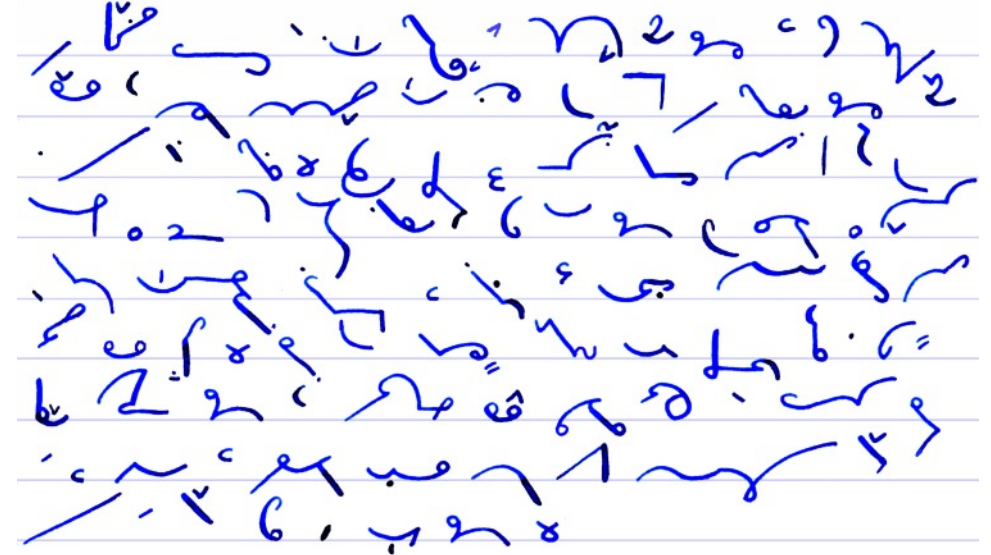
We Like To Abbrev

The variety of abbreviations used by scribes and copyists have mostly* disappeared into the mists of history, but new ones are being created all the time for similar reasons. The most obvious is texting "shorthand". Its origin was to save on the cost of sending the phone message by reducing the number of characters it contained, and later on to save time and effort* entering the text on the early phone keypads (before the arrival of touchscreens

and text prediction). The initial flurry of texting inventions has now slowed and it seems to have settled down to a handful of universally useful terms to be used in informal settings, such as comments and forum conversations.

* "mostly" Omits the lightly-sounded T

* Omission phrase "time (and) effort"

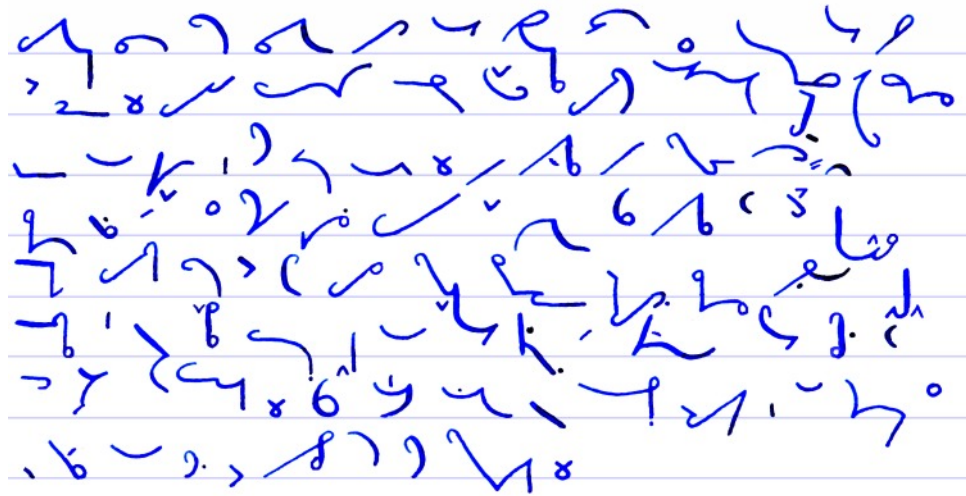


We Like To Abbrev

Our diverse collection of common abbreviations, and the earlier shorthand systems with their arbitrary signs that must be* memorised en masse, have got our present systems of shorthand a rather bad press. This is only dispelled when you actually begin learning it, although if interest is weak or enthusiasm absent, then any system, however simple, is likely to appear unacceptably complicated when compared with the ingrained longhand that

has been learned and used since childhood. Speaking for Pitman's, I hope you have now discovered that it is a well-designed logical system that reflects the sounds, syllables and phrases of normal speech and, when written with reasonable neatness, may be read many years later by the writer, and by others who know the system. (1171 words)

* Omission phrase "mus(t) be"



Pitter Patter Raindrops

We have had some very heavy rain in the last few days and more is forecast for the rest of the week. We would normally expect fine weather in the month of June and thunderstorms to come in July, but they are here now. Our roads are perfect man-made stream beds, and as there are hills where I live, those roads that point downwards get the water from all the other

ones, providing the spectacle of twin streams racing down the gutters on both sides, clearing out any debris and jumping over the drains that cannot handle the quantity. This is unusual enough to be interesting to watch, but not so much as to pose any threat to the residents or their property.

Blank lined writing area for notes.



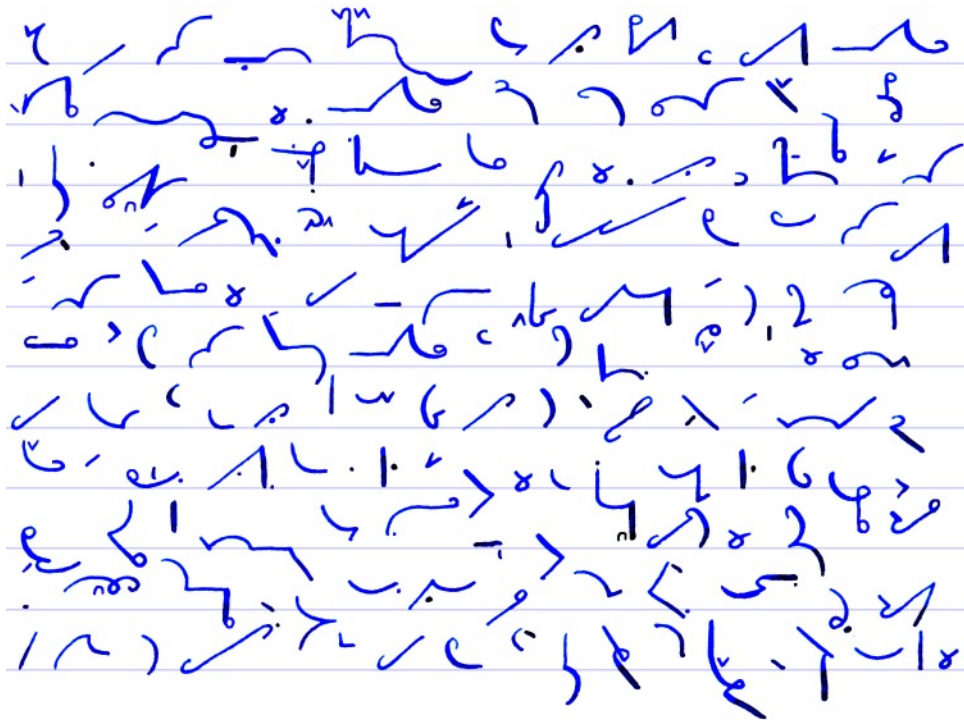
Pitter Patter Raindrops

We have a particular liking for heavy rain, as long as we are indoors feeling safe and cosy underneath the dependable and well-built roof, behind the solid walls and on this side of the two panes of double glazing, watching the giant drops pelting the plants, jumping up off the hard surfaces and turning the pond from peacefully* smooth to a spiky confusion of droplets rebounding up from their* impact with the water. The fish love it, as flies and other critters* are washed in from the air, the* branches and the greenery along the edges, and it also adds to the aeration of the pond, as well as

bringing its own fresh flavour to the pond water for them.

- * "peacefully" Insert the final dot, as "peaceful" could also make sense
- * "from their " Doubling for "their"
- * "critters" Note the outline for "creatures" has an Ar instead of the R Hook
- * "air, the" Not phrased, as there is a pause

Blank lined writing area for notes.



Pitter Patter Raindrops

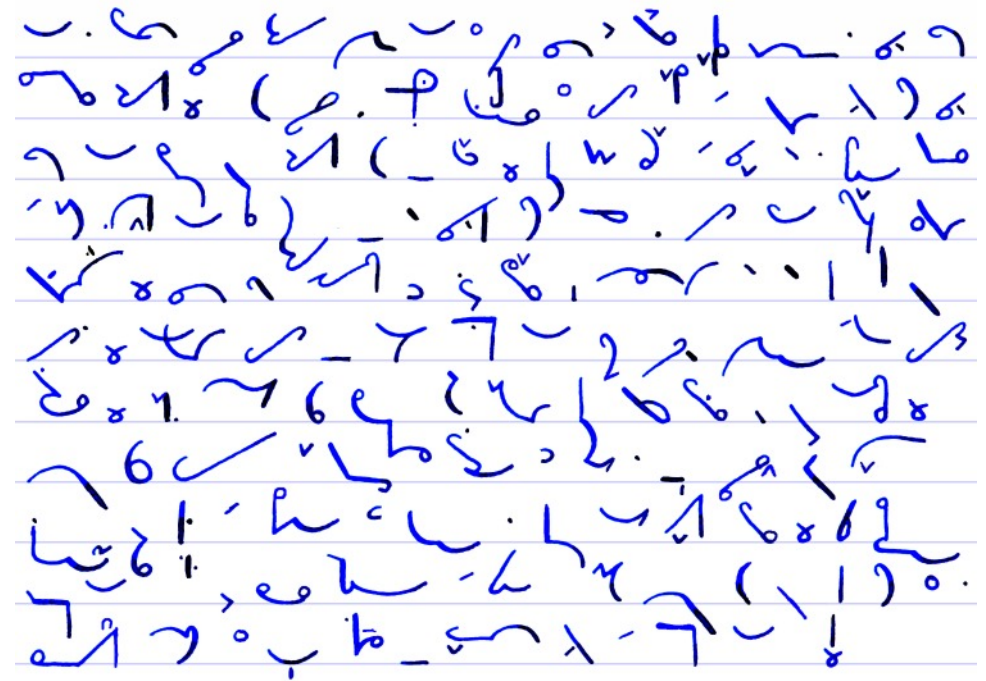
I think our little game of triumphing over the rain started when we had caravan holidays many years ago. The caravans were very small by today's standards, but it was a hugely exciting adventure for us children. The rain would drum on the metal roof and reverberate around the interior, but we were safe in our little wood and metal box. We could look out of the window and see through the misty glass all the other little boxy caravans with their dim lights on. Somehow we felt that if it rained at night, then the rain was all used up and tomorrow would be fine and sunny, ready for a day on the beach. If it continued into the day, then visits to the souvenir shops had to make up for the lack of good beach

weather. There were* always the amusement* arcades to fill any* rainy hours, or the choppy angry seas to watch, which left us wondering why we ever thought it was possible or advisable to paddle in it.

* Omission phrase "there (w)ere"

* "amusement" It is obvious that it is not "amazement" here, but the other forms of "amaze/amuse" and derivatives should always have their vowel in

* "any" Essential to insert a final dot vowel, as "fill in" would also make sense



Pitter Patter Raindrops

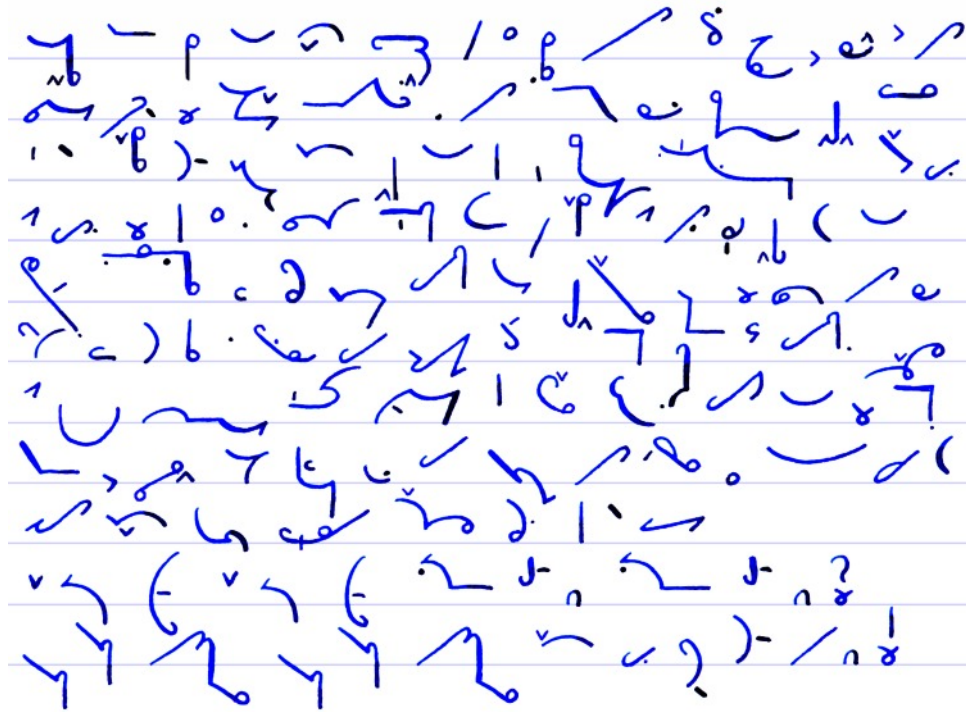
In a former house that we lived in as children, some of the boys decided to make a hut from scraps of wood. They used the existing fence as one side, and built up their hut from any spare bits of wood they could find. It was about the size and height of a telephone box and I was allowed in so that we could all huddle there against the rain, in our private self-built* bolthole. Some bread and water would complete the supplies, but most importantly* of all it had to be raining. Unfortunately* one could only get in through the roof, lifting off one of the panels. I did manage this several times, although I felt it was not the best place to put the entrance. Maybe this is where I began planning what a good house

ought to be like, continuing to this day, and starting with having a door in the right place. Just struggling to get in added to the sense of adventure and achievement, and I think maybe they put it there as a security measure, as no adults could climb up and get in!

* "self-built" Outlines beginning "self" are always written in second position, to accord with the vowel in "self"

* Omission phrase "mos(t) importantly"

* "Unfortunately" Optional contraction



Pitter Patter Raindrops

Nowadays I can sit in my greenhouse, which has seats rather than plants, and listen to the sound of the rain hitting the roof. Unlike the caravan, the rain can be seen streaming down the glass on all sides, so I feel that* I am out in it but strangely unaffected by the wet and the wind. It has a small gutter along each side and the rain shoots out of them in spluttering cascades when there is too much water for the downpipes to take. Summer rain is not particularly cold, so it is a pleasant* way to watch the pond get drilled with the watery* missiles and the fish making the occasional lunge at flies that have washed in. Getting back to the house, only twenty feet away, before the rain stops is another story

though and one of my favourite nursery rhymes says it all:

I hear thunder, I hear thunder!
 ark don't you, hark don't you?
 Pitter patter raindrops, pitter patter raindrops,
 I'm wet through, so are you! (779 words)

* Omission phrase "I fee(l) that"

* "pleasant" Helpful to insert the vowel, as it is similar to "pleasing"

* "watery" Insert the vowel, as "water" would also make sense



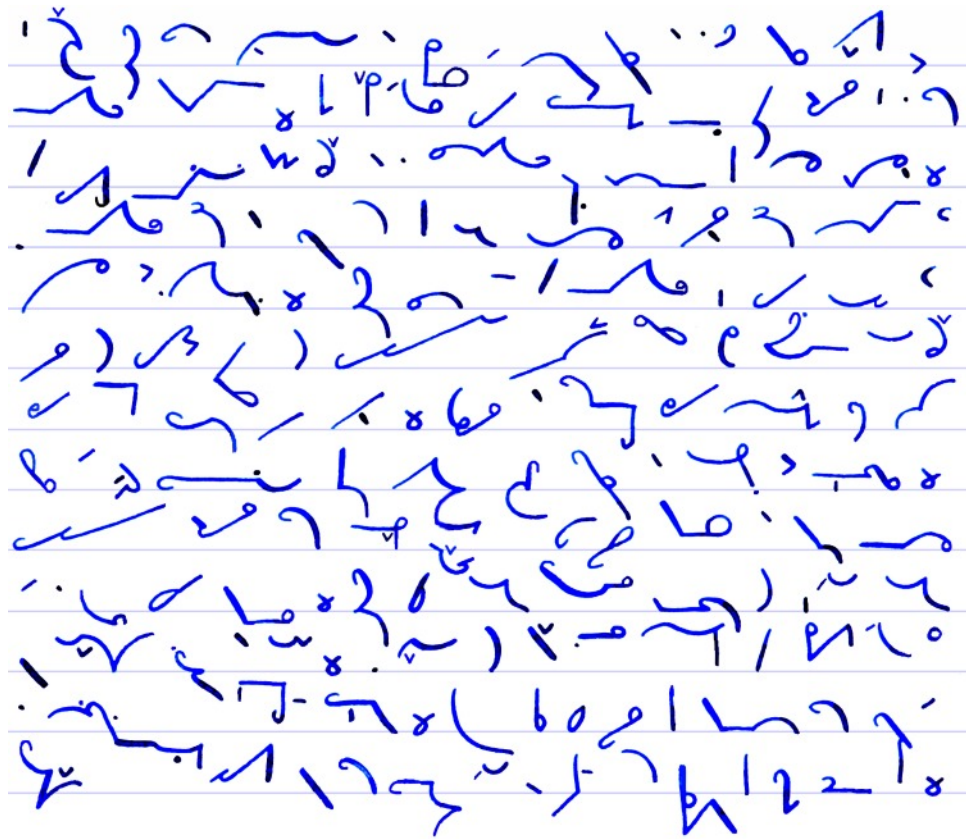
Caravan Holidays

Our annual caravan holiday in the nineteen sixties was the highlight of our year, from our home in South London to the seaside towns of Clacton, Herne Bay, Seaford or Newhaven. What is now a short day trip by car was then a huge adventure by coach or train. All the luggage was carried by hand and we waited for what seemed like ages at the coach pickup point or railway station. Time was passed by playing with the Scoubidou knotting* toy which was popular at that time, consisting of lengths of plastic that could be woven into a multi-coloured chain. This would be undone and redone several times throughout the holiday, and it

helped pass the time while sitting on a suitcase waiting for the coach to come into view. The coach was slower than the train but it had the advantage of a halfway break, although we children wanted that break to be as short as possible*.

* "knotting" Always insert the vowel in "knitting, knotting, netting" as the outlines and meanings are all similar

* "short as possible" Not made an omission phrase, as that might be read as "short space"



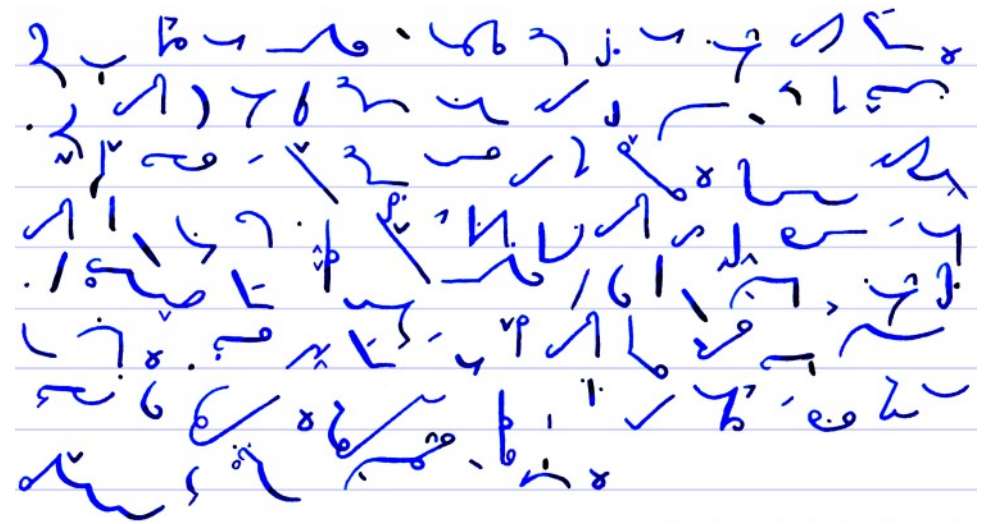
Caravan Holidays

On arrival, there was more lugging of suitcases and maybe the possibility* of a short bus ride to the caravan park. At the site office we collected the key which was always on a very large wooden keyring, about the size of a smartphone today, to make it impossible to lose. The caravans were all numbered or had individual names, and the rows were marked with letters of the alphabet. There were* some quite large caravans but we knew that ours was one of the cheapest, so we were not really surprised as they shrank in size as we got nearer our row. This was all forgotten as we mounted the three little steps and opened the creaking door, revealing the

delightful prospect of inspecting all the cupboards. We were always very excited to find the well-used boxes of board games and a few story books. There were just enough blankets to cover us but not enough to be entirely comfortable all night. The lighting was by gas mantle which started off as an impregnated cotton globe. After its first use, it became very brittle and fragile, and we had to be very careful not to touch or disturb it during the week.

* "possibility" Optional contraction

* Omission phrase "there (w)erre"



Caravan Holidays

There were* no toilets in the caravans, all facilities were contained in the communal wash block. The shower water was only just warm enough and we did not* look too hard at the grimy tiled corners and pipework in case we saw the spiders. Drinking and washing up water had to be fetched from an outside standpipe and the dirty dish water went down the sink and into a large galvanised bucket underneath the caravan, which then had to be lugged to the communal drain for emptying. The

grass round the bucket and under the site water taps always grew longer and greener than elsewhere. All these were not disadvantages, but added to our enjoyment and sense of achievement in surviving without the comparative luxuries of home.

* Omission phrase "there (w)ere"

* "we did not" Not phrased, to aid correct reading. If phrased it would look like "we do not" or "we had not".

Horizontal lines for writing practice.



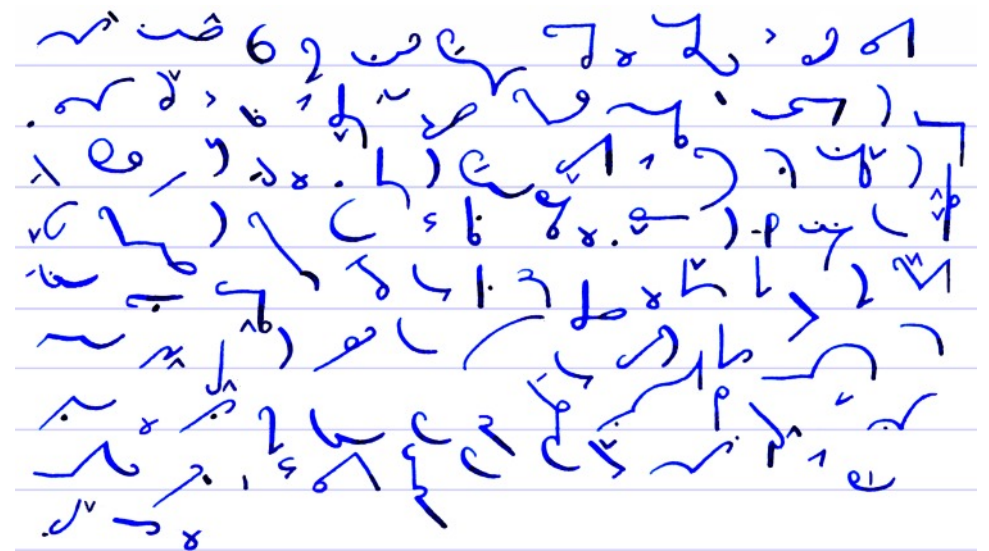
Caravan Holidays

Our grandparents had saved coins in a jam jar all year and so we felt like millionaires with a whole ten shillings* each to spend. This would equate to about fifty pounds* today, in terms of what it would buy in the way of beach toys, sweets and souvenirs. At the site store we bought plastic beach shoes and straw hats, and invested in a tin of chocolate drink powder that could be added to milk, which had to last all week. We children had beds that felt not much larger than a bookshelf, while our parents had the fold-down double bed that filled the centre of the caravan. We fell asleep listening to the unaccustomed countryside

sounds of farm animals, seagulls and crows rather than the pigeons and sparrows that we were used to. There was total darkness outside, apart from the glowing windows of the other caravans. The day's activities ensured that we slept soundly and by midweek we had got used to turning over in bed on the spot, without rolling off.

* "ten shillings" There were 20 shillings to the British pound pre-1972 decimalisation

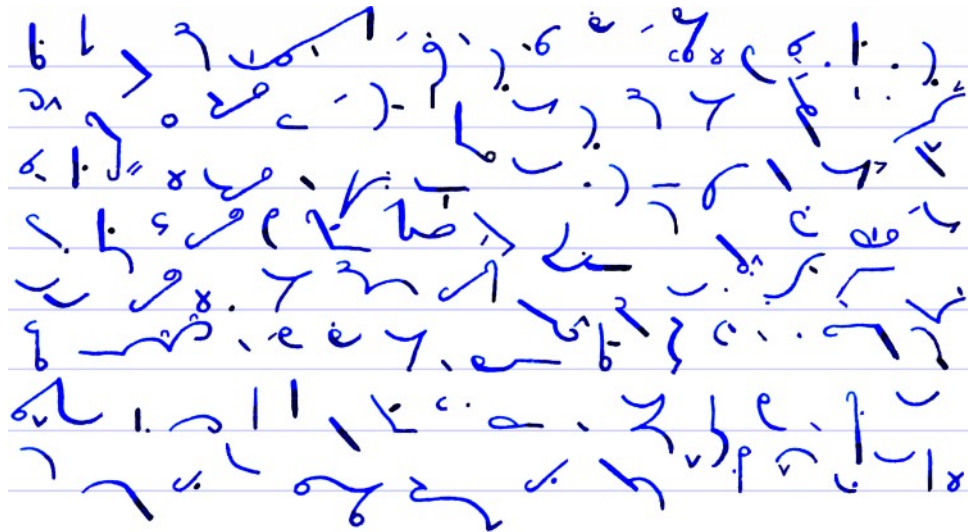
* "pounds" Always insert the diphthong, as "pence" is similar



Caravan Holidays

Mornings announced themselves through the ancient floral curtains. Anticipation of the pleasures ahead, the small size of the beds, and the desire not to waste precious minutes all encouraged us to get up as soon as our eyes opened. The door was flung wide and the fresh air enticed us outside while breakfast was prepared, along with the day's sandwiches. The sky was studied intently for offending grey

clouds and plans for the day were discussed. Time at the beach was the priority, and going round the town was reserved for later if the weather turned cooler or rainy. Rain during the evening, however, would be positively relished as it pounded on the metal caravan roof, but with the hope that it would be over by the morning and the sun shining again.



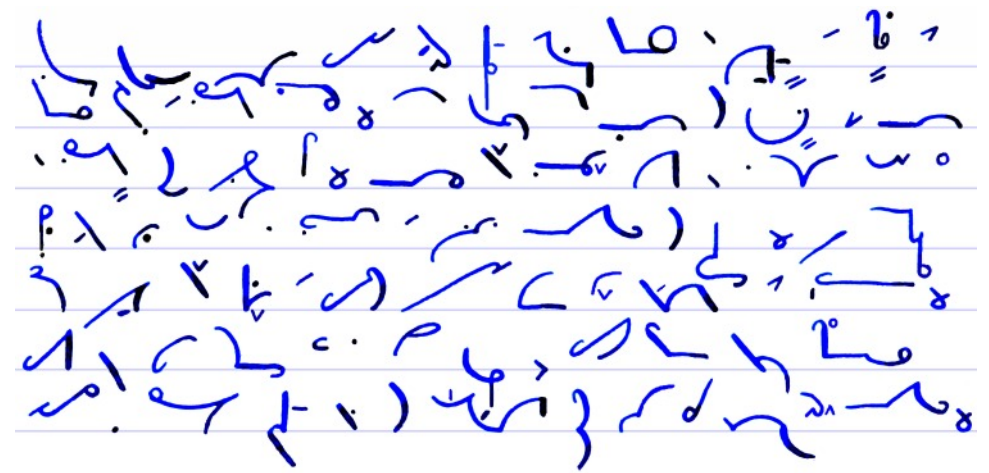
Caravan Holidays

Days at the beach were unhurried* and consisted of sea, salt, sand and sandwiches. However hot the day, the sea around Britain is always cold, and so dips in the sea were only possible on a really hot day. If it was too chilly to go in, the sea could still be enjoyed by playing dare with the waves as they broke and advanced up the shingle, or bouncing flat stones off the incoming waves. The only warm water to be found would be in a shallow rock pool,

with its accumulation of soft sand in which to sink toes, although the thought of a crab or two hiding did mean it had to be poked with a stick to ensure it was safe to tread in, or maybe wait for someone else to clear the way before I set my feet in it!

* "unhurried" Note the Hay stroke keeps its clockwise direction. The combination N + Circle S + Ray has an anticlockwise circle e.g. "answer, nicer"

Blank lined writing area for practice.



Caravan Holidays

After the evening meal, we would open the dusty and faded boxes* of Ludo and Draughts, and the packs* of playing and Snap cards. My favourite card game was Fish, but the game of Snap was not restful* at all. Games by gaslight led to an early night, as staying up late in a cramped and ill-lit caravan was out of the question*. Our activities were ruled by daylight and weather, rather than the electric light bulb and the clock. We had to be well organised with a last visit to the wash block before

darkness, and once the central double bed was unfolded, there was little chance to move around the caravan.

* "boxes" "packs" Insert the vowels, as these two are similar in outline and meaning

* "restful" Omits the lightly sounded T

* Omission phrase "out (of the) question" using the optional contraction for "question"

Blank lined writing area for practice.

Handwritten shorthand text in Pitman's New Era style, consisting of approximately 10 lines of cursive symbols on a lined background.

Caravan Holidays

Damp sand gradually* accumulated in bags, socks and shoes, along with the aroma of seawater and seaweed. By the end of the week we had a collection of buckets, spades, shells, and stones with interesting patterns or holes containing glistening salt crystals. The chocolate powder seldom lasted beyond midweek, and on the last day we almost convinced ourselves that we were looking forward* to the greater comforts of home. On the last day inclement weather was our friend, because we would not be looking wistfully* at a sunny beach that we were having to leave behind. The sense of adventure and discovery is permanently attached to the memories of those holidays, and, in

hindsight, we now envy the easy ability to rest completely from school and work, without the intrusion of mobile phones and laptops which did not then exist. A week spent finding out that we could survive, and enjoy ourselves, without our house and possessions, made us realise that home is people and enjoying activities together, and not a building. (1226 words)

- * "gradually" has full D, in order to distinguish it from "greatly"
- * Omission phrase "looking fo(r)ward"
- * "wistfully" Omits the lightly sounded T

Handwritten shorthand text in Pitman's New Era style, consisting of approximately 6 lines of cursive symbols on a lined background.

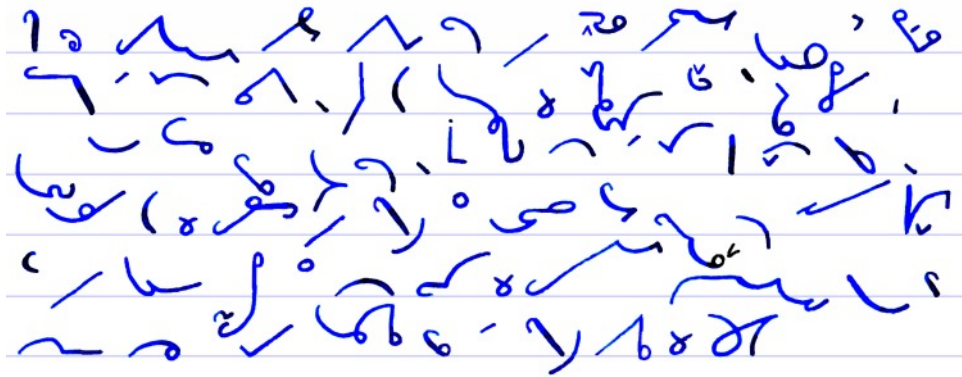
Short Letters 7

All the paragraphs are 100 words

Dear Mr Andrews, Thank you for your email giving us a date when our representative may call on you to discuss the building work at your house. I can confirm that he will be arriving at 9 am on Monday 21st January. He will be bringing with him the

amended plans for the extension and the new layout for the landscaping work. I have attached these for your consideration so that when he comes, you and he can discuss any extra alterations you wish us to make. Please email me if you need to change the meeting date. Yours faithfully (100 words)

A series of horizontal lines provided for writing a response to the letter.



Short Letters 7

Dear Friends, We have now received the report from our accountants regarding the finances of the Sports Club and I am happy to attach them for your consideration*. I trust that you will* find all of these satisfactory but if you have any questions*, please feel free to contact me and I will do my best to answer them. Once again* our membership has increased over the previous year and we are delighted that our financial situation has improved greatly. We are now looking forward to being* able to

make improvements to our facilities, buildings and membership rates. Yours sincerely* (100 words)

* Omission phrases "for your (con)sideration" "I trus(t) that you will" "wu(n)s again" "Yours (sin)cerely"

* "questions" Optional contraction*

* "to being" Based on the short form phrase "to be"



Short Letters 7

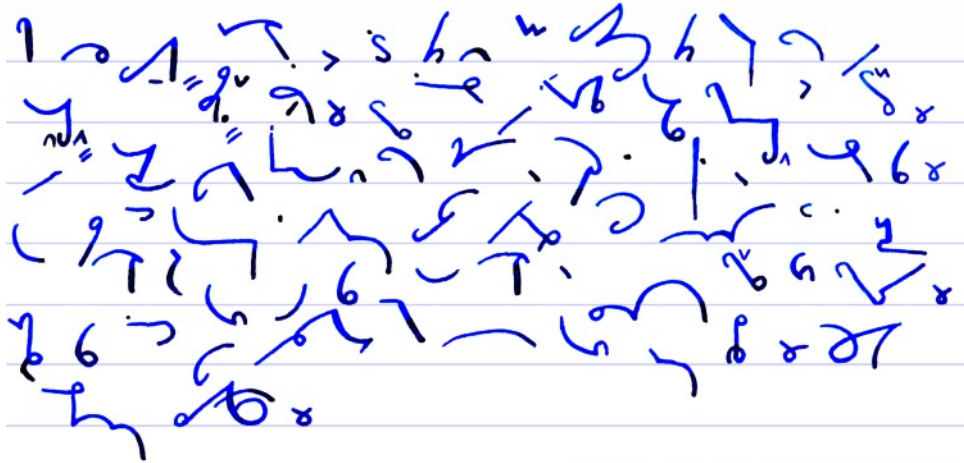
Dear Parents, Thank you so much* for supporting our fundraising day at the school last week*. It was a great day and I am very pleased to inform you that we raised more than our target figure of one thousand pounds. As you know, this is going to be used to redecorate the play areas and update all the equipment, including the playground games. This will* take place over the summer months when the school is closed for the holidays. We hope* to see you in September for our

Harvest Fête and show you all the new improvements. Yours truly (100 words)

* "so much" Stroke M included in order to join the phrase

* Omission phrases "las(t w)EEK" "we hope"

* "This will" Downward L to make a good join



Short Letters 7

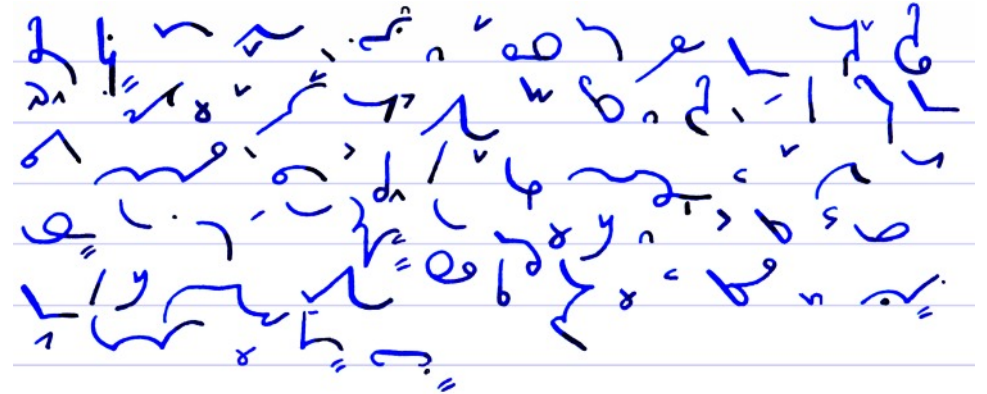
Dear Miss Wood, I am replying to the complaint which you made about the washing machine* which you bought from our Newtown High Street store. Please accept our apologies for this breakdown of the appliance. Our engineer will be contacting you very shortly to arrange a date to inspect this. If he cannot effect* a repair, we will replace the machine immediately with an identical* model, although if you wish this could be* any model of similar price that you prefer. I trust that* this action will resolve the matter for you to your satisfaction. Yours sincerely*, Customer Services Manager (100 words)

* Omission phrases "wash(ing) machine" "I trus(t) that" "Yours (sin)cerely"

* "effect" Note spelling, meaning to make, do or carry out; affect means to cause a change in something

* "identical" Contraction that omits the N, therefore on the line

* "this could be" Not phrased, so it does not look like "this can be"



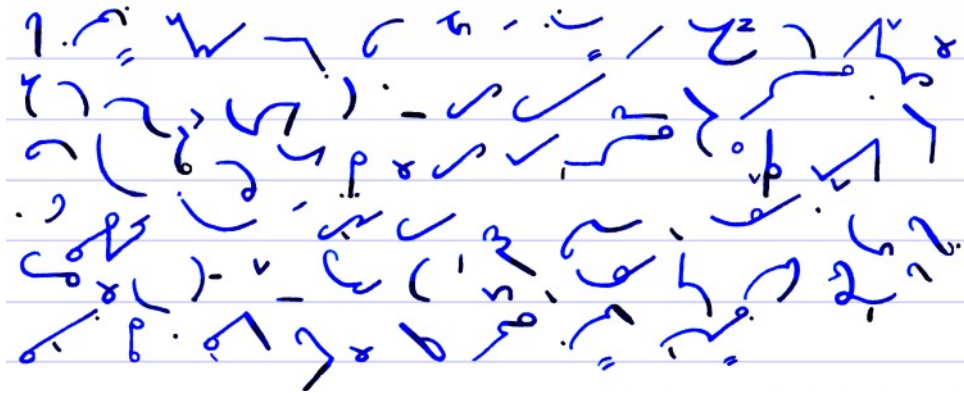
Short Letters 7

Dear Sir David, I am writing to congratulate you on the success of your recent book entitled "Travels Around The World." I really enjoyed reading about the places you travelled to and it brought back happy memories of some of the towns which I visited many years ago when I lived in the United States of America* for a year, and in Australia for two years. I wish you all the best with the next book, which I

shall look forward* to reading as soon as it is available. With best wishes* to you, Mary and the family, Tom Green (100 words)

* Omission phrases "United States of America" "look fo(r)ward"

* "best wishes" Upward Ish to make a good join



Short Letters 7

Dear Alfred*, I hope you are* keeping well and that you and Anna are enjoying your retirement. I think your move to the village was a good one, where you can both relax a bit more after all those years in the city. One of our colleagues has decided to write a short history of the company and wondered whether you would be willing to answer a few brief questions. If so, I could* forward them on to you to answer at your leisure, and there is no particular hurry, as it is a hobby project. Best regards, Albert* Morris (100 words)

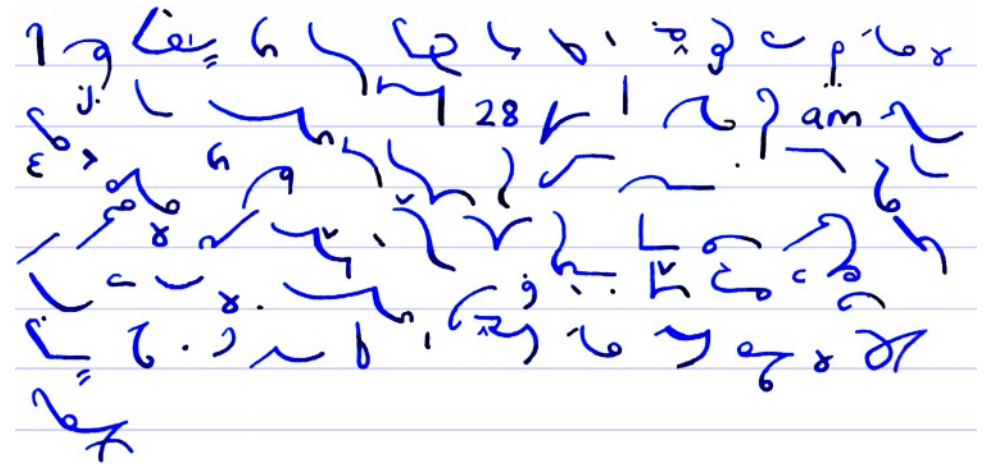
* "Alfred, Albert" Care needed to write these accurately, as they are similar

* Omission phrase "I (h)ope you are"

* "I could" Not phrased, so it does not look like "I can"

* "hobby" "habit" Insert the first vowel in these, as they are similar in outline and meaning, although unlikely to be misread in the above passage.

Blank lined area for writing practice.



Short Letters 7

Dear Mrs Johnson, Thank you for your application form for the post of Accounts Assistant in our City office. Please attend for interview on Monday 28 July at 11.30 am, and bring with you all the certificates that you listed on your form, so that we can make a copy of these for our records. You are invited to arrive early so that you can take some refreshments before being called in. The interview will consist of a

time of questions* with Mr Black and then a short written test on accountancy, office and English skills. Yours sincerely*, Personnel Manager (100 words) (700 words Total)

* "questions" Optional contraction

* Omission phrase "Yours (sin)cerely"

Blank lined area for writing practice.