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Blogs - 2018 - December

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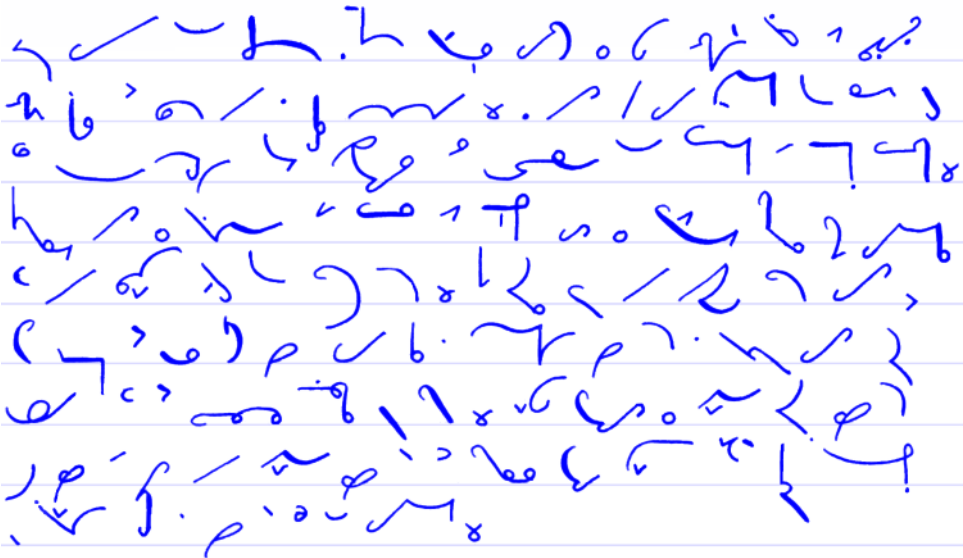
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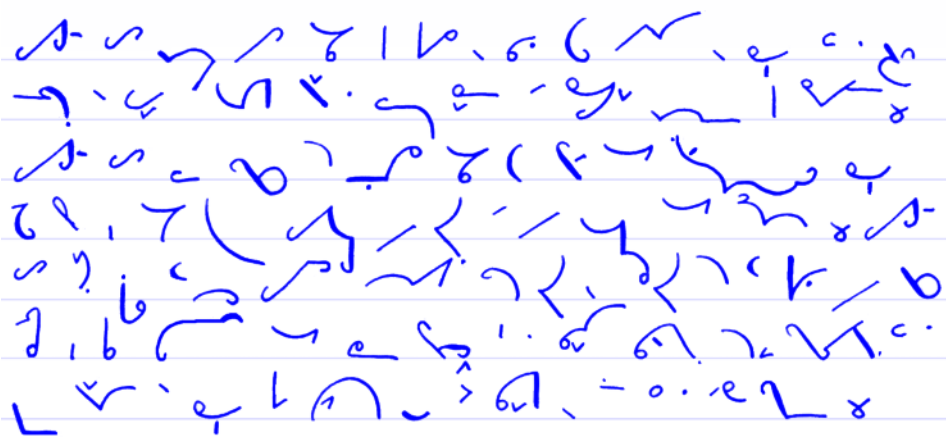


What We Don't Want

Here we are in December, the autumn bonus weather is well and truly* past, and the heatwave and drought conditions of the summer are a distant memory. The rain which we longed* for has now been with us intermittently for the last few weeks* and is increasing in quantity and getting colder. At present the rain is pelting on the glass and the gusty wind is blowing the drops through the windows that are slightly open for fresh air. At the shops people are rushing from one to the other to get all the things on their list, whether it is a mental list or a paper one, especially necessary

with all the Christmas extras to be remembered. While everyone is writing shopping lists or wish lists, and children are writing lists of what presents they would like, I thought it would be interesting to compile a list of what is not wanted.

- * "truly" and "utterly" Always insert the vowel, as they are similar in outline and meaning
- * Omission phrase "last few wee(k)s"
- * "longed" Stroke Ing is never halved

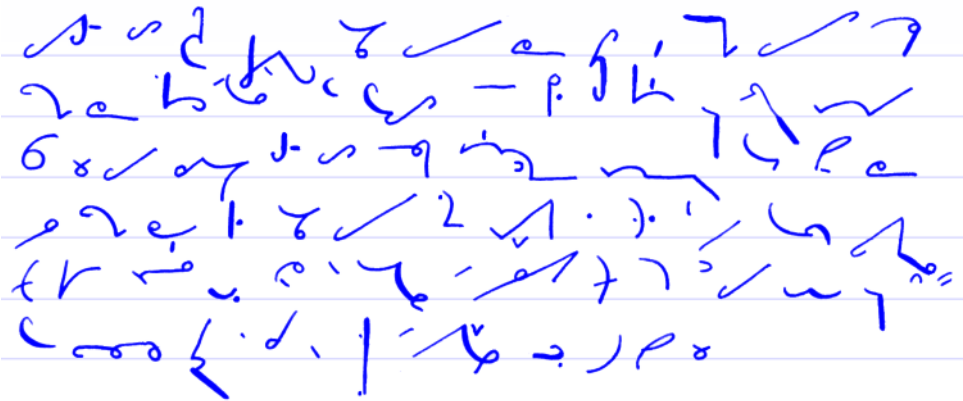


What We Don't Want

We don't want too much* rain, unless it turns to sleet then rapidly to snow*, with a beautiful covering of white followed by a clear sky and sunshine to make it sparkle. We don't want cold breezes or gales unless they blow in the aforementioned snow and then stop, but only after we have done our shopping and are indoors in the warm. We don't want icy conditions that mean we cannot march from shop to shop or that delay our buses and trains, but it is

welcomed in the school playground on a slightly sloping area, preferably with a big pile of snow at the lower end of the slide to act as a soft brake.

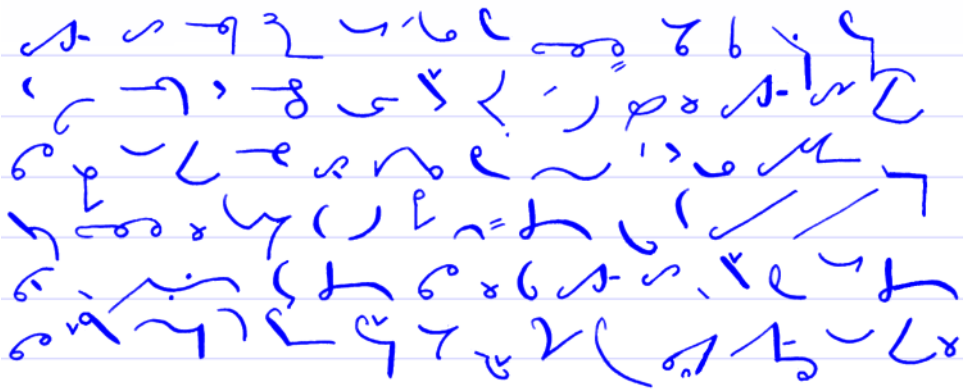
- * "too much" Including the M stroke is quicker than writing separate outlines, similarly "so much" "very much"
- * "snow" Always insert the vowels in "sun/sow, sunny/snowy"



What We Don't Want

We don't want travel disruption unless we are school children who get the wonderful message from the school admin office that everyone can stay* at home today and probably tomorrow as well. We certainly don't want extra homework to make up for the lost* school hours from the Snow Day, unless we are asked to write an essay on our favourite* YouTubes (which will of course need lots of investigation and research) or what we intend to do over Christmas which would be a chance to edit* and revise the gift wish list.

- * "stay" and "sit, set, seated" are safer with vowels inserted, as they are all similar in meaning
- * "lost" Helpful to insert the vowel, so it is not misread as "last"
- * "favourite" Note that "favoured" has an anticlockwise Vr stroke
- * "edit" and "audit" Always insert the vowels



What We Don't Want

We don't want extra work in the office over Christmas, unless it is paid overtime that will cover all the expenses incurred by the shopping and wish lists. We don't want the January sales to start in January, because that won't help us save money on all the things we would like to get before

Christmas. Fortunately they usually start mid-December, even though we are rather slow to rename them the December sales. Then we don't want to buy stuff in the December sales, Cyber Monday or Black Friday, only to find there are further huge reductions in January.



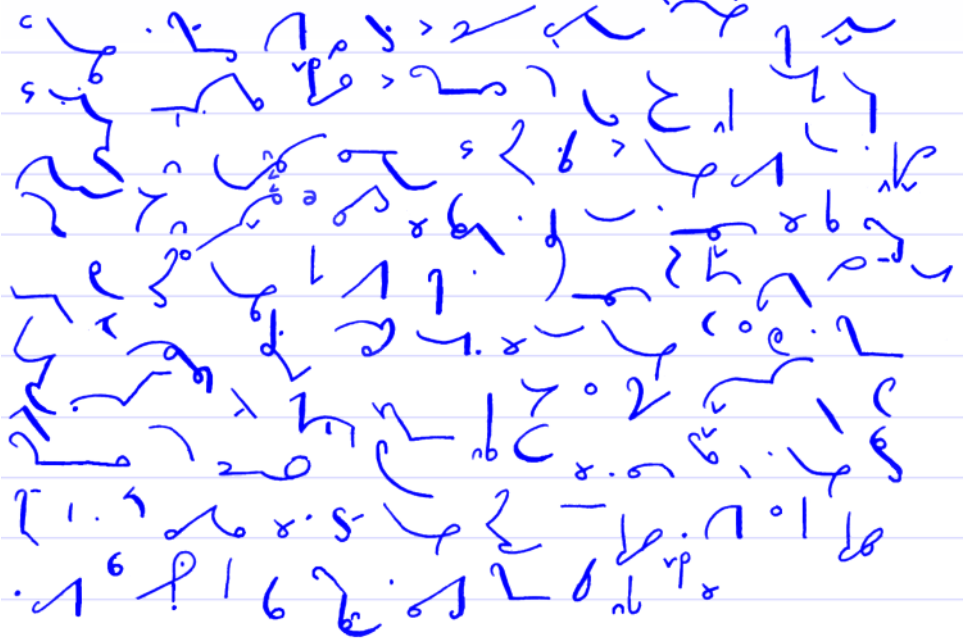
What We Don't Want

For the shorthand writer*, there are a few things that I have found from experience definitely belong on the Unwanted List. First and foremost* is the writing instrument that is not working perfectly. I have found no remedy for a scratchy pen other than to try it on ultra-smooth high quality paper and if that does not help, then it is time to replace it. A pen that runs dry needs investigation as to the reason. It must not be* left uncapped while waiting to use it and sometimes a cleanout and fresh

ink will help, if old and thickened ink is the problem, or maybe use a better quality of ink. A pen that gets too inky at the nib when first taken out may respond to being* stored with the nib and cap uppermost.

* Omission phrase "short(hand) writer" "first (and) foremost" "it mus(t) not be"

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



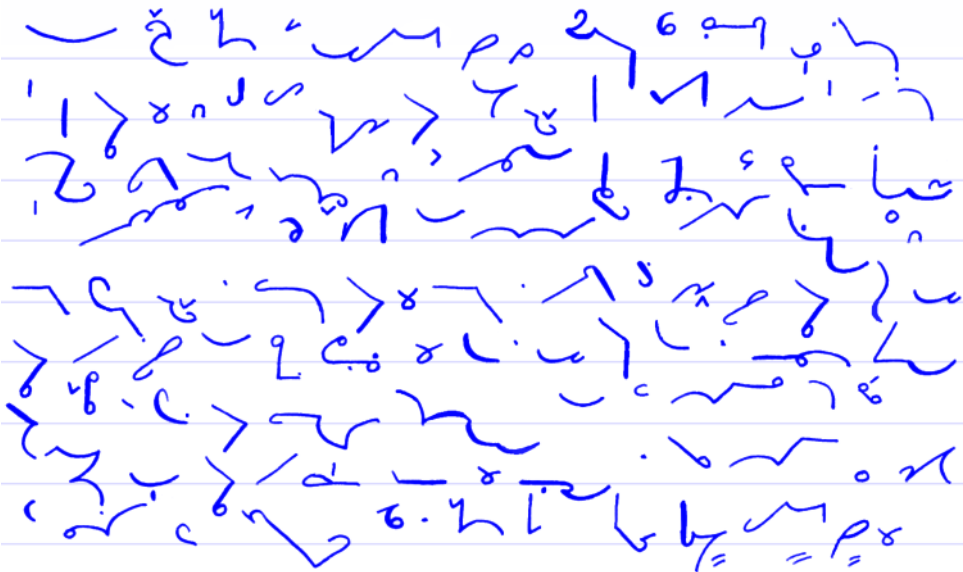
What We Don't Want

With pencils, a broken lead is the bane of the shorthand writer*, wobbling ominously* during writing with the inevitable* collapse sideways of the fragment or even falling out onto the pad, leaving you furiously scribbling with the sharp edges of the pencil wood for an outline or two until you realise what has happened. This would be a disaster in an exam. It is prudent to keep several sharpened pencils at the ready during an exam, although time will be lost in the changeover, and that must be considered* desperate measures indeed. Any pencil that has suffered a break should be marked up

and demoted to practice duties only, as there are likely to be other fractures or weaknesses further along. The same applies to a pencil that has been dropped on a hard surface. A blunt pencil sharpener can twist the lead as it twists the wood that is resisting it, thus producing a hidden break just out of sight.

* Omission phrase "short(hand) writer" "mus(t) be (con)sidered"

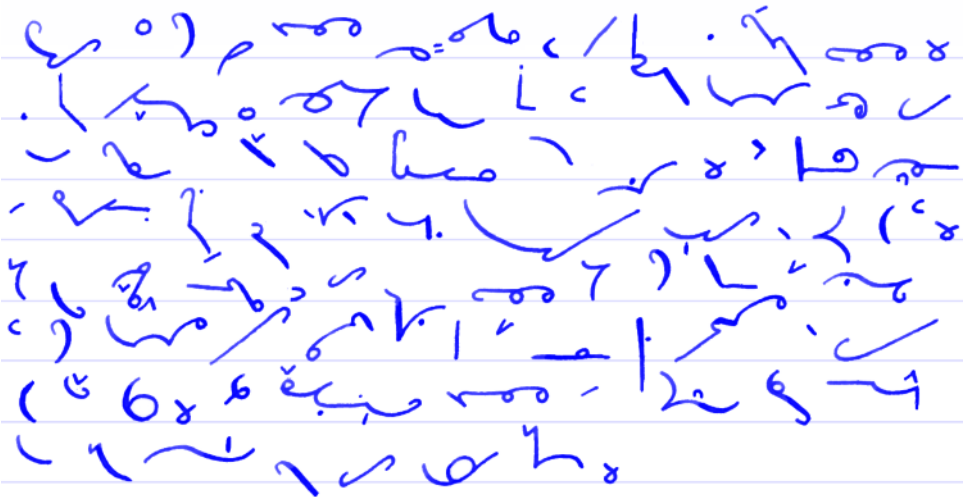
* "ominously" Insert the first vowel, as it is similar to "immensely"



What We Don't Want

Another frightful item on the Unwanted List is the shorthand pad that has scattered notes appearing on different pages. You do not want to turn the page only to find it already written on, and your imagination will be enough to remind you of the resulting disbelief and dismay, with the speaker continuing on relentlessly and the words held in memory rapidly fading, as you keep flipping to find a clear page. Keep

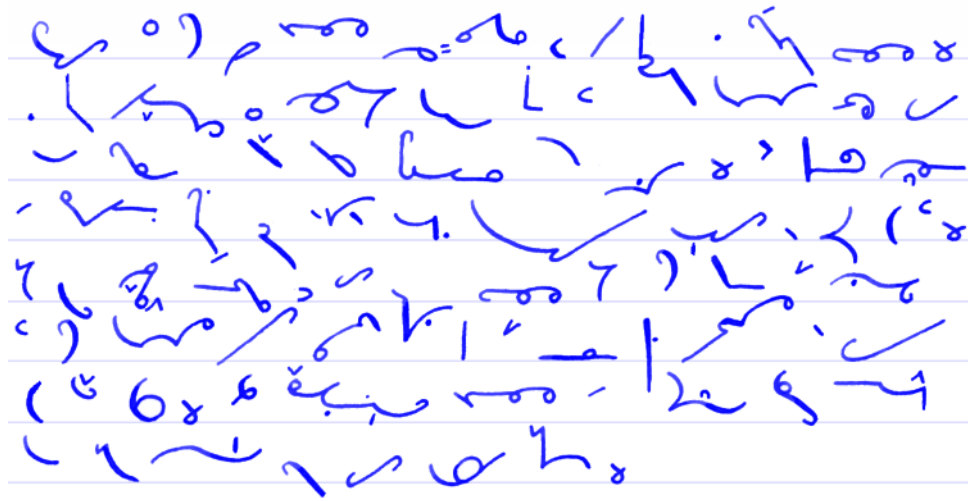
a rubber band round the used pages, so that new pages are used in strict sequence. Have a new pad for an exam, checking both sides of every page carefully, removing any with marks or spots, and ensuring no pages are stuck together. Gaining a pass mark is worth that small effort of preparation and that is an item at the top of the Definitely Wanted List. (900 words)



Christmas Lights 2

Everyone has their list of Christmas must-haves*, without which it would not be a proper* Christmas. The top requirement is most certainly* having contact with family and friends whether in person by post telephone calls or email*. All the decorations, music and sparkly trappings would be hollow indeed if there* were no-one to share them with. I think even light-house keepers would want to delay Christmas until they are back on the mainland with their families, rather than celebrate it on the exact date, regardless of where they find themselves. That is the sine-qua-non of Christmas, and assuming that has been accounted for, I have my own number one necessary item.

- * "must-haves" Full outlines for "haves" as the short form would not be clear in this context
- * "proper" Always insert the first vowel, and the diphone in "appropriate", as these are similar in outline and meaning
- * Omission phrases "mos(t) certainly" "there (w)ere"
- * "email" Insert the first vowel, to help distinguish from "mail"
- * "if there" Only "if" is doubled or halved for "if it". "For" is not, to ensure these two remain distinguished from each other in phrases

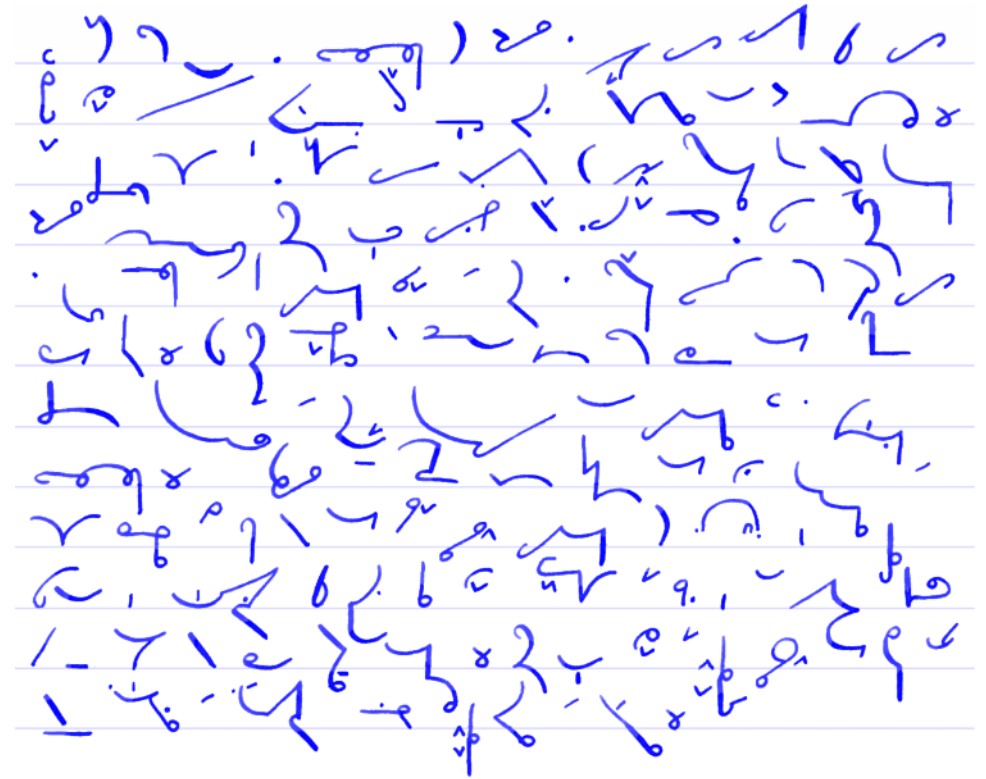


Christmas Lights 2

That item is not snow, puddings, mince pies or even presents. It is Christmas lights. Just about any other* Christmas accessory can be missing, but there must be* lights. Shiny baubles, tinsel, gleaming wrapping paper and sweets in foil just don't cut it on their own. In comparison they are dull, second-best versions that only glow and sparkle because they reflect the coloured lights all around. The string lights are more alive (literally, electrically live!) than any

other* Christmas trimming and, unlike in earlier years, they are cheap, abundant, robust and come in a multiplicity of designs with umpteen twinkling, flashing and chasing options. I like my lights steady, so switching them on means repeated clicking through the options to find that one.

* Omission phrase "any oth(er)" "there mus(t) be"

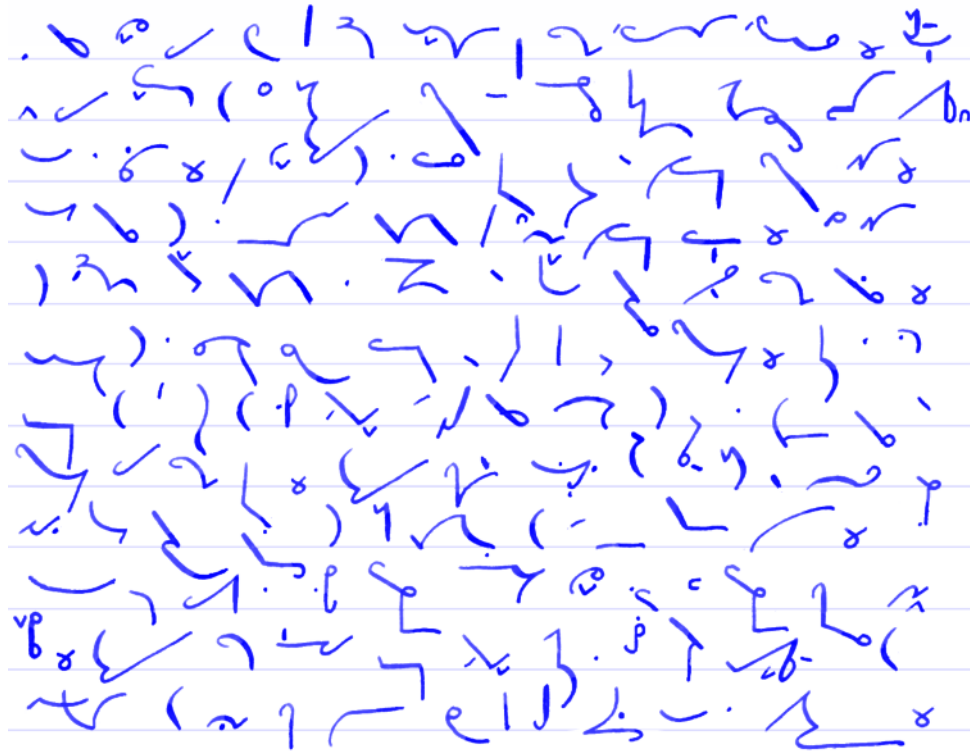


Christmas Lights 2

When I was very young, the Christmas tree was always a real one, and we had just one set of lights, rather chunky pine cone shaped bulbs in all the colours. I discovered early on the ideal way to wrap them round the branches for best effect, always making sure there were* none wasted by shining against the wall, and that there were* a few extra at window height and especially a bright yellow or orange one near the top. Then there was the excitement of walking home from school in the dark December afternoons, and seeing if there were any windows with an illuminated Christmas tree.

This was quite magical to me at the time, in the late fifties and early sixties, as the tree up in the high house window was alluring but distant, welcoming but unreachable, just shedding its light quietly on the street, but not revealing the decorations which could only be seen by those indoors. There were* no lights on the outside of the houses as they had not yet become commonplace and affordable except outside shops and pubs.

* Omission phr ase "that there (w)ere"



Christmas Lights 2

The best lights we ever had were entirely different from the normal offerings. I don't know how we acquired them, as I think they were probably quite expensive at the time and they must have been* greatly reduced in a sale. Each light was a glass tube full of liquid, probably oil. In the base was a coloured bulb which made the liquid glow. As the oil was warmed by the bulb, a column of tiny bubbles rose from the base. Underneath was a simple spring clip to attach it to the branch. It was an art to get them on so that they stayed upright and generally the best method was to choose a thicker piece of branch away from the tip. They were truly* enchanting although I was too impatient* to sit and wait for the bubbling to begin*, so I had to leave them and come back later. Another year we had a set of plastic candle lights, complete with

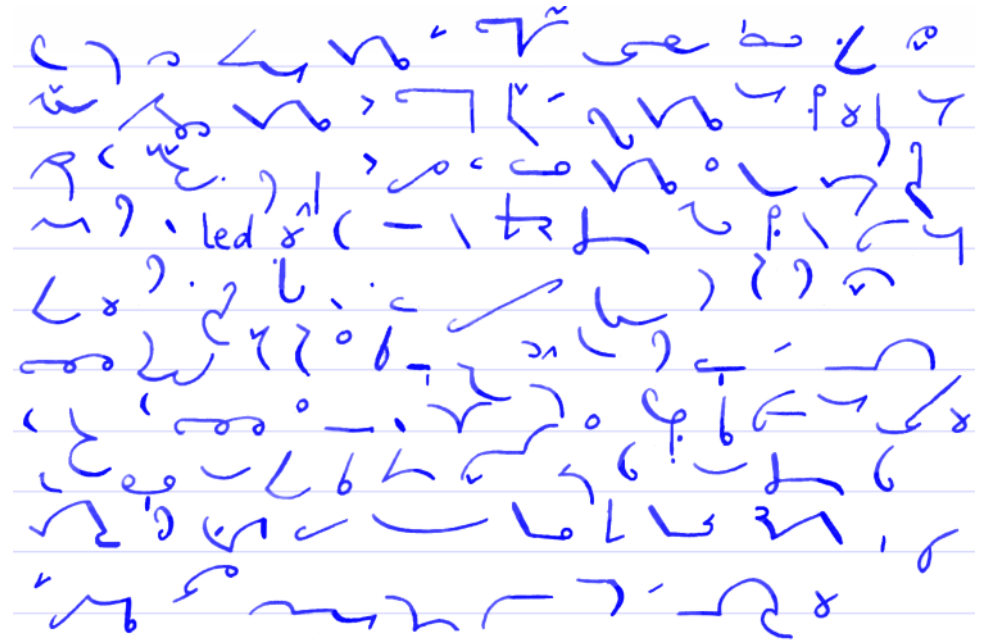
plastic drips round the sides. They were very awkward to get upright and it was a constant battle to readjust them and unfortunately they made the tree look as if it had been shaken in an earthquake.

* Omission phrase "they mus(t have) been"

* "truly" and "utterly" Always insert the first vowel, as these are similar in outline and meaning

* "impatient" See www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand.org.uk/distinguishing-outlines-5-care-e-n.htm "impatient impassioned impassion"

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



Christmas Lights 2

Every year meant checking the bulbs on the gradually increasing stock of ageing lights and finding replacement bulbs of the correct type and number of bulbs in the set. It was only last year that I finally threw out all the ones with glass bulbs as being too much trouble, and now they are all LED. They go up at the beginning of December and often stay up well into January. They are a cheerful addition to a cold winter evening, so although they are my Christmas essential, I think of them as just good to have around for their glow and colour, without feeling that Christmas has

come too early or is overstaying* its welcome in the New Year. If it snows in January, which is much more* likely here than in December, then I will be glad they are not folded away in their box at the back of the wardrobe but still on the windows and walls, making the room look cosy and colourful. (785 words)

* "overstaying" Not using a diphone, as the "i" sound is included in the Dot Ing

* Omission phrase "much m(ore)"



Short Letters 15

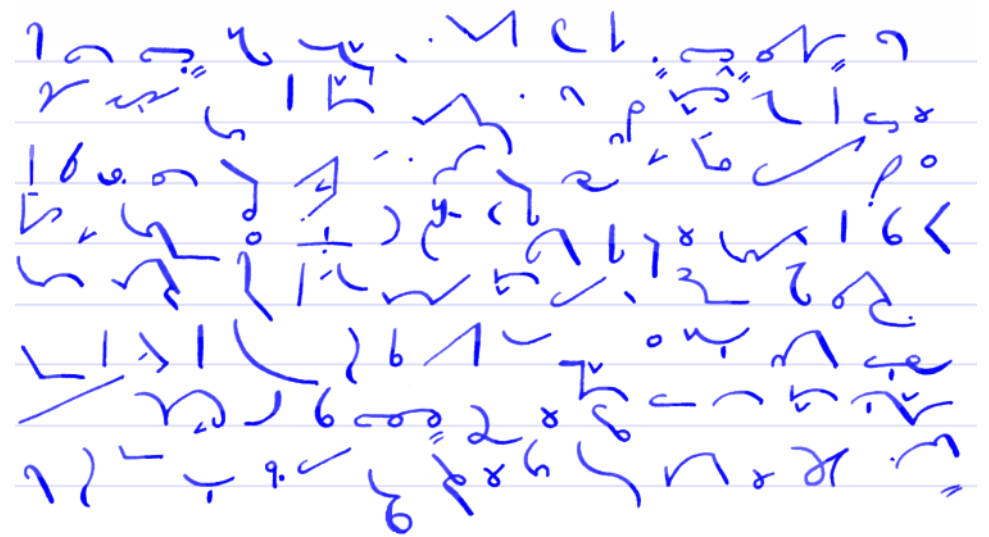
Conversational matter to give practice in the commonest words

Dear All, We would like to invite you to our Christmas Party on Boxing Day. As we are all spending Christmas Day with our immediate families, we thought it would be great to all meet up somewhere special the day after. We are having a buffet lunch at The Crown* Hotel, followed by entertainment in their big ballroom, with dancing and music, and items for the children as well. In the evening we are having a sit down meal with waiter and waitress* service, and then a quieter time of singing Christmas songs around the blazing log fire hearth in the old hall. There is also a nursery for babies, who will be

asleep by the evening. It will be just wonderful, with fun, food and wine laid on, and an enjoyable family time of catching up with everyone. We are looking forward to seeing you. Love, Joe and Mary (150 words)

* "The Crown" Not using Tick The, as that word is part of the name of the business

* "waitress" Generally helpful to insert the second vowel, so it is not misread as "waiters", although that is not likely here. See <https://www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand.org.uk/theory-19-suffixes-general.htm> Section 5, for examples of where a stroke S is used.



Short Letters 15

Dear Mr Green, I have been invited to a party over at The Crown Hotel very shortly and wondered if you had time to repair a particular suit of mine and have it cleaned. It just needs some buttons reattaching and a little bit of mending on the pockets where the stitching has torn, but the fabric is OK, so I don't think that will be difficult to do. If you are able to do this job for me, I will be able to drop it off tomorrow on my way to work, and then hopefully pick it up the day

after, so that it is ready in good time, as I know you will be closing rather earlier than usual this Christmas season. Please call me on my mobile number, so that I can know straight away if this is possible. Thank you for your help. Yours sincerely, Albert* (150 words)

* "Albert" Note that "Robert" uses plain B stroke and halved Ray, in order to distinguish these two



Short Letters 15

Dear Margaret, Just a note to ask your opinion* on some party wear that I am thinking about. I have been invited to a Christmas party at The Crown and I am wondering what to wear. Do you think that green dress would be suitable, as it is quite decorative and not too revealing? Or should I wear the pink one with the collar, which has a fuller skirt for dancing? Maybe I should think of buying a new one altogether. I might have to get out that blue dress I wore for that wedding, but that would mean new shoes, which there is no time to find. I would so value your opinion, as I know you will be very practical and

honest* about what would be the right thing to wear to suit the occasion. I look forward* to hearing from you very very soon! Love from Jean (150 words)

* "opinion" This short form is on the line, to help distinguish it from the similar "information" above the line

* "honest" Always insert the first vowel, to help distinguish it from "nice" when these are not neatly written

* Omission phrase "I look fo(r)ward"



Short Letters 15

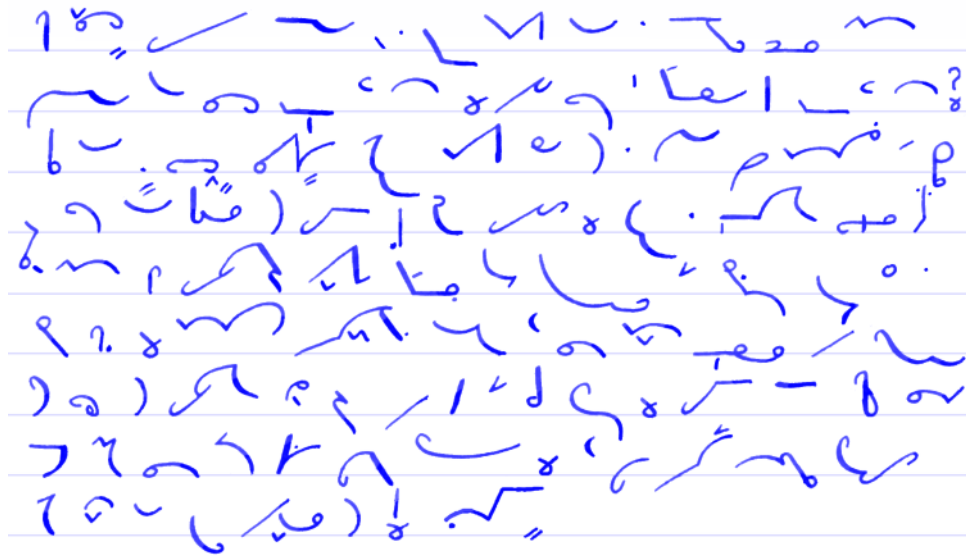
Dear Susan and Brenda, Guess what, we are going to a big party on Boxing Day and I am allowed to bring two friends with me. Would you two like to come? There's going to be dancing in the afternoon so we can all wear those outfits that we bought for the disco last month*, and we can try out the new makeup, hair gels and glitter sprays that we have been waiting for a chance to use. It is going to be a great afternoon and I hope* you can come as well, otherwise I will be dancing with some distant cousins who I don't think will be as energetic as us. We might even have a chance to persuade the deejay to play our favourite* songs and

music. Let me know as soon as possible* so we can get together and plan our outfits. Lots of love, Angela* (150 words)

* Omission phrases "las(t) month" "and I (h)ope" "as soon as poss(ible)"

* "favourite" It may be helpful to insert the last vowel to prevent misreading, but note that "favoured" uses a left Vr stroke, to distinguish

* "Angela" Insert first vowel, as "Nigel" has the same outline



Short Letters 15

Dear Simon, We are going to a big party in a couple of weeks and I am looking for someone to go* with me. Are you free on Boxing Day to come* with me? It is in The Crown Hotel and they have already sent us a long list of meals and sweets to choose from in advance, so we can eat whatever we want. They have a golf course attached and I am told we will be able to ride the buggies for the afternoon on the spare field, as a special treat. I am also reliably informed that some of my cousins are

bringing their friends, so we will have lots* of people our age on the dance floor. We can go dressed smart casual and I think some hair gel will be in order. That will really impress everyone and they might not even recognise us! Mark (150 words)

* "to go" "to come" Always insert the vowel in "to go" in phrases, to distinguish it

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



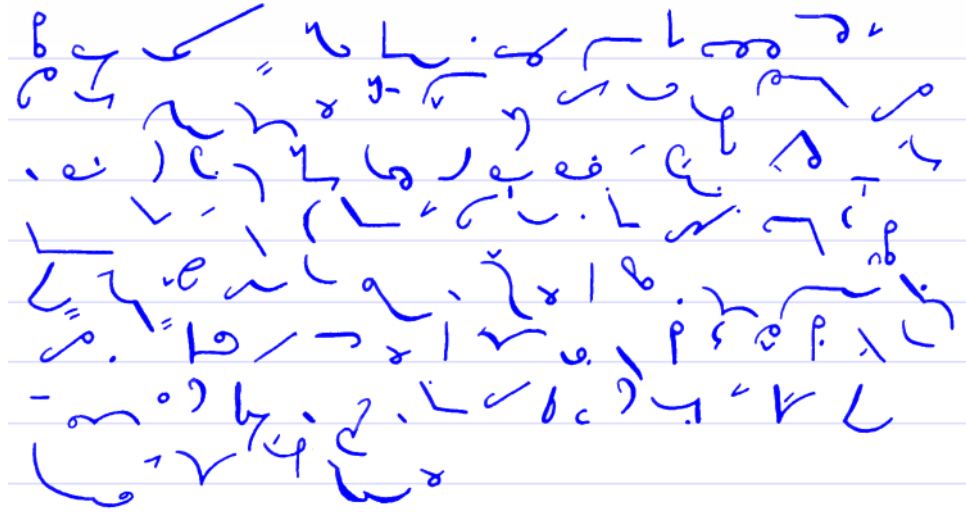
Short Letters 15

Dear All, What a wonderful day it was at The Crown last week*. I am so glad everyone turned up OK despite the snow* and rain. The food was wonderful, the cakes and sweets table was groaning with goodies and the wines certainly warmed everyone up after their long journeys in the cold. Things were really hotting up on the dance floor and I did spy some of my nephews, nieces and their friends looking like a million dollars in their new gear, so well done them. The catering staff did a wonderful job. It was great to hear

everyone singing all the Christmas carols round the log fire. What a wonderful way to spend a snowy* Christmas afternoon. I have some brilliant photos of it all which I will be sending to you later. Let me wish you all a happy and prosperous New Year. Love, Joe and Mary (150 words) (900 words total)

* "snow" "snowy" Always insert the vowels in "snow/sun, snowy/sunny" to distinguish

* Omission phrase "las(t w)eek"



Cards

As it is nearly New Year, I have been taking a closer look at the Christmas cards on the walls in the living room. I don't like to throw away the non-festive landscape ones too soon, so every year I take the favourites*, usually snow* scenes and fluffy robins, cut off the picture part and put them back on the wall in a compact wintry group that suits January and February, whilst waiting for spring to arrive. It stops the room looking bare once the decorations are gone. It hardly needs to be said that the lights stay up for quite some time*, as they are definitely too cheerful to

pack away just when they are needed on the dull January afternoons and the early onset of evening.

* "favourites" Note that "favoured" uses a left Vr form

* "snow" Always insert the vowels in "snow/sun, snowy/sunny"

* "some time" This is a shorthand phrase, the longhand is written as two words and only as one word in "sometimes"

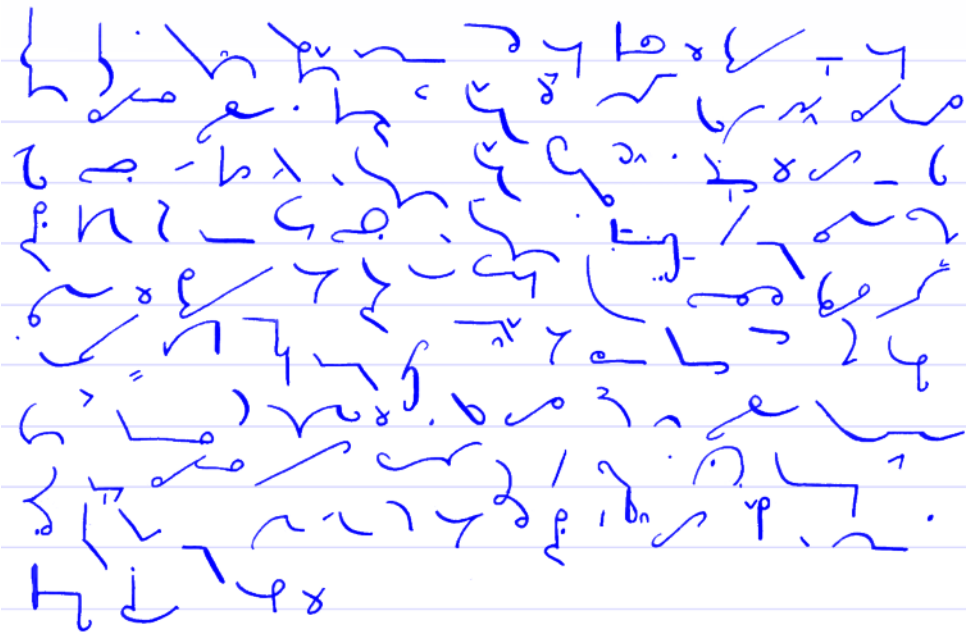


Cards

During school holidays, I had rather more cards to play with, as I got them from my relatives. One year I saved them all, and remade them into new cards for next year, to sell for school fundraising. I cut out the best pictures and stuck them onto new folded paper, and added more glitter wherever possible, to make up for the home-made appearance. One of the teachers bought a large wad of them,

which was most gratifying for me, as I was not sure if they were smart enough. I think her action was more to support the fundraising than a judgment* on the quality of my card production.

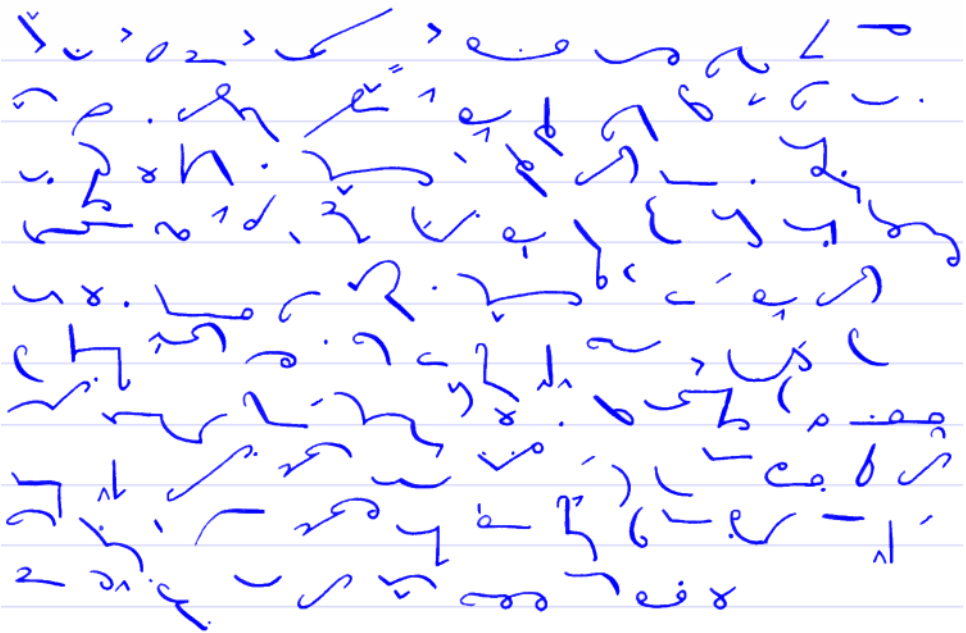
* "judgment" This can also be spelled "judgement" in British English



Cards

At that time it was a popular pastime to make cards into decorations. They were cut into circles using a template with five points marked evenly round the circumference, and then creased and turned up to form five flaps around a pentagon. One could then staple twelve of them together along the creases to form a dodecahedron which could be hung from the ceiling. As they were only available in

quantity after Christmas, this was really a New Year holiday activity to keep children occupied until school began again, so the festive theme of the pictures was irrelevant. The best ones were made using pinking shears to cut the circles rather than normal scissors, which produced a lacy effect, and the top part could be left off or only stapled on one side, to make a decorative container instead.



Cards

By the end of the first week of the New Year, all the senders* names will have been checked against my list, the waste paper* recycled*, and the snowy display will be placed on the wall in a neat arrangement. It will be a reminder of possible weather to come, the anticipated photographic opportunities and the chance to wear the furry snow boots that have not been needed for some years now. The pictures will also be a reminder that cold and snowy weather, however decorative and novel, means a very cold trip down the garden to the fish pond every morning to carefully break and remove the ice. The

best encouragement though is the excuse to get out the "winter warmer" knitting patterns and see if I can squeeze just one more pair of leg warmers into the sock drawer, then I can safely go out and walk around comfortably in one of my Christmas card scenes. (535 words)

* "senders" Same outline as "centres"

* Omission phrase "was(t)e paper"

* "recycle" To make this outline clear, the circle S is flattened and the L hook exaggerated