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Blogs - 2020 - February

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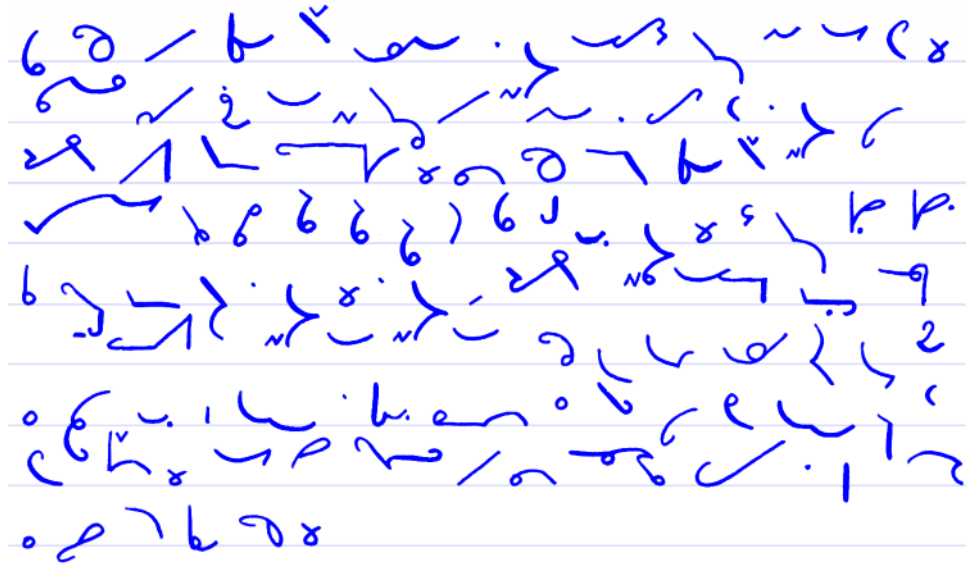
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Distinguishing Phrases 2

These phrases are distinguished by inserting a vowel in one of the pair and not in the other. As long as you are consistent in how the pairs are written, the one without a vowel will always be read back correctly. Some phrases can be distinguished by altering the position, such as "of those, of this, of these", so those do not need vowels. With the pair "at last, at least" it is prudent to give both a vowel. A vowel should always be included for extra clarity in any phrase if felt necessary, especially if the shorthand is less than*

neat, but having a definite* scheme as above will save having to do that every time. In the last paragraph are some examples where a different method is used, or it is not phrased.

* "definite" Insert the last vowel, and the diphthong in "defined" as they are similar in outline and meaning

* "less than" Downward L in order to join this phrase



Distinguishing Phrases 2

I paid a lot of money for those new clothes and shoes.

He has waited a very long time for this job opportunity.

She has been saving her money all year for these presents.

We went to those offices at the end of last month* for a meeting.

I have been invited to this meeting to take notes of the discussions.

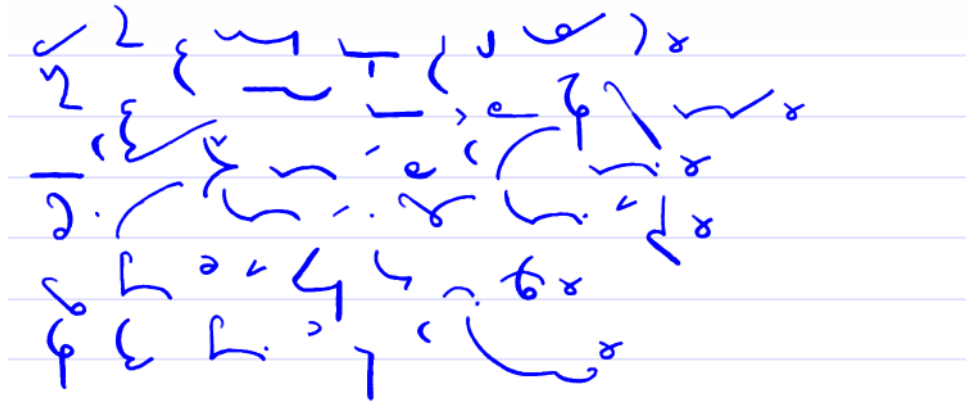
She confirmed that she came to these meetings at head office.

I think I can probably finish the report without those files.

We will not be able to work without this very important information.

She was glad to be living without these difficulties with the transport.

* Omission phrase "las(t) month"



Distinguishing Phrases 2

We asked when they intended to go but they did not answer us.

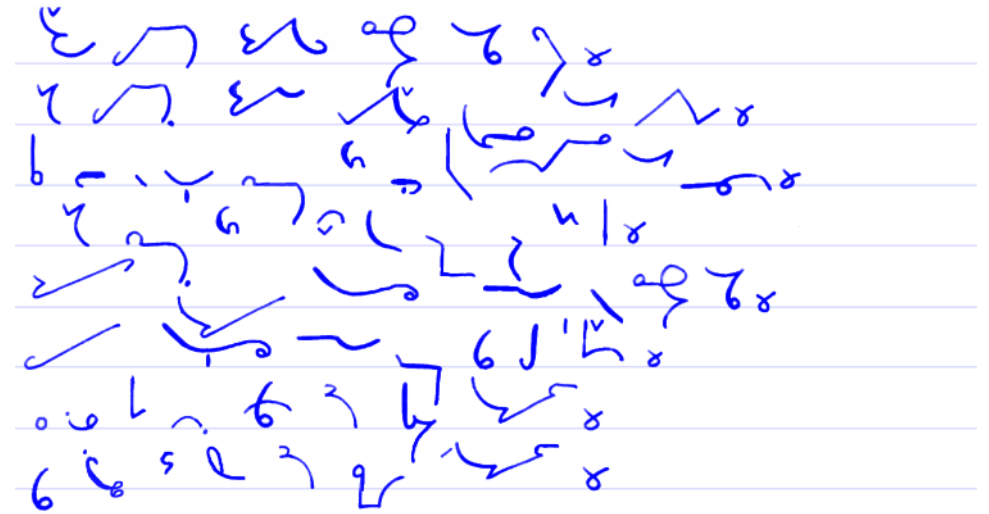
I asked when they were going to give to the school and they said probably tomorrow.

Give that file to me and send that letter to him.

There is a letter for me and a parcel for him on the table.

Please tell me what is on the agenda for the meeting this morning.

They said they would tell him what to do that afternoon.



Distinguishing Phrases 2

Finally* we can say that we have been successful in this project.

I think we can see that we need to revise the figures in the report.

It is great to know you can say that you gained top marks in the exam.

I think you can see that you might* have to talk to them about it.

I wonder if we are by any means going to be successful in this.

We are by no means going to get this done on time.

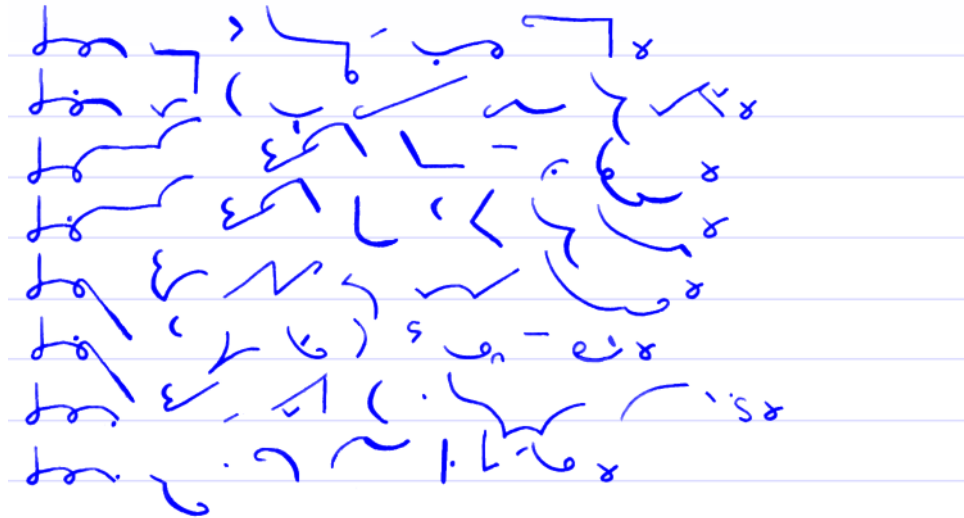
His comments at the meeting this morning were definitely for the record.

These conversations with the staff were strictly off the record*.

* "Finally" "officially" Always insert the first vowel, as the outlines are similar

* "you might" Not phrased, whereas "you may" is phrased

* "off the record" Because of the serious consequences if these two are not transcribed correctly, a non-theory suggestion is to intersect off the/record (as it occurs less frequently) so that it cannot be misread



Distinguishing Phrases 2

It is most* important to get all the facts and names correct.

It seems important to let them know we are waiting for them to reply.

It is most* likely that we will be back quite late this evening.

It seems likely that we will be doing that job for them after all.

It is most* probable that they will return here tomorrow afternoon.

It seems probable that she will phone us with the news quite soon.

It seems to me* that we should write them a formal letter of complaint.

It seems to him* to have been a very long day at the office.

* "most" Omits the T in all these phrases

* Omission phrases "it seems (to) me" "it seems (to) him"



Distinguishing Phrases 2

The experiences described in my recent book are all mine.

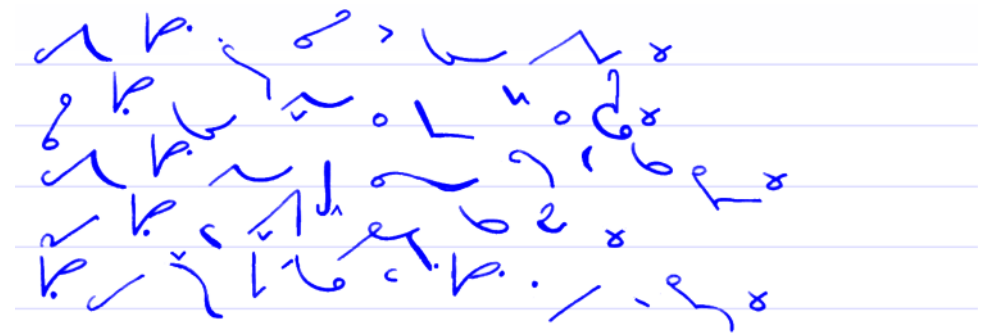
All the photos and drawings in my new book are my own.

The house is mine and the car is also mine.

The opinions contained in my latest report are entirely my own.

It is in many ways a relief that they did not come here yesterday.

I am in my own way very happy to be living here.



Distinguishing Phrases 2

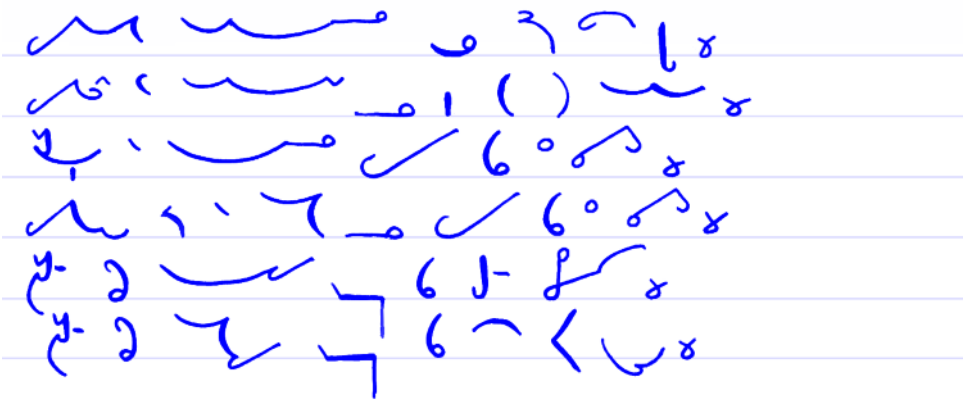
We have at least completed half of the financial report.

He has at last finished writing his book about his travels.

We have at least written down something from that fast speaker.

You are at last able to write reasonably fast shorthand.

At last we arrived at the office with at least an hour to spare.



Distinguishing Phrases 2

We know that in another case things were more difficult.

We found that in neither case did they say anything.

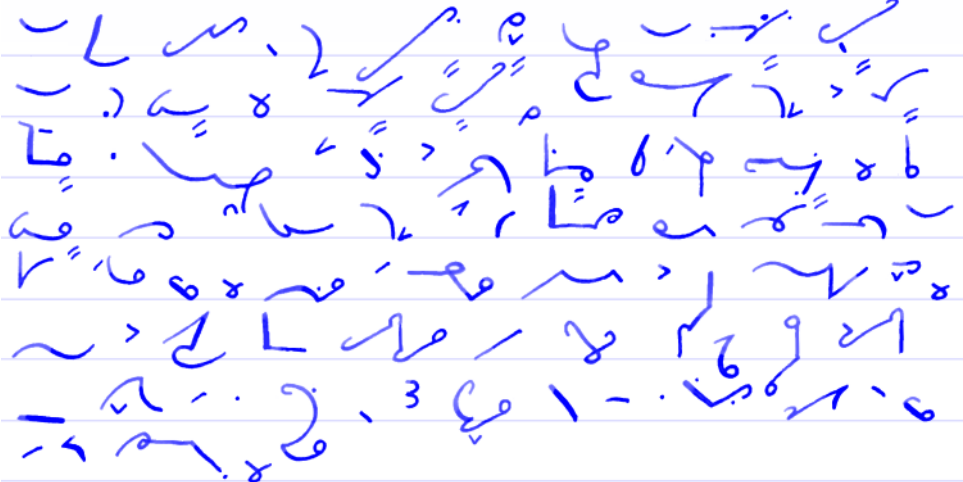
I do not know of another case where this has happened.

We have not heard of any other* case where this has happened.

I don't think there is another way to get this done satisfactorily.

I don't think there is any other way* to get this important job finished. (726 words)

* Omission phrase "any oth(er)"



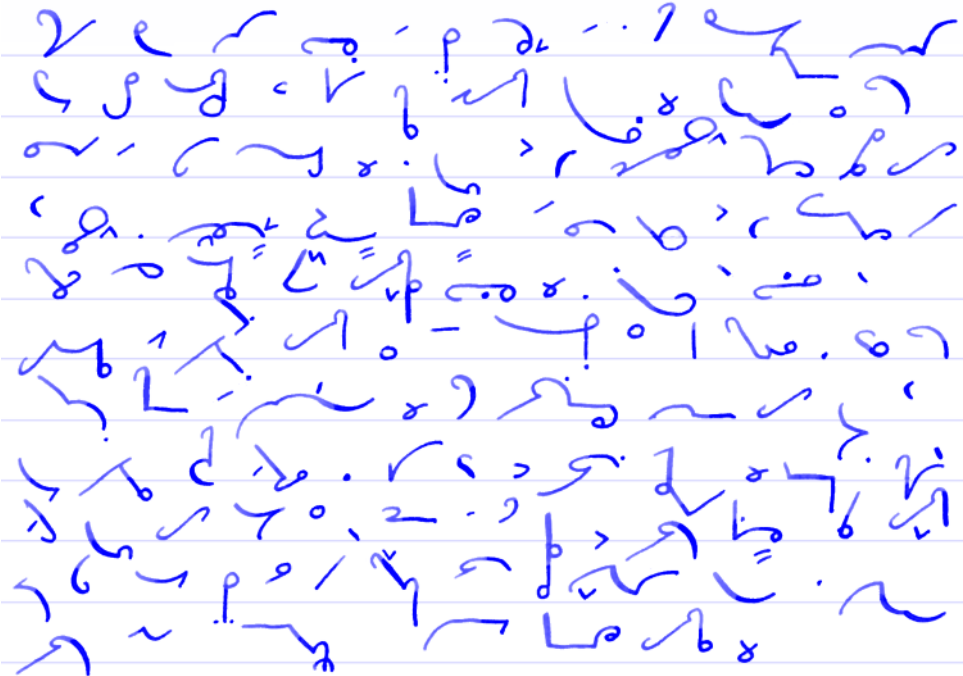
Winter Lights

In January we went to see the Winter Lights festival in Canary Wharf in East London. Canary Wharf is the central area of the Isle of Dogs, a peninsula on the bend of the River Thames just opposite Greenwich. It is London's main financial area, and the old Docklands is now mostly* covered in tall office buildings. Imports and exports are now of the digital monetary kind. Many of the original dock waterways are

preserved, and these stretches of water give life and a freshness to what would otherwise be quite a barren world of buildings and hard landscaping*.

* "mostly" Omits the T

* "landscaping" It is the L stroke that is above the line, so it does not matter where the P stroke ends up



Winter Lights

There are several little greens* and sitting* areas, and a larger central park immediately over the station entrances, with tall trees and water features. Everything is very smart and well maintained. A few of the old warehouses remain, such as the one that houses the Museum of London Docklands, and some pieces of the old equipment are preserved, most noticeably the giant waterside cranes. The combination of acres of windows and the rippling water is quite interesting, as it prevents the buildings from appearing dark and looming. Their reflections* make one feel that if the ripples travelled upwards, the whole building would shimmer and disappear. To get a truly* open view, one only has to walk a short distance to the

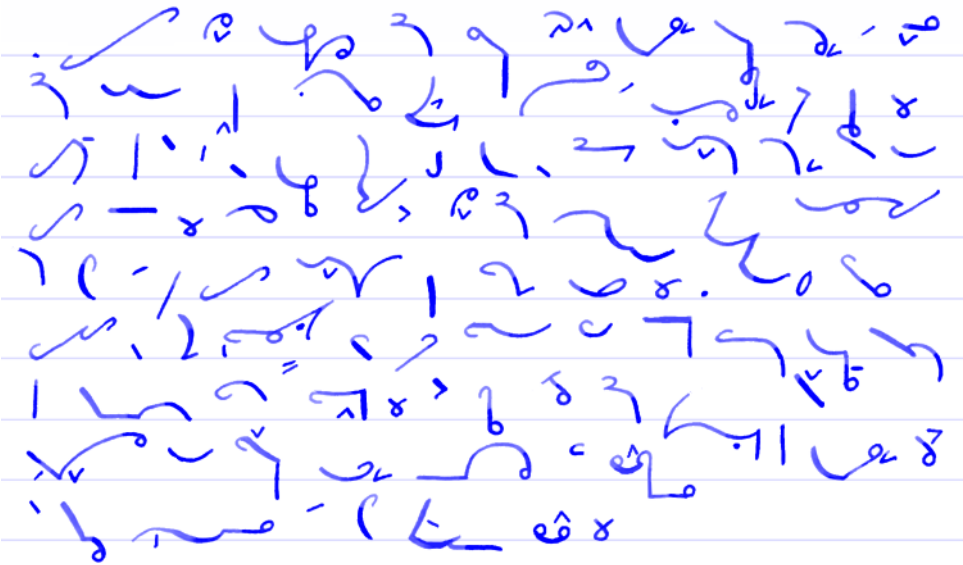
River Thames, which is wider here than in the city, and is much brighter and more lively, being a living river and not captured like the docklands waters.

* "greens" Insert the vowel, as it could be misread as "grounds" in this context

* "sitting" "seating" Insert the vowel, to differentiate

* "reflections" "refractions" Insert the vowel after the FL stroke, as these are similar in outline and meaning; similarly with all the derivatives

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



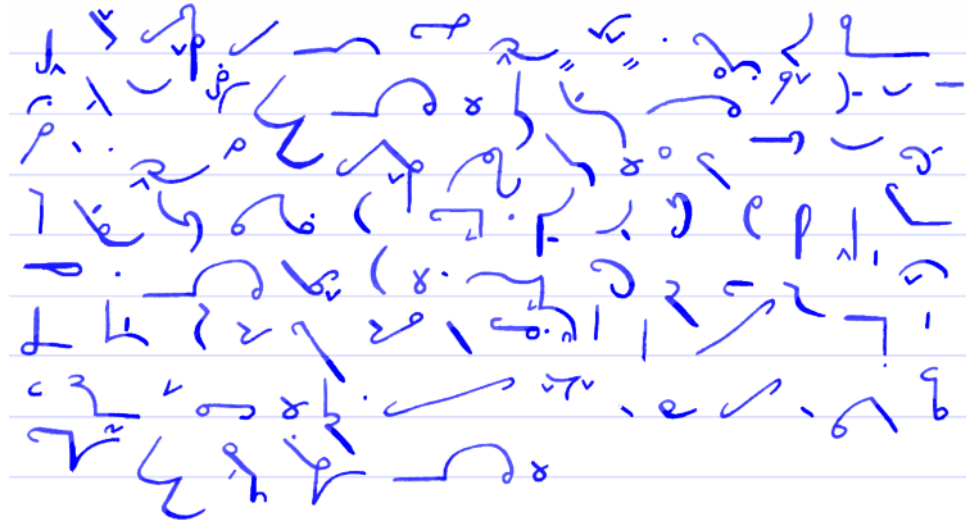
Winter Lights

The Winter Lights installations were spread around the various pedestrian areas, and guides were handing out maps showing the locations and names of each display. We saw it all on two visits, so that we did not* have to walk the entire area in one go. Most of the lights were moving and changing in some way or other, and each one entirely different from the next. The first place we went to was the Crossrail building roof garden, in order to* get clear

photos before it became more crowded. All the trees and plants were illuminated by uplighters in bright neon colours, with soundtracks at various points of birds, monkeys and other jungle sounds.

* "We did not" Not phrase, to differentiate this from "we do not"

* Omission phrase "in ord(er to)

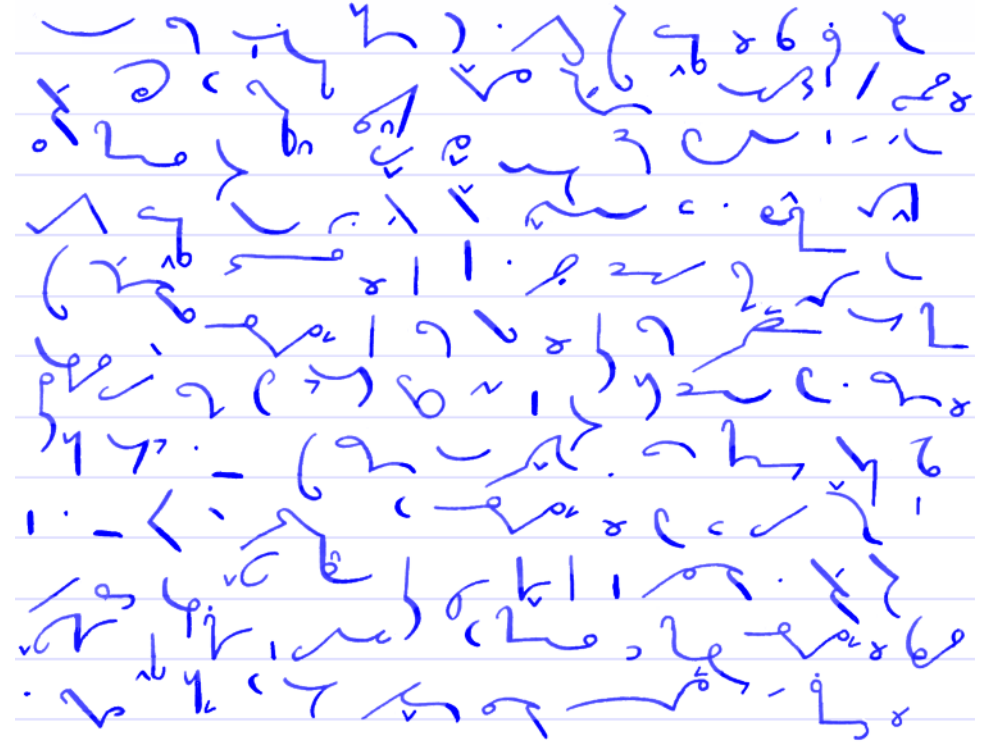


Winter Lights

Down by the waterside we came across the Mountain of Light, a pyramid shaped structure lit up in constantly changing colours. It was four metres high, so not quite as much of a mountain as the website illustration appeared. As people gathered in front of it posing for their selfies, they created a shadow* show of their own, as they stood out black against the colours behind them. A miniature version would be

great to have on my desk at home, although I would probably always be glancing at it rather than getting on with work on the screen. It would be a wonderful night light, to send one to sleep with its gradually changing subdued pastel colours.

* "shadow" Insert the second vowel, as it is similar to "shade"



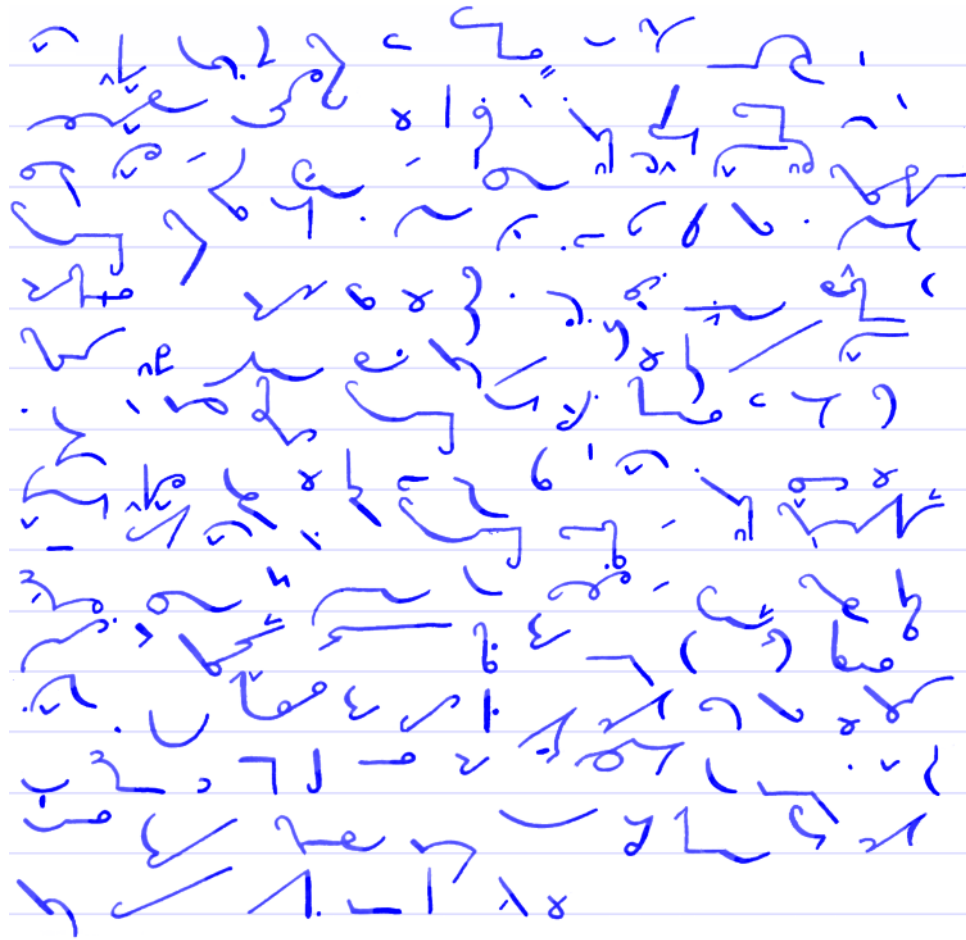
Winter Lights

Another very innovative item was a representation of thunderclouds*. This consisted of several bubble machines that produced huge piles of foam in one of the large courtyards. As darkness fell, white lights underneath were flashing on and off to represent clouds being lit up by lightning, with a soundtrack of loud thunder rumbles and cracks. It had a raised walkway through the middle for visitors to experience it from above. It was very realistic in the dark, as it was away from the other noisy places, and I did feel I was walking over a storm. I do enjoy a good thunderstorm in real life*, the more

dramatic the better, and this did a good job of reproducing that experience. However, when we arrived on our second visit, while it was still daylight, it did resemble a bubble bath wildly out of control, but we knew that darkness would transform the experience. This was a brilliant idea that only required simple materials and construction.

* "thunderclouds" The dictionary gives this as one outline but that makes the outline descend two lines downwards.

* Omission phrase "rea(l) life"



Winter Lights

My outright favourite was the projection* called Aquatics, not particularly colourful but mesmerising nonetheless. It consisted of computer generated creatures, made of simple lines and shapes, floating and swimming around like prehistoric plankton, projected onto a long low concrete wall just above a length of watercourse between the buildings. There was an eerie, haunting, echoing soundtrack that perfectly suited the shifting scene before our eyes. It was rather like a film of almost transparent plankton in the ocean darkness, with only their illuminated outlines visible. It would be great to have this on my computer screen. I could* watch my pet plankton critters* and primordial worms swimming about looking for morsels and fleeing perceived dangers, learning all the behaviour and character traits that would keep them and their descendants alive, the

fish and dinosaurs that would one day rule the world from above. Absolutely no work would get done, because I would most certainly* have to keep an eye on them, in case they were progressing too much* in their intelligence and taking over the world before we are ready to give it up.

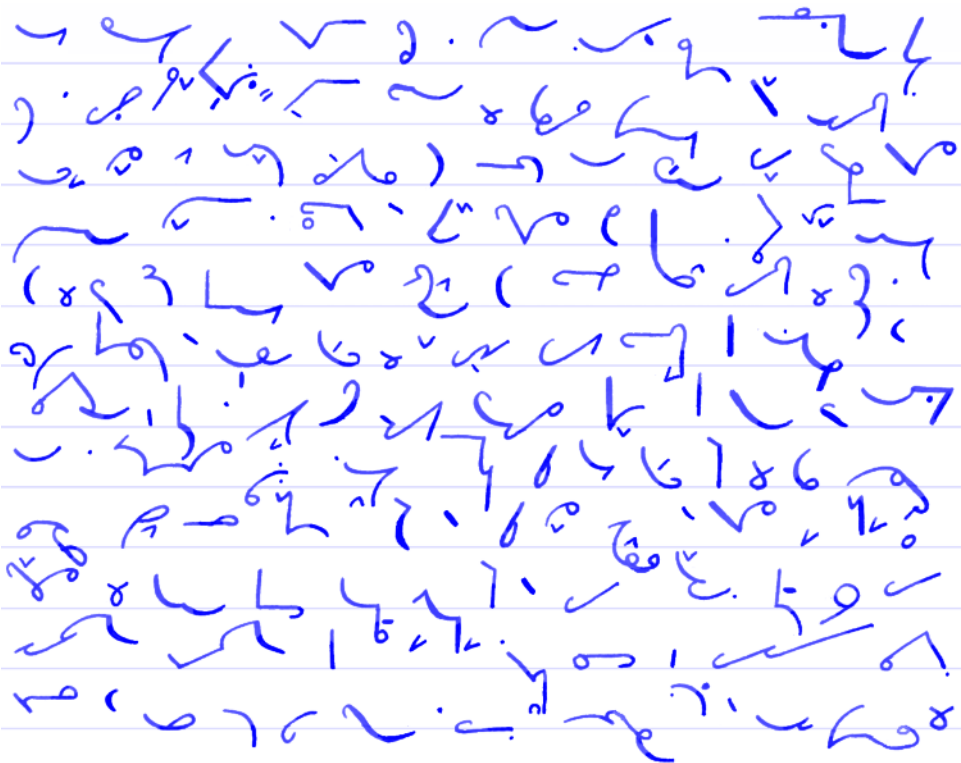
* "projection" Optional contraction

* "I could" Not phrased, to prevent misreading as "I can"

* "critters" Insert the first vowel, compare "creators" below

* Omission phrase "mos(t) certainly"

* "too much" Includes the M stroke, in order to join the phrase

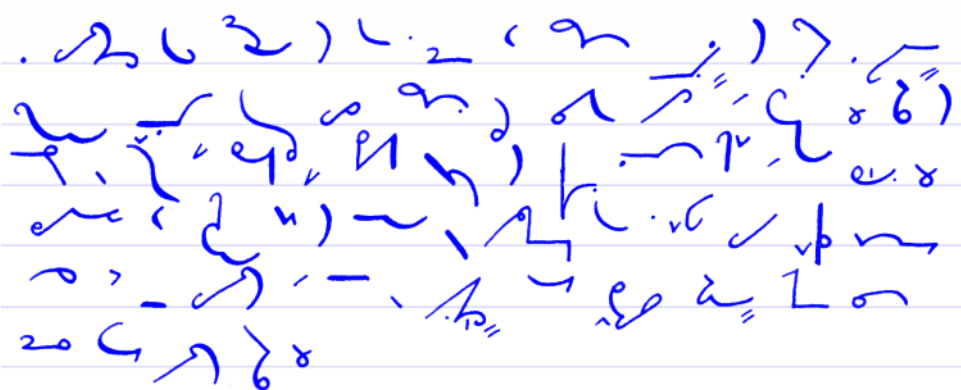


Winter Lights

In the central Jubilee Park there is a long narrow stream, cascading gently through a waist-high rock garden. This was illuminated by underwater neon lights, and the entire surface was covered in floating white plastic balls, looking like a carpet of giant pearls as they diffused the patches of light underneath them. People were taking the balls and throwing them across the water. There was a friendly atmosphere of innocent fun. I wondered whether the creator* had envisaged that happening, but it was a real pleasure to watch everyone's delight at being able to engage in a harmless. sillv communal activitv. iust for

the fun of it. This must have been the* simplest, lowest cost item of them all, just lights and thousands of balls, but the idea is priceless. Having taken photos and video of it all, we finally tore ourselves away, and we will have to relive it on the computer screen, but we were hoping of course that next year will bring an equally impressive array of new illuminations. (1002 words)

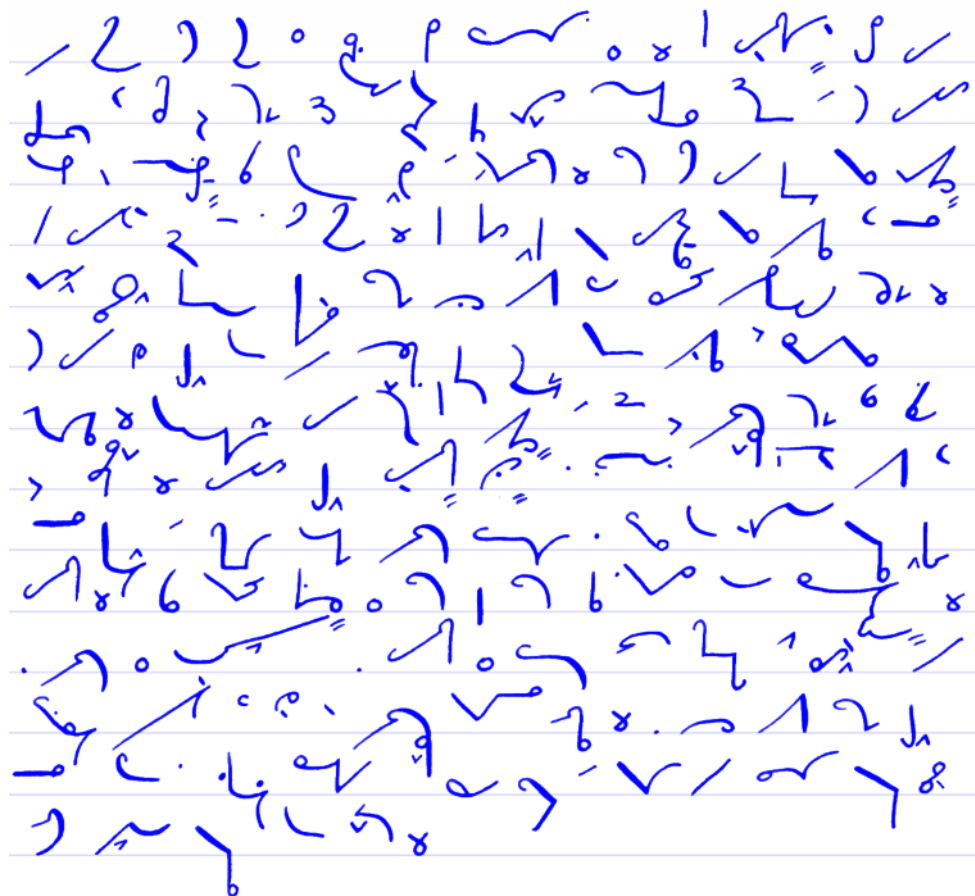
- * "creator" Insert the diphone, compare "critter" above
- * Omission phrase "must (have) been"



Diary Day 6 - Richmond

The weathermen have been warning us for a week that storm Ciara* was approaching the UK, bringing gale force winds, stormy* seas, heavy rain and flooding. All this was expected to arrive on the Sunday, but the Saturday before was totally calm, dry and sunny*. As we knew that travelling about was going to be restricted for a while, we decided to make the most of the good weather and go to Richmond in the south west of London, and take some walks along the river paths.

- * "Ciara" Pronounced Keera
- * "stormy" Insert the final vowel, as an original noun can also be used adjectivally e.g. storm seas, stormy seas
- * "sunny" Always insert the vowels in "sun/snow/sunny/snowy"



Diary Day 6 - Richmond

Our journey there was not as straightforward as it normally is. At Waterloo Station we discovered that trains to that area were not available due to line maintenance work and so we went instead to Kingston which is further south and upriver. From there we took the bus to Richmond, which we thought would be quite a short journey. It turned out to be one of those bus routes that goes "all round the houses", taking detours from the main road in order to* serve the residential areas. So we settled down for our mystery tour, seeing the back roads of the suburbs and villages. Eventually we arrived at Richmond and walked to the riverside area that is adjacent to the high street. We went down Water Lane, a granite cobbled road

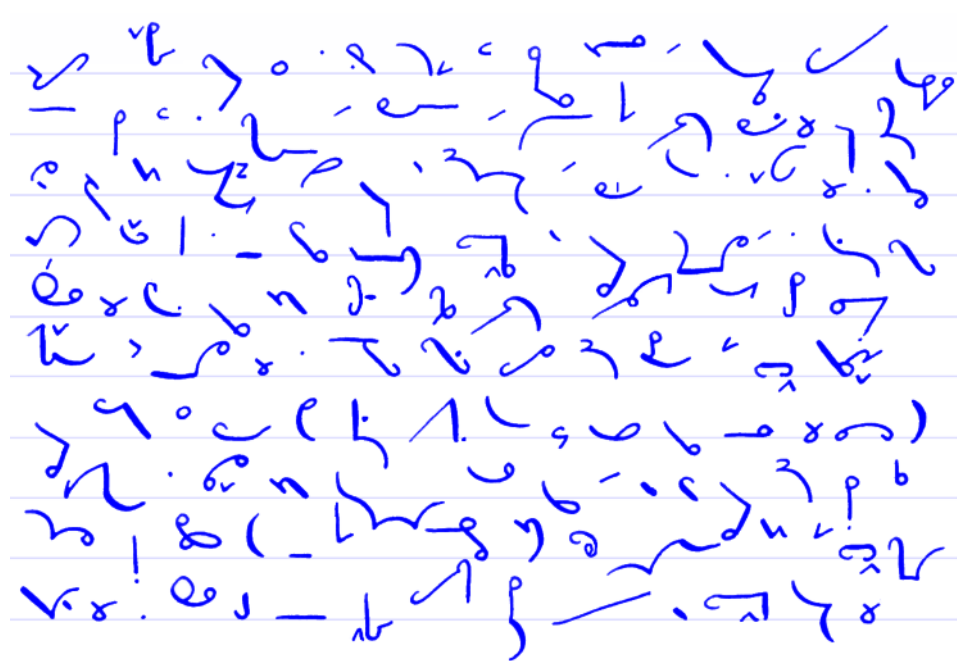
that goes downhill and directly into the river, clearly a place for hauling boats out of the water. This part of the Thames is very different from its appearance in central London. The river is narrower, the water is clearer and more attractive, and the surroundings are pleasantly* rural, with lots* of riverside parks and trees. The main road from the town goes over the eighteenth* century stone bridge and below are small boat huts, and pleasure rowing boats for hire.

* Omission phrase "in ord(er to)"

* "pleasantly" "pleasingly" Insert the first vowel, as these are similar in outline and meaning

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

* "eighteenth" Essential to insert the vowel to differentiate from "tenth"



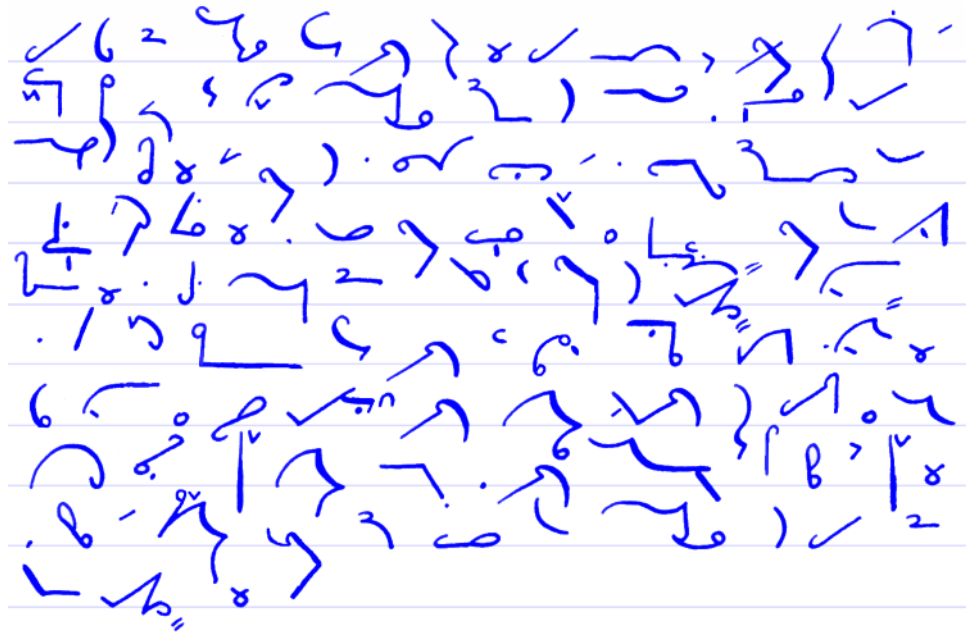
Diary Day 6 - Richmond

To one side of the bridge is a stepped area with strips of grass and benches, where visitors can sit with a drink and snack, and look at the river scene. Today there were* lots* of people about enjoying the last bit of warmth and sun for a while. The birds also find it a good place to gather, crowds of pigeons, seagulls and a fair number of swans. Every piece of bread thrown towards the river resulted in the sudden screeching and diving of the gulls. A couple of brave ones were standing on the ground behind the pigeons, in order to be* as near as they dare, ready for when the next piece comes. Someone was holding a slice of

bread firmly in his fist, and two bold pigeons were sitting on his arms eating as fast as they could, at the expense of their friends milling about on the ground directly below. The swans did not come out of the water, as it was rather too crowded for them.

* Omission phrases "threr(e w)ere" "in ord(er to) be" The short form "be" remains on the line, as the word "to" is part of the omission

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

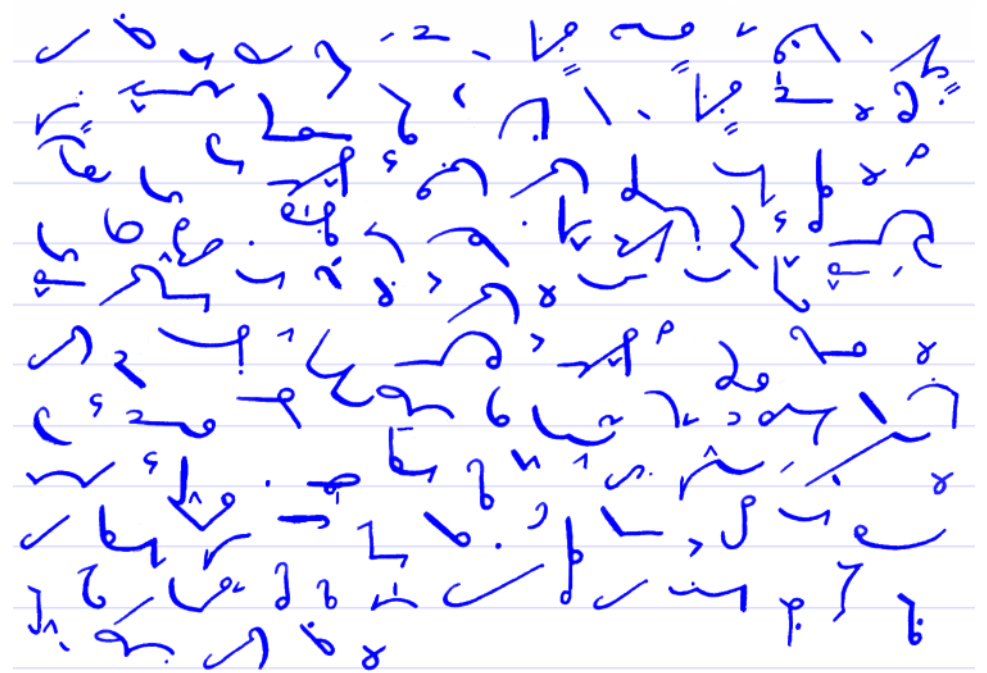


Diary Day 6 - Richmond

We then walked northwards along the river path. We came to the railway bridge, which was empty and quiet, as it was here that the line maintenance work was going on, the cause of our cancelled trains. On the bridge was a small crane and a group of workmen in dayglo orange jackets. The next bridge close by is Twickenham Bridge for road traffic. A ten* minute walk past that brought us to Richmond Lock, a large iron structure over the river, with sluice

gates held aloft. This lock is used to regulate the river levels upriver, so that the water is never lower than half tide level, keeping the river navigable at all states of the tide. The steps and high level footbridge were closed for maintenance, so we walked back to Richmond.

* "ten" Insert the vowel to differentiate from "eighteen"



Diary Day 6 - Richmond

We passed under the stone bridge and walked to Terrace Gardens on the slope of Richmond Hill, and climbed the zigzag* paths that lead up to Terrace Walk. There is a magnificent view over the countryside, with the silver* river disappearing into the distance. As the view faces south west, the sunsets here must be* a delight to watch, especially with the colourful sky reflected in the broad bends of the river. In fact* any type of sky and weather would be interesting, and the changing colours of the countryside as the seasons progress. However, with the weekend's expected storm, this viewing area would certainly be empty tomorrow, with the downpours, the gusts tossing the trees about, and the wind howling and roaring. We descended the hill

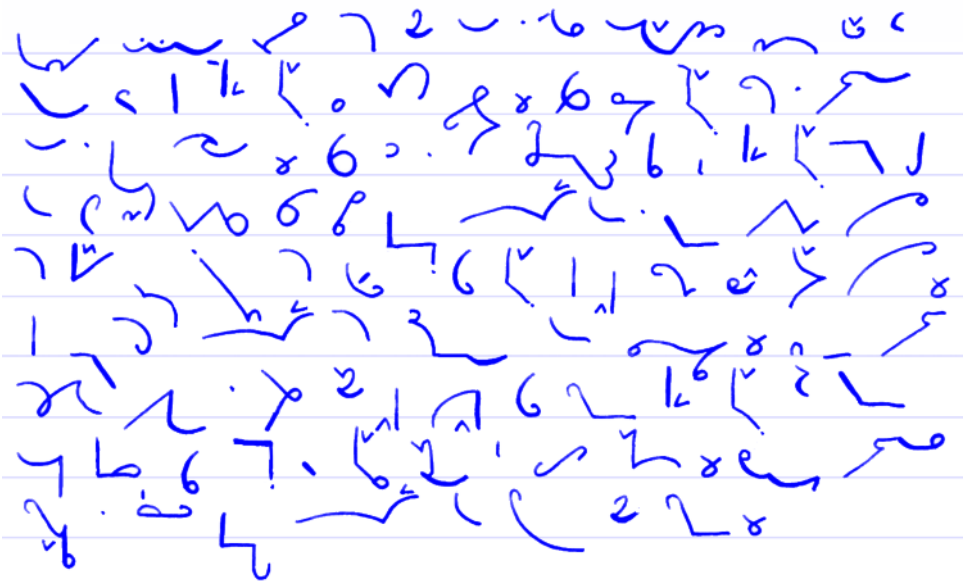
again and took the bus the short distance back to the station in the centre of town, and then our various trains towards home, where we intended to stay until the two days of stormy* weather passed. (770 words)

* "zigzag" An initial Zee sound always uses the stroke, but not necessarily within the outline

* "silver" "sulphur" Always insert the first vowel for clarity

* Omission phrases "mus(t) be" "In (f)act"

* "stormy" Insert the final vowel, as "storm weather" would also make sense

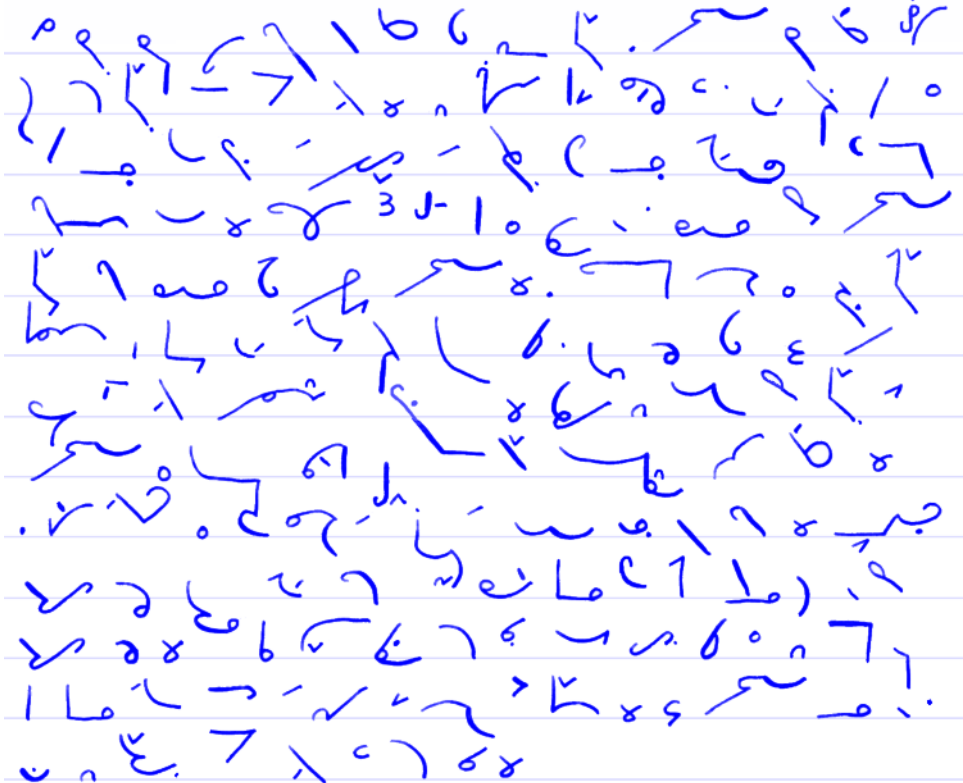


Audio Typing

If you are intending to use your shorthand in an office environment, you may find that being able to do audio typing is also useful. This is the skill of typing from a recording in a continuous manner. This is what a transcriptionist* does, but audio typing can be done for other purposes as well, such as dictating material for a book, report, letters or diary to your computer or phone, then typing it out from the sound file later on. It could be your own material or working for

someone else. You could record yourself reading a passage of shorthand out loud, then practise audio typing of that back into text, thus getting two types of training on one item. Saving the recordings provides a stock of dictation material for further shorthand practice.

* "transcriptionist" Omits the first N. Upward S stroke out of necessity, a very few outlines do this.



Audio Typing

As the speaking speed will probably be faster than you can type, the recording has to be paused constantly so that your typing can catch up. You control the audio source with a foot pedal which has large keys for play and rewind, and possibly other keys and functions that can be programmed in. Firstly, what you don't do is listen to a sentence, stop the recording, type the remembered sentence and then restart the recording. The correct method is to play and type at the same time, but take the foot off the pedal after just a few words, then when you are nearly caught up

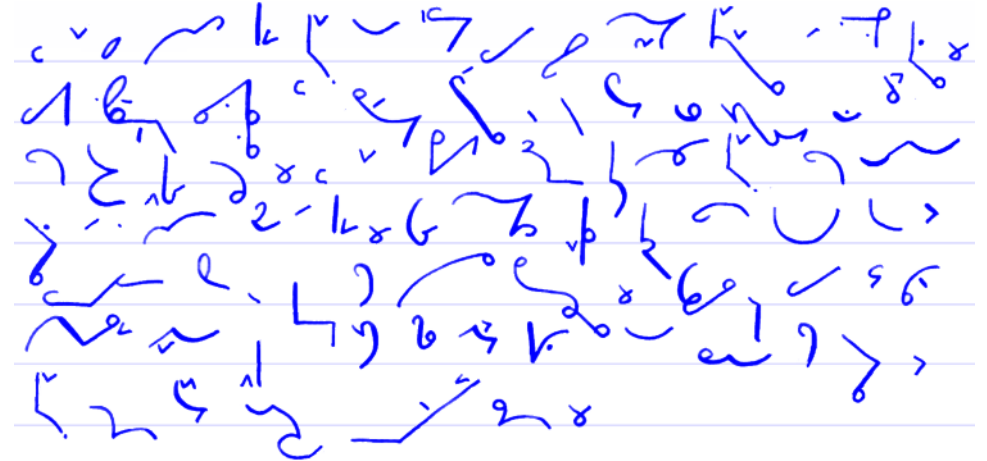
resume the playback. This way you never stop typing, and the recording is effectively slowed down by introducing little pauses. The whole operation is smooth and continuous and nothing needs to be remembered. Coordination between ears, fingers and foot very soon takes over and it becomes easy to stop between words. It is like chasing your hat in the wind, just as you get to it, it takes off again and you are on the move all the time. When the recording comes to an end, you finally catch up with your hat.



Audio Typing

I use the Express Scribe programme which can be operated on screen with a mouse, or via keyboard hotkeys, or with a foot pedal. It also has a voice speed slider. I have found that it is important to have a resting position on the foot pedal so that the front of the foot does not have to hover

during pauses, which can be tiring or even cramping. My USB pedal has a central rest area and side keys for play and rewind. A quick tap on the rewind jumps it back a couple of seconds, and holding it down rewinds until released.



Audio Typing

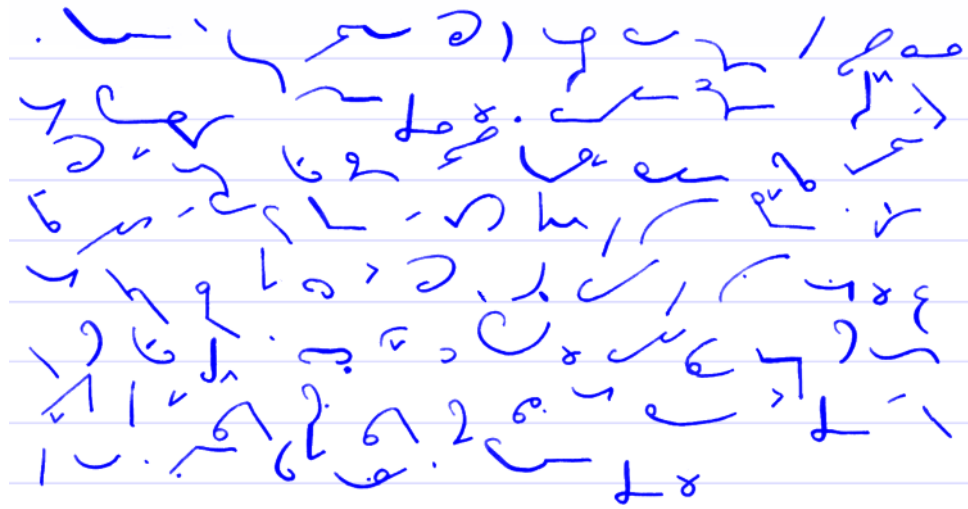
When I first learned audio typing in college, we used manual typewriters and cassette tapes. We had stethoscope headsets with sponge blobs to put over the ends to prevent the end points from falling out of the ea*rs. When I started work, it was mostly typing from handwritten pages, and a little shorthand and audio. Then the management decided it would be more efficient for all the clerical staff to dictate their letters as far as possible*. This was to

do away with the slow laborious writing out of their drafts and avoid* the delay in sending their pages to the typing room via the internal courier system.

* "mostly" Omits the lightly-sounded T

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

* "avoid" "evade" Insert the second vowel, as these are similar in outline and meaning

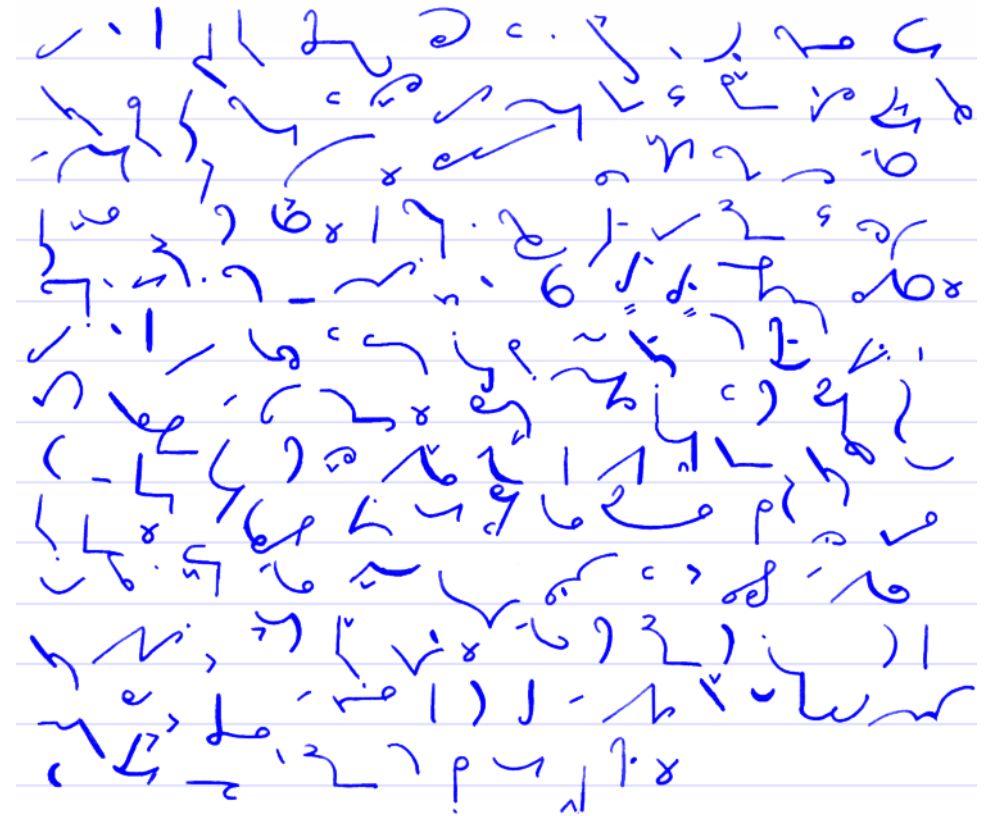


Audio Typing

A bank of four recording machines was installed in our room, which used six inch flexible magnetic disks. The clerical worker dialled up the machine on the internal phone system* and used various single numbers to pause, rewind and play back, and also, at the end of each letter, spike a hole in the paper strip at the front of the machine, to show where each letter ended.

When they put their phone down, a green light would flash. We would listen to get their name, write it on the slip, thread the slip through the slits in the centre of the disk and put it in a rack, then insert a blank disk.

* This was called the PAX system = Private Automatic Exchange

[illegible]

Audio Typing

We all had table top transcription* machines, with a pointer to show progress along the paper strip which was printed with lines one minute apart, with the spike holes showing the position and length of each letter. As we were somewhat isolated from the main offices, it was nice to hear their voices. It brought a personal touch to our work with the friendly greeting of "A very good morning to you all, this is John Jones Customer Services." We all had our favourites, with clear confident speaking and not bored or droning, cheery but also businesslike and well organised. Senior management continued with their shorthand typists, so that they could dictate, change their minds, revise and have it read back to them, before any typing took place. This was the jam in the

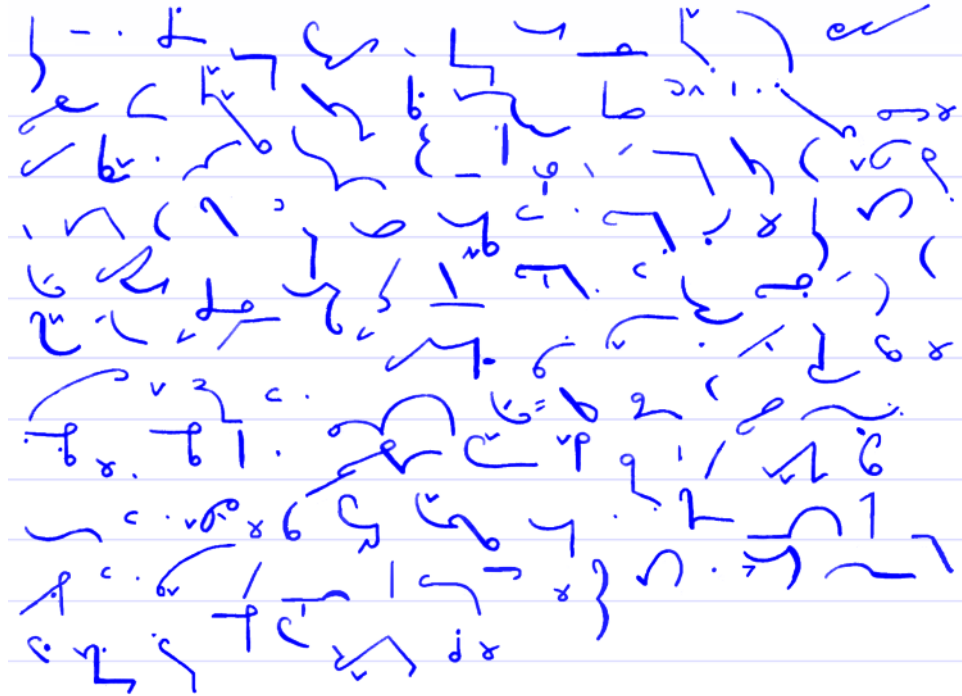
sandwich for us shorthanders*, as it meant two hours in a quiet office, writing fairly slowly, with all the hesitations and revisions, before returning to the noisy typing pool*. Often their work was confidential so it could not be sent to the disks and of course it was done and returned by hand immediately without joining the queue of work or sitting in the out-tray.

- * "transcription" Omits the first N, to distinguish it from "description"

- * "shorthanders" The D sound is included in the doubling. A thickened stroke would be "ing-ger"

- * "typing pool" A large room where all the typists worked, separate from other offices

We all had table top transcription* machines, with a pointer to show progress along the paper strip which was printed with lines one minute apart, with the spike holes showing the position and length of each letter. As we were somewhat isolated from the main offices, it was nice to hear their voices. It brought a personal touch to our work with the friendly greeting of "A very good morning to you all, this is John Jones Customer Services." We all had our favourites, with clear confident speaking and not bored or droning, cheery but also businesslike and well organised. Senior management continued with their shorthand typists, so that they could dictate, change their minds, revise and have it read back to them, before any typing took place. This was the jam in the



Audio Typing

It was quite a task to get everyone to dictate in the exact typing order, as we were using electric typewriters, before the days of moving text around on a computer screen. We designed a little form that they could add notes to and keep before them while speaking, to help them remember what to do next, nowadays called a crib sheet. It was also fun washing the disks now and then*, which would become grubby with finger grease, and see them drying off on the rack on the window sill

like a row of dinner plates. Later on I worked with a similar phone based system that used mini cassettes. The cassettes had a reusable flock side strip on which to write the author's name with a stylus. This flattened the fibres into a darker colour and it could be reset with a slider which combed it clear again. There was also a noisy magnetic plate to drag the completed cassette over to wipe the contents.

* Omission phrase "now (and) then"



Audio Typing

I hope* this brief* peek* into the past will enable you to appreciate your present ease of typing on a screen, with the generously forgiving backspace key to correct mistakes in an instant, and the ability to save it all for future editing and record keeping. If you are on a real typewriter perchance, then you have the incentive and necessity to get everything right first time and not let the fingers lapse into complacency, and so gain an extremely valuable advantage out of that older method of creating pages of text. There is only one warning that is necessary, and that is to never, never, never, and once again* never, use a foot pedal on practice dictations to allow the shorthand writing to catch up. You don't want the hardware for the new skill of

audio typing to undermine and prevent the attainment of shorthand speed. All the shorthand dictation downloads for these blogs can be used for audio practice so you are never without learning material. (1193 words)

* Omission phrase "I (h)ope" "wu(n)s again"

* "brief" Generally advisable to insert the vowel, so it is not misread as "number of "

* "peek" This spelling means a look or glance into. "Peak" is the highest part of something such as a mountain, ability or career. "pique" means slight annoyance, "to pique" means to excite interest or curiosity