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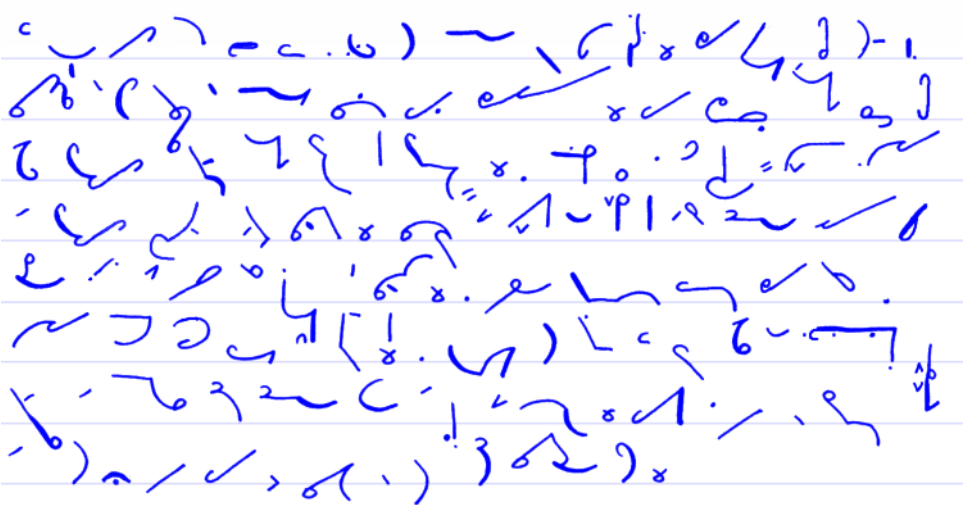


Fireworks Display

Last Saturday was Fireworks Night here in the UK. Instead of hugging the radiator and rushing to the window to see nearby garden fireworks rising over the trees and roofs, we travelled to Blackheath in south east London to see the firework display to be held on the heath. The weather forecast was quite reasonable for an evening out in the open and possibly standing around waiting for things to begin*. It is not my habit* to go out in the evening and seeing the lighted windows of houses whilst standing at the bus stop and train station did make me wonder whether the display would be worth the chilly journey. But I was well wrapped, ready with calorific

snacks in the bag* and camera to hand, determined to swap the radiator for a radiant display, to be enjoyed first hand rather than odd twinkles of far-away rockets in the gardens over yonder, and often gone before I can get the camera out.

- * "to begin" Through the line, based on the short form "to be"
- * "habit" and "hobby" Helpful to insert the vowel
- * "bag" "bucket" "pocket" Helpful to insert the vowels, also "basket" if badly written



Fireworks Display

With no rain or great cold, the event was going to be well-attended. As we changed trains, so did hundreds of other passengers, all going the same way as we were. We squeezed onto the second train, and then everyone poured onto the platform at Blackheath. The exit is a short tunnel-like alleyway and everyone shuffled up the slope. Some people on the right hand side had stopped walking and were just

standing chatting, and the rest of us continued on slowly. The reason became clear as we passed the alleyway cash machine near the top! The village was packed with people, and those not congregating outside the pubs and cafés were walking along and eating on the move. We had an hour to spare and so made our way to the heath to see what was happening there.



Fireworks Display

We left the bright village shops and roads, and entered the blackness of Blackheath. The name means dark coloured heathland, in past centuries a wasteland* of gravel pits and workings, a dangerous area where stage coaches and riders travelling across it could be attacked by robbers and highwaymen. The flat grassy heath is now surrounded and criss-crossed by roads, but the lights on these had little effect on the blackness and we strained our eyes to see where we were walking. There were* a number of carts selling flashing LED wands in the shape of swords, windmills and stars, so everywhere we saw lines and circles of light being waved about by the children, without being able to see much of the owners at all. We passed the long queues at the row of food vans and I was

amused* to see for sale* "Foot Long Frankfurters" that could easily feed two people, one starting at each end! Health food this was not, but I would say guaranteed to keep the eaters stoked* up and warm.

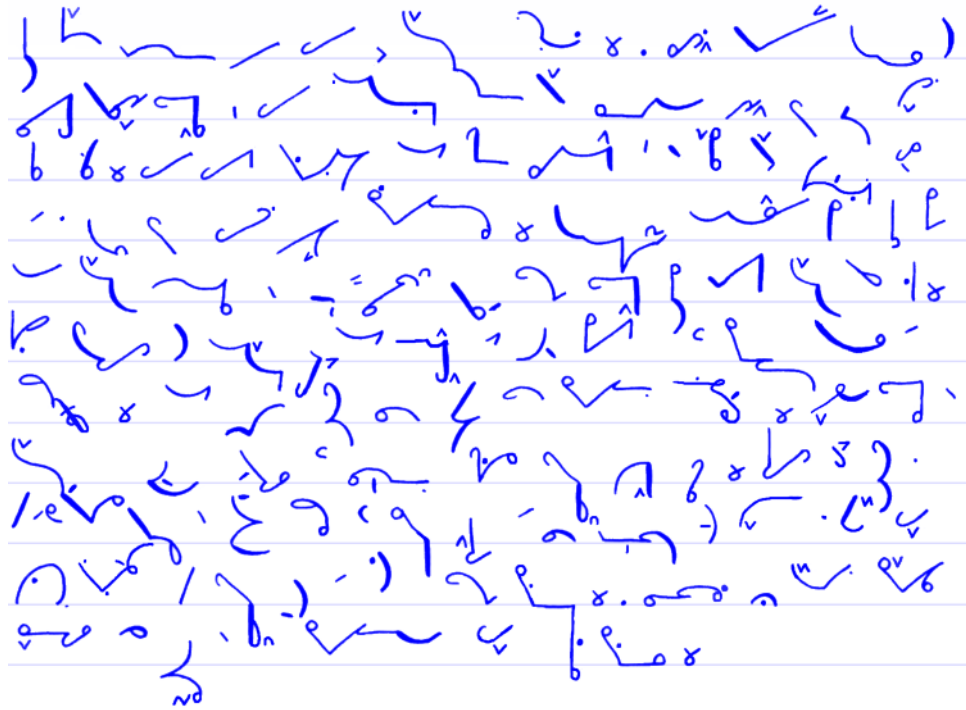
- * "wasteland" Not omitting the T, as that might be misread as "wetland"
- * Omission phrase "there (w)ere"
- * "amused" and "amazed" Always insert the vowel
- * "for sale" Downward L to join the phrase
- * "stoke" Insert the vowel, so it is not misread as "stocked"



Fireworks Display

In the distance we saw the funfair in full swing and we headed for that, feeling rather like moths in the dark, attracted to the brightest lights. Funfairs nowadays are best seen at night, and like everywhere else it was full to capacity, with noisy crowds and excited children, and the riders' screams and squeals were drowned out by

the music and sound effects of the rides. One of my favourites to watch is the Dodgems, less fierce than some of the others but still fun for all ages, and it seems there is more colour as the shiny metal floor reflects the neon lights, and the cars seem to be gliding on a neon-lit mirror.



Fireworks Display

It was time to make our way to the firework arena. The surrounding barrier fence was hidden behind the crowds but we navigated by skirting round the people who were* lining its edges. We waited patiently in the dark, surrounded on all sides by the illuminated wands and a few people waving real sparklers. Eventually the announcer said it would start in five minutes, to good-humoured boos from the crowd, as it was already five past eight*. At last*, everyone was invited to join in the countdown*, and the show started with spectacular bangs and starbursts. In the middle there were* some gentler more sparkly explosions. Rising curtains of fireballs shooting upwards with smoky trails produced loud cheers. At one point there was a large soft burst of falling stars that

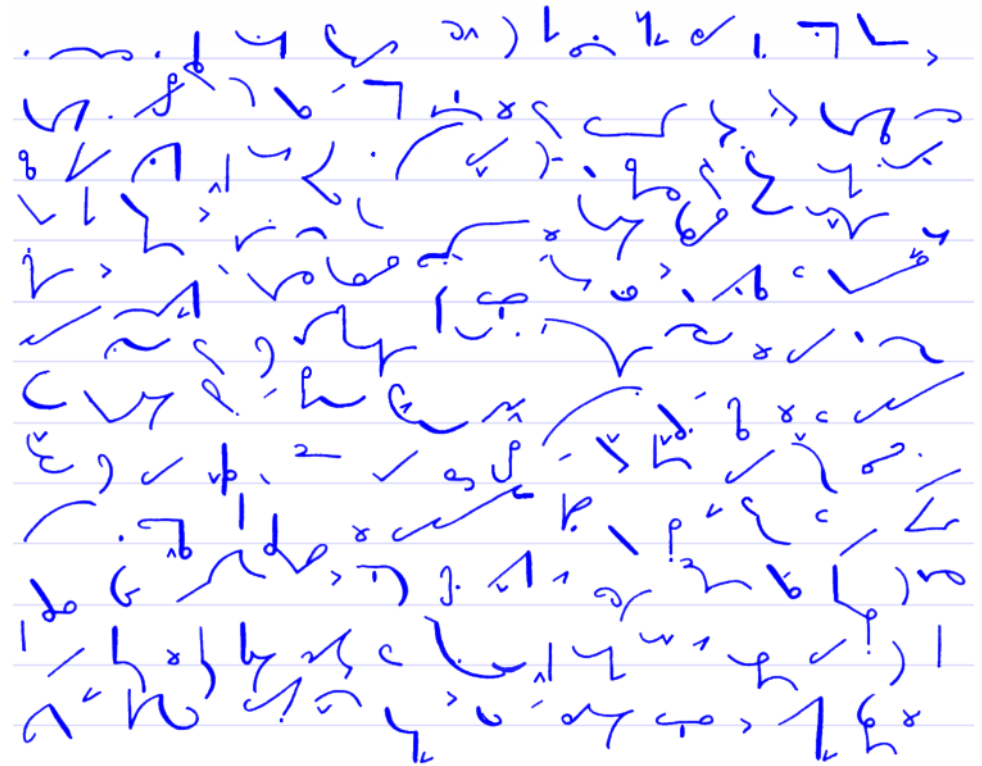
spread outward and seemed to cover us like a giant white lacy parasol, which produced oohs and aahs from the spectators. The screamers made fiery spirals skywards, amidst showers of sparkling white specks.

* "eight" Always insert the vowel in the outline, likewise both vowels in "eighty"

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

* "countdown" Note "count" on its own is written halved with Hook N

* Omission phrases "who (w)ere" "they (w)ere"



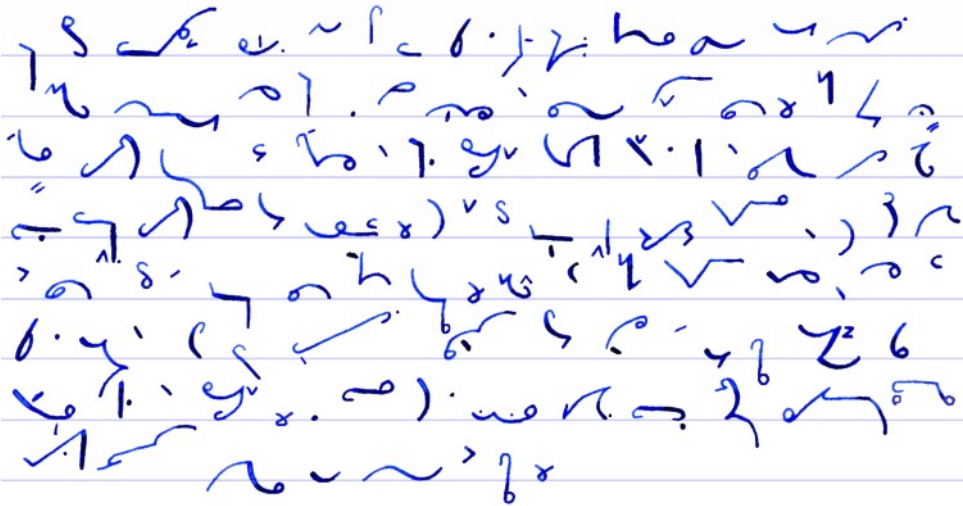
Fireworks Display

The moment the display ended, everyone around us had the same idea as we did, get back to the village, the railway station or bus, and get home. People quickly filled up the village's main streets, which are laid out in the shape of a letter Y, so two streams of people converging into the narrow part at the bottom of the hill made for gridlock. Fortunately, this was entirely under the control of the myriad of police officers, who had closed off the ends of the two roads with barriers and were letting people through alternately in an orderly manner. We all moved along patiently, stopping and starting, flowing round the litter bins and trees. When we were finally through, we decided to walk to our second

station and by the time we arrived half an hour later the crowds had dispersed. We were glad at last* to be sitting on the platform with our chocolate biscuits, then the relief of the cosy train ride and the friendly warm bus, depositing us almost at our door. It was definitely worth the effort of venturing out into the night and the next time* we see it will be on the television watching my video of the event, and certainly close to the radiator this time. (973 words)

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

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



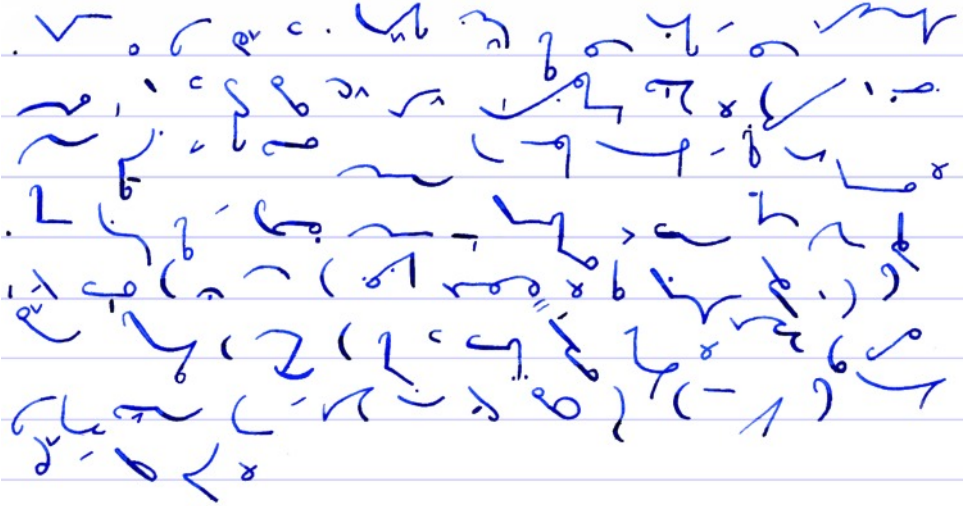
Last Leaves

Today has been gloriously sunny and not at all cold, just a touch of chilly dampness first thing in the morning, and I have been making the most of it, the last moments of something like summer. I had checked the Met Office* weather forecast, with the promise of all-day sunshine followed by a day of heavy rain, and then grey cloudy weather for the next week*. So I planned to go out to one of the parks, to see what was left of the summer plants and to get some autumn photos. I found that I had

the park almost to myself, with just a handful of other people wandering slowly over the lawns and under the trees, enjoying this bonus day of sunshine. The grass was an intense healthy green and there were* circular carpets of red and yellow leaves under many of the trees.

* "Met Office" = Meteorological Office

* Omission phrases "ne(k)s(t w)eek"
"there (w)ere"



Last Leaves

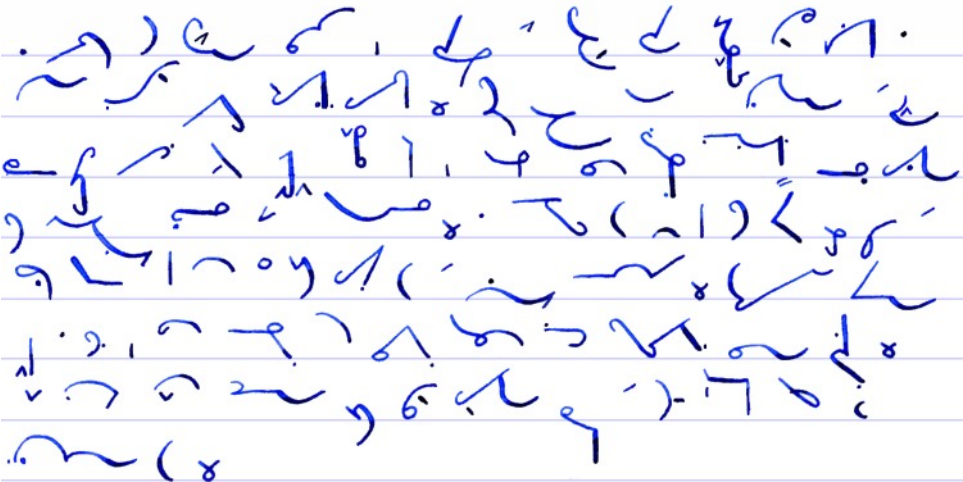
The park is well supplied with a variety of mature trees, some native and some ornamental imports, but all with plenty of space around to allow unrestricted growth. They were all casting long shadows on the grass, making for extra interest and contrast in the pictures. The dark fir trees and evergreens* make good backdrops to the golden* autumn leaf display but up close they made me think ahead to Christmas. It is barely possible to see their spiny branches without imagining them dripping with glittery* baubles and tinsel. I am glad that these ones will continue

growing thick and healthy, in open spaces so that they can reach their natural size and best shape.

* "evergreens" and "overgrown" Insert last vowel to prevent misreading

* "golden" OK without vowels, but insert the diphone in "glowing" as this is similar in outline and meaning

* "glittery" Ensure the final dot vowel is accurately placed, so it does not look like "glittering" with Dot Ing

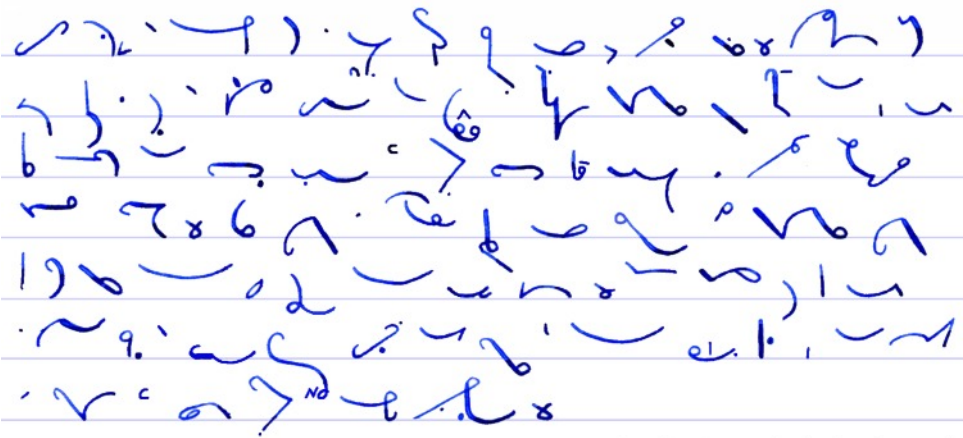


Last Leaves

The river was flowing slowly but generously, and the overflow channel on the other side of the* lawns held a long shallow ribbon of weedy water. There were* no longer any laughing and shouting school children running up and down the sides of it, but instead some placid Canada geese wading through and nibbling the grass on the banks. A couple of them made it their job to stand still and stare back at me as I was

watching them and aiming the camera. They were not checking out a threat but more expecting or hoping for some action, preferably something edible. I matched my walking to their slow waddling speed and so I got past without alarming them.

* Omission phrases "on the oth(er) side of the" "there (w)ere"



Last Leaves

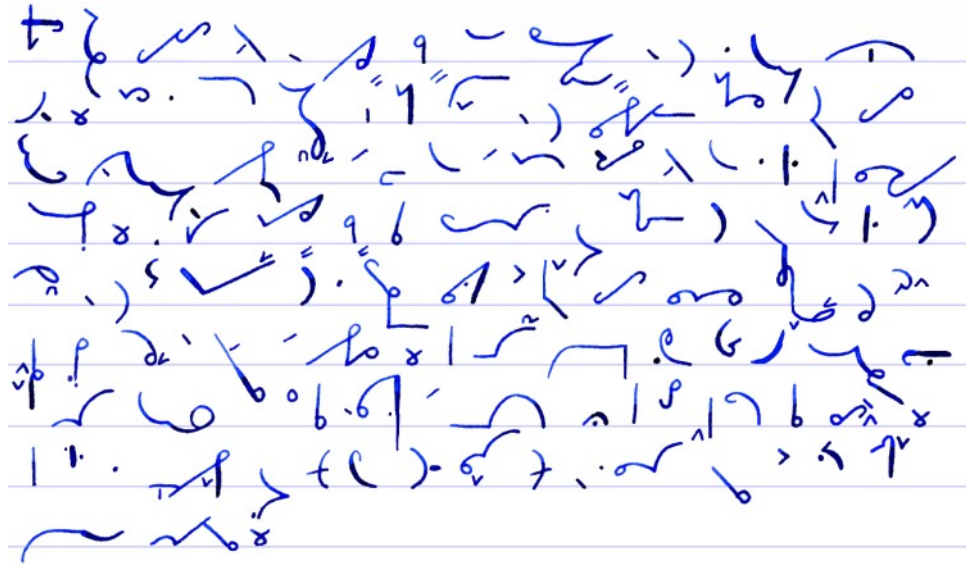
One area of interest was a newly planted strip next to the rose beds. Last time* I was here it was a sea of holes, waiting for thousands of daffodil bulbs to be dropped in, but now it is covered in green netting, with patchy green tufts underneath, the result of several weeks* of grass growth. This will be a magnificent display next spring, as the bulbs will be at their best in their first season in their new home. I can almost see it now, a long street of golden* flowers waving in the breeze on another sunny* day, but in March and April,

with summer approaching instead of receding. (492 words)

* Omission phrases "las(t) time" "several wee(k)s"

* "golden" OK without vowels, but insert the diphone in "glowing" as this is similar in outline and meaning

* "sunny" "snowy" "sun" "snow" Generally best to write the vowels in these



Vintage Cars

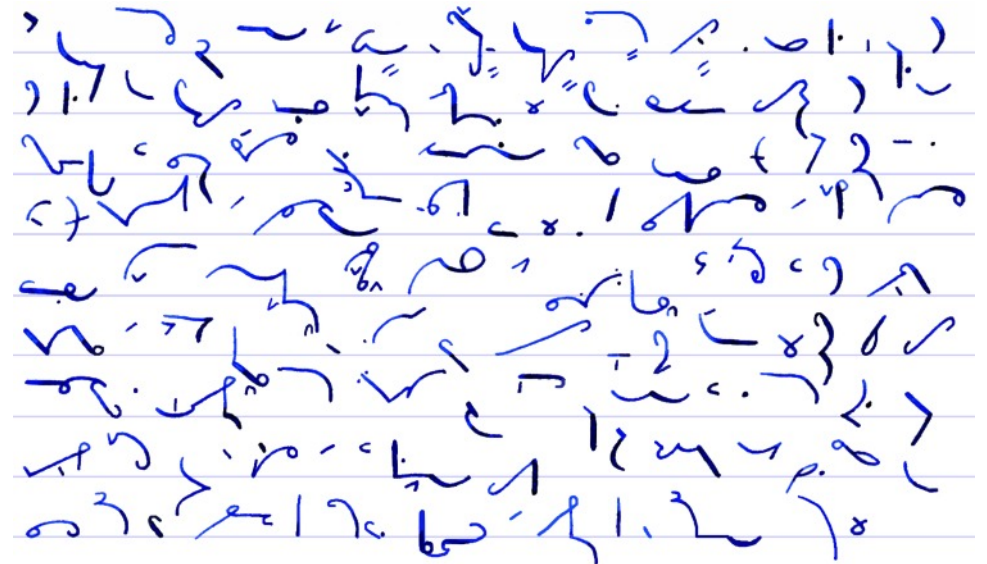
At the beginning of this month* we went up to Regents Street in Central London to see a vintage motor show. I am not a car enthusiast but I do like to see historical items, especially ones that have been lovingly restored and cared for, and I am always up for a day out somewhere interesting. The whole of Regents Street, which is normally full of traffic, was pedestrianised for the day and I was amused* to see that the barrier was a plastic hedge of the type one sometimes sees around the outside seating* areas of pubs and restaurants. It actually looked

safer than the usual invisible grey metal fences, as its solidity and colour made it stand out from its surroundings. It added a countryside feel (ever so slightly) to a small piece of the hard and dry looking metropolis.

* Omission phrase "of this (mon)th"

* "amused" and "amazed" Always insert the vowel

* "seating" Insert the vowel clearly thick, as "sitting" would also make sense

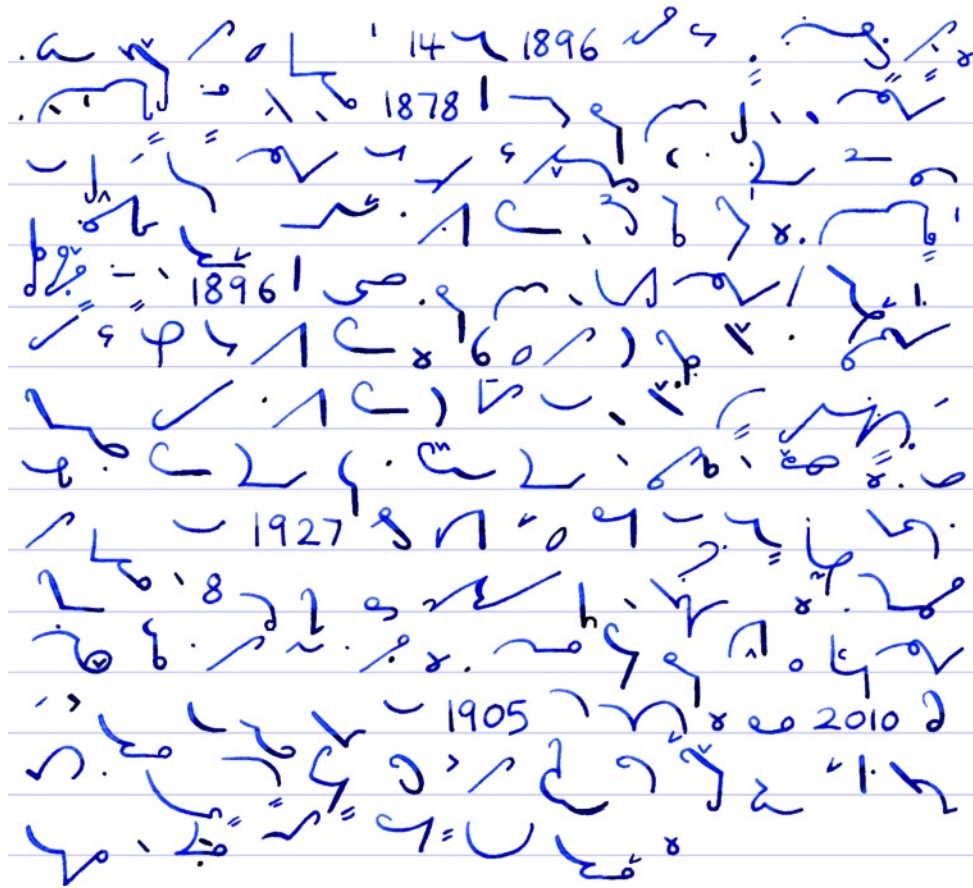


Vintage Cars

All the vintage cars would be going on the London to Brighton Veteran Car Run the next day, but today was their day for everyone to gaze, admire and dream. Every single one of them was in perfect condition with smooth spotless paintwork and gleaming brass fittings (of which there were quite a lot), polished and resembling* solid gold. The large headlamps and side lamps glistened like miniature lighthouse lenses, and the simile continues with the horns, with their rubber bulbs and coiled tubes, to alert people rather than cut through the fog. There was just one

example of an unrestored car, apparently too far* gone to do anything with, a car shaped object of rusted iron full of holes and decaying wood, although I would not be in the least surprised if someone were able to rescue it from complete disintegration and restore it to working order.

* "resembling" Using Ray, because there is an S between it and the M, compare "rambling" that has downward Ar



Vintage Cars

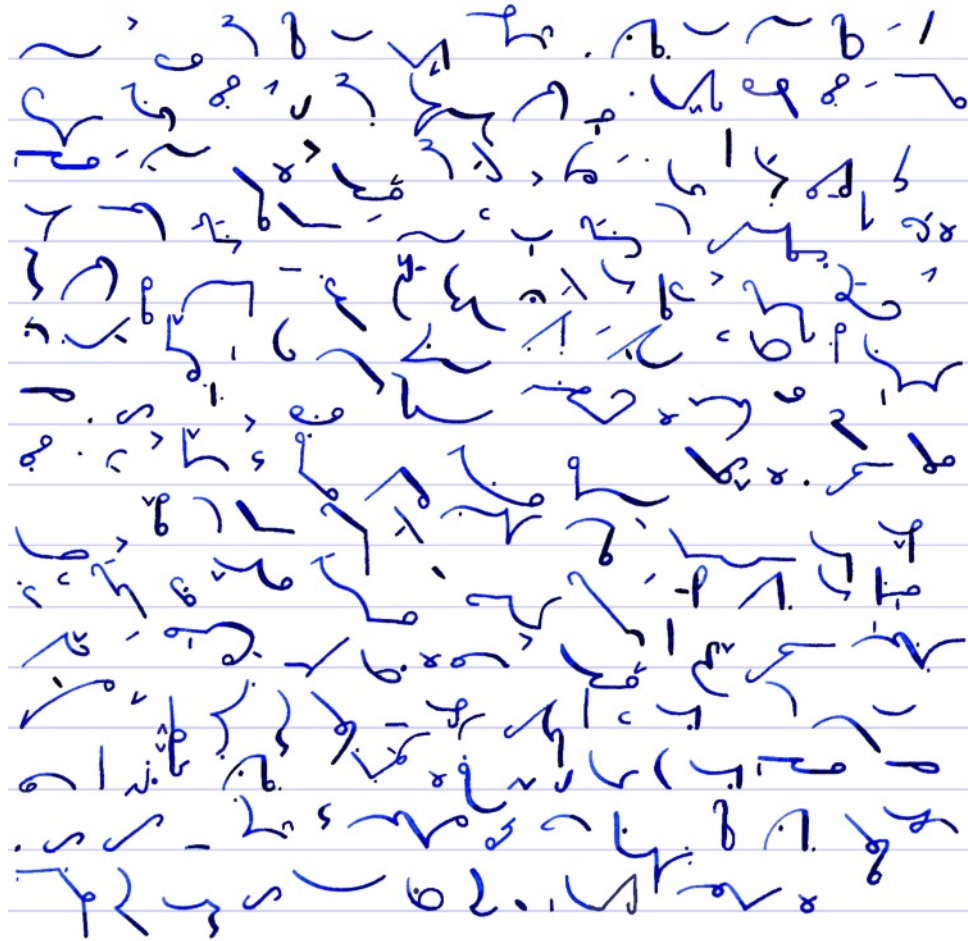
The London to Brighton Run first took place* on 14 November 1896 and was called "The Emancipation Run". The Locomotive Acts up to 1878 had kept the speed limit down to 2 miles per hour* in town and 4 miles per hour* in the country, with the requirement that an escort walk some distance ahead of the vehicle carrying a red flag, to warn of its approach. The Locomotives On Highways Act of 1896 had increased the speed limit to 14 miles per hour*, which obviously did away with the necessity for the red flag. This first run was preceded by a celebratory breakfast where a red flag was torn in two by Lord Winchelsea, and instead of a flag escort they had a "Flying Escort" of hundreds of cyclists. The next Run took place in 1927,

and has been held on the first Sunday in November continuously, apart from a break of eight years during the Second World War due to petrol rationing. The organisers emphasise that it is a run and not a race. The maximum average speed allowed is 20 miles per hour* and all the vehicles have to have been built in 1905 or earlier. Since 2010 there is also a "Future Car Challenge" version of the run, travelling from Brighton to London on the day before the veterans, to showcase modern energy-efficient vehicles.

* "took place" Note that the phrase "taken place" omits the L hook

* Omission phrase "m(iles) per hour"

[illegible]



Vintage Cars

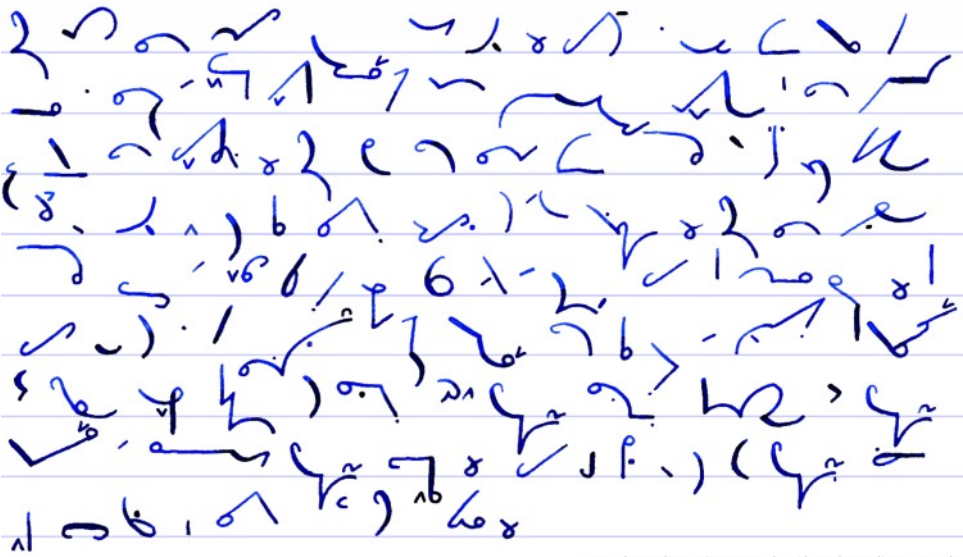
Many of the owners were dressed in period costume, the ladies in long dresses and large floral and feathered hats, and the gentlemen wearing full-length* leather coats, a variety of sensible hats and caps, goggles and long boots. All the vehicles were open to the elements and a few had folding hoods which would only cover and protect the back and many with no protection or windscreen at the front. Although the leather seats looked quite comfortable, I don't think they would have made up for the discomfort of the primitive suspension and the hard narrow tyres, but then maybe the shaking, rattling and rolling, with faces set firmly against the wind, added to the sense of adventure and exploration. I am sure hands would be on hats a lot of the time, with the straps, ribbons and feathers* streaming behind. The wicker baskets fixed to the sides or back brought up mental images of picnic food inside, complete with proper* plates, knives and forks, all carefully prepared and stowed, ready for the decorous, refined and scrumptious country feast. Some of the

vehicles had delightful wicker umbrella holders on the outside of the chassis, so that the passenger could instantly withdraw it when needed, or maybe in summer it contained the lady's parasol. Considering how the gentlemen felt they needed goggles against the wind, one could assume that the umbrellas served the more daintily dressed lady passengers in the same capacity, especially now that the wind in their faces was not 2 but 14 miles per hour.

* "full-length" The two L strokes have to be at slightly different angles in order to be written in succession like this, see "fouly, vilely" etc on www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand.org.uk/theory-14-L-forms.htm#vowel-indication

* "feathers" Insert the vowel, as "features" could also make sense

* "proper" Always insert the first vowel, and the diphthong in "appropriate", as they are similar in outline and meaning

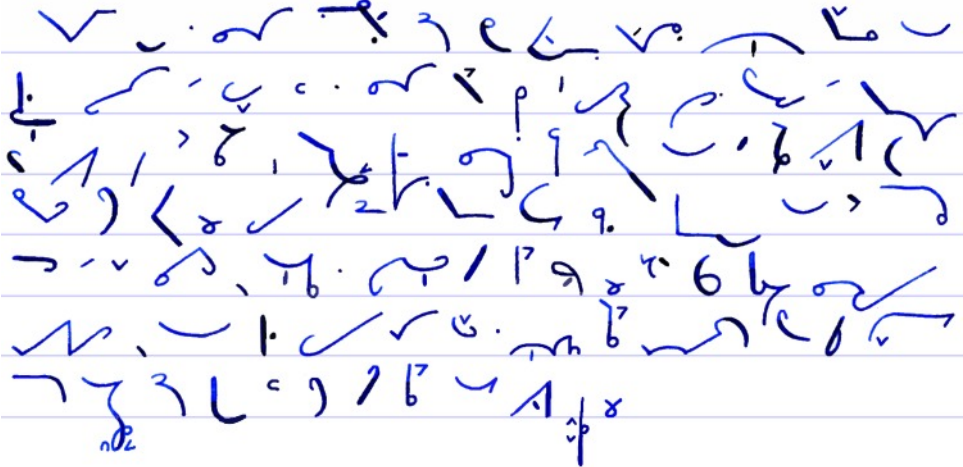


Vintage Cars

There were* also some modern vehicles in the show. We saw a new electric bus, which gives a smooth and quiet ride, and which I am looking forward* to riding on more regularly when they become more widespread. There were several very smart electric cars all attached to their charging points, to show how easy it is, hoping to wean* us off petrol. There were* some racing cars, clean and silent, just itching to start themselves up and zoom away at maximum speed. At one end was a large simulator and it was obvious from its pitching and lurching behaviour that the person inside at the time was scraping around the virtual circuit, demolishing all

the virtual barriers and scattering the virtual crowds. We did not* stay to see them virtually stagger out, green faced but happy with their achievements.

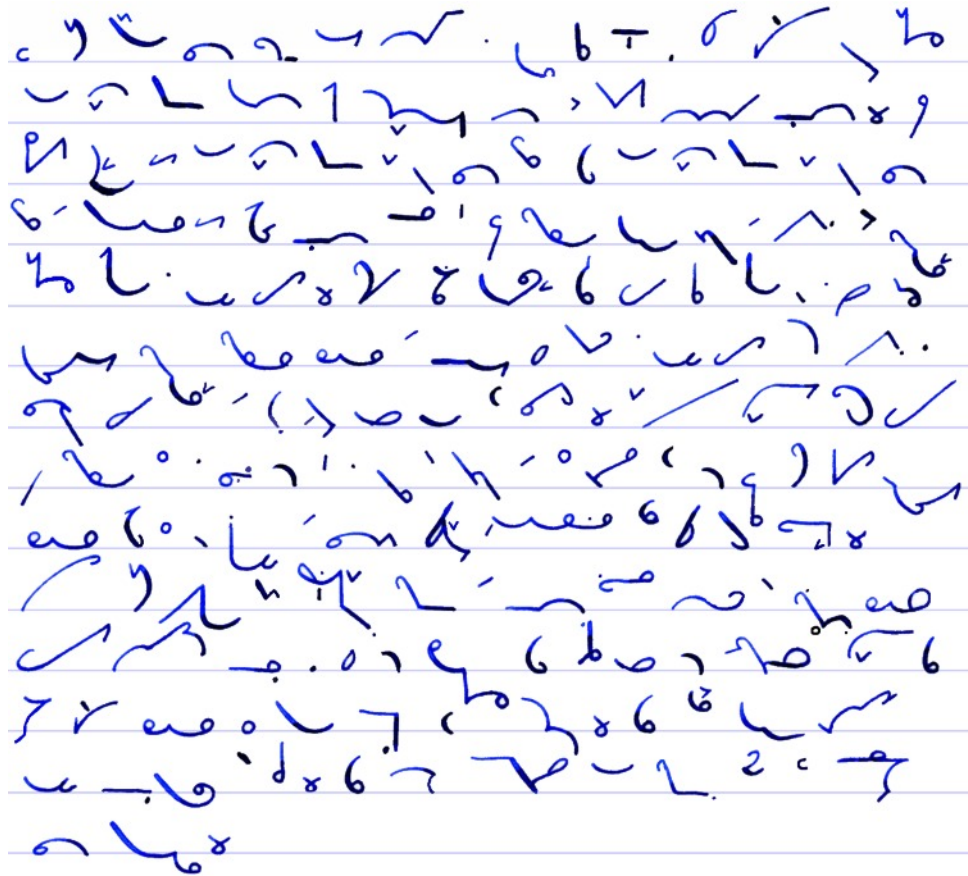
- * Omission phrases "there (w)ere" "looking fo(r)ward"
- * "wean" Helpful to insert vowel, as "win" could make sense here
- * "we did not" Not phrased. The outline for "did not" has to remain in position. If phrased, it would be above the line and mean "do not".



Vintage Cars

Parked under a small gazebo were several chunky police motorbikes, in dayglo yellow and white, with a small boy sitting on one of them, leaning forward and barely able to reach each of the handles, but obviously totally smitten with it and probably in awe of those who ride them as part of their job.

We walked back along the street, taking in all the cars again, and I happened to notice a well-known large toy store. I thought, this is definitely somewhere to return to another day, where I will find a multitude of toys to marvel over, just like the car enthusiasts were doing with their larger toys in the road outside. (1030 words)



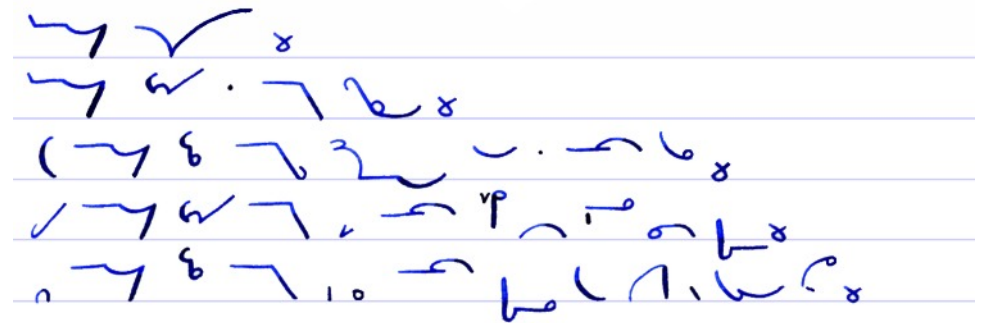
Party Game

When I was buying some fruit in the market a few days ago, the stallholder put the items in my bag for me and it reminded him of the party memory game. He started saying "In my bag I put some apples" then "In my bag I put some apples and bananas" and then the game goes on, with each person having to remember and repeat all the previous items and adding a new one. There are endless variations on this, whether it is adding to a list of words, finishing the previous person's sentence and giving the first part of a new one, or repeating a simple story and thinking up the next thing that happened. I rather like the version where each person has a secret word on a piece of paper and has to use that word when it is their turn to finish the sentence and then has to continue and

somehow justify the nonsense that has just been created. Later on I was reading about stenotyping practice and came across mention of pyramid sentences, where the learner keys the first word several times, then adds the next word, and progresses like this until the whole sentence is being keyed without error. This avoids* having to learn the new key combinations all at once*. This method can be used in practising shorthand with exactly the same benefits.

* "avoids" "evades" Insert the second vowel in these and derivatives, as they are similar in outline and meaning

* Omission phrase "at (wu)ns"



Party Game

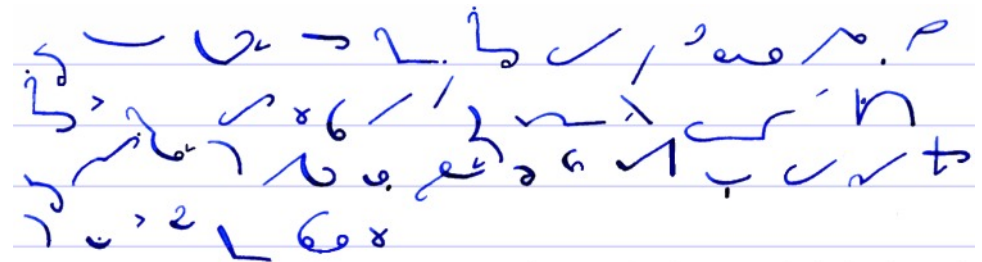
I acknowledge your letter.

I acknowledge that you are a capable person.

They acknowledge that he is capable of working in a commercial office.

We acknowledge that you are capable but the commercial side may cause some difficulty.

You acknowledge that he is capable but his commercial difficulties have led to financial loss.

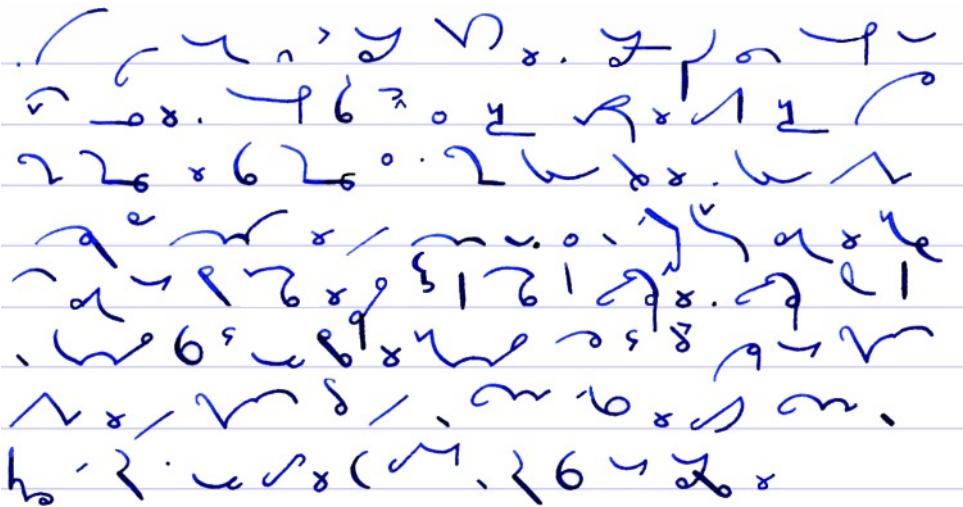


Party Game

Here is another variation, again practising contractions where each short sentence repeats the last contraction of the previous one. These are much easier to make up quickly and tailor to your own learning or revision needs*, using words

that you already know, whether you are at the beginning or end of the shorthand book lessons.

* "needs" Insert the vowel, as "ends" could also make sense here

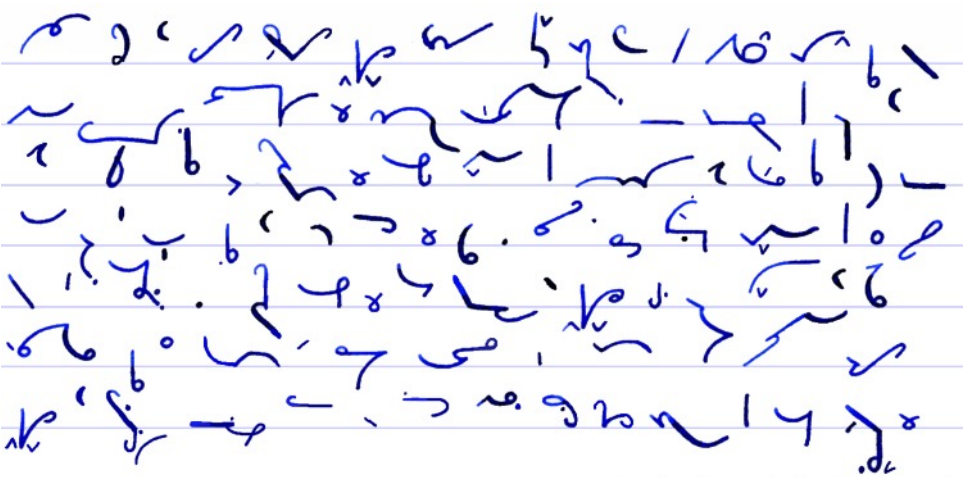


Party Game

The letter will inform you of the insurance* policy. The insurance company showed some interest in my case. The interest on this account is identical to last year. We had identical letters from the organisation. This organisation has a very good financial position. The financial report must be sent immediately. Our immediate need is to obtain the fire certificate. I have received* my certificate in the subject of mathematics*. He said that he would do mathematics at university. The university staff had to familiarise themselves with the new subjects. I familiarised myself with the points listed in the preliminary report. Our

preliminary plans are to amalgamate the offices. We shall amalgamate the two departments and establish a new one. They wanted to establish themselves in the insurance business.

- * "insurance" Can also be written as intersection using N with circle S
- * Omission phrase "I have (re)ceived"
- * "mathematics" The shorter words "maths" and "math" are normal outlines, above the line and vocalised

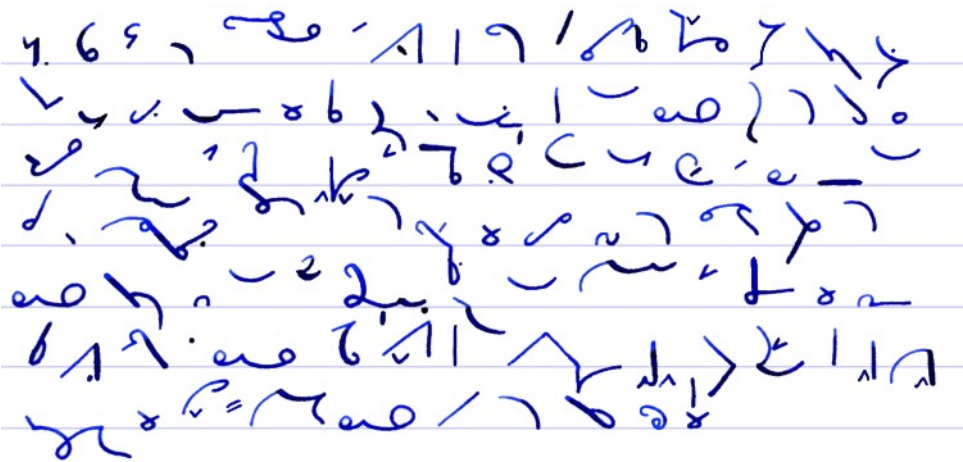


Party Game

Lastly* there is that one stubborn outline that you are tired of tripping over, which refuses to allow itself to be written quickly and correctly. You may have, unwillingly, come to expect it to do that and that just adds to the problem. Instead of writing it immediately and without fuss, it is easy to give in to thinking "Oh no, it's that word again." Thus the half a second allocated to writing it is used up on anticipating the

trouble instead. For the beginner, all outlines tend to feel like that and this solves itself as familiarity and skill increase, but I am referring to one outline that blatantly ignores the call to action and needs stern treatment to bring it into obedience.

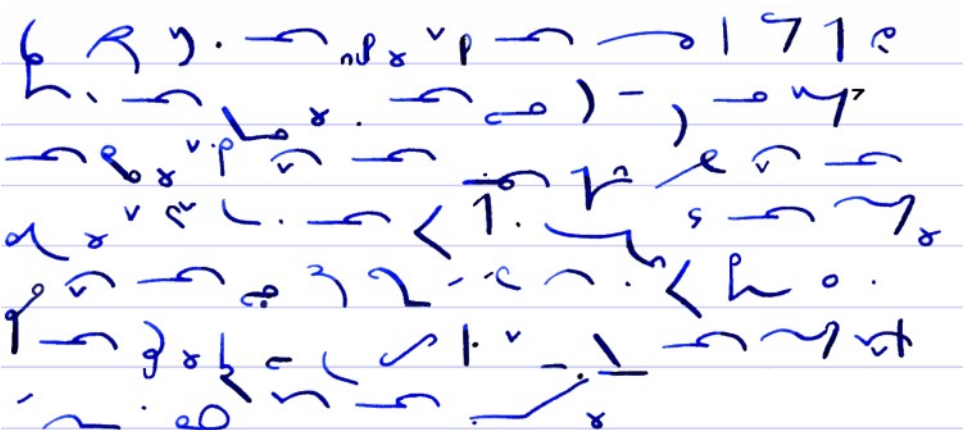
- * "lastly" Omits the T



Party Game

I did this with the word "correspondence" and wrote it very large hundreds of times until the paper fell apart under the wet ink. It is easier to include it in sentences so that your pen is always moving and the troublesome outline gets swept along in the flow and is not given any chance to misbehave or protest. Once you have your

sample passage or sentences before you in shorthand, there is no need to have any longhand on the desk. You can just read and remember a sentence and then write it repeatedly down the page, saying it out loud to yourself. Line-length sentences are your best friends!



Party Game

This time last year I was a commercial student. I studied commercial matters at college and had lots* of commercial books. The commercial course was quite easy because I enjoy commercial subjects. I sat my commercial exam and duly received my commercial certificate. I applied for a commercial job and had an interview with the Commercial Manager. He said my commercial grades were very good and offered me a job starting as a commercial

assistant. It would be great if one day I could* become Commercial Manager of my department and make a success of my commercial career.

* "lots" Insert the vowel in this and in "masses" as they are similar in meaning and outline if not written neatly

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



Party Game

Obviously all learning is like this, building upon what you know, but in shorthand it is especially beneficial to spread out the effort. It is not a big deal if you fail to recite the nine times table perfectly, or recall all the chemical elements or the prime ministers of the last hundred years, because you are not being timed to the second. In shorthand you are being timed moment by moment and you have to recall each outline instantly. Getting behind or leaving gaps can put a dent in confidence that will affect

future writing as well, if allowed to do so. I would suggest you use this method on all those outlines that need additional effort, as well as new material. Your personal notebook listing outlines that have caused* hesitation is a good place to start, in order to* redeem and retrain the troublemakers and get them back into full readiness for service. (954 words)

* "caused" Special outline, to differentiate it from "cost"

A series of horizontal lines for writing, intended for the user to practice shorthand outlines. The lines are evenly spaced and cover the majority of the page area.