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## Blogs - 2020 - May

## 2 Fraser's Numbers

## 5 Learning Quotes

## 8 Termination

## 10 Black Hole

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PDF Date: 12 September 2024



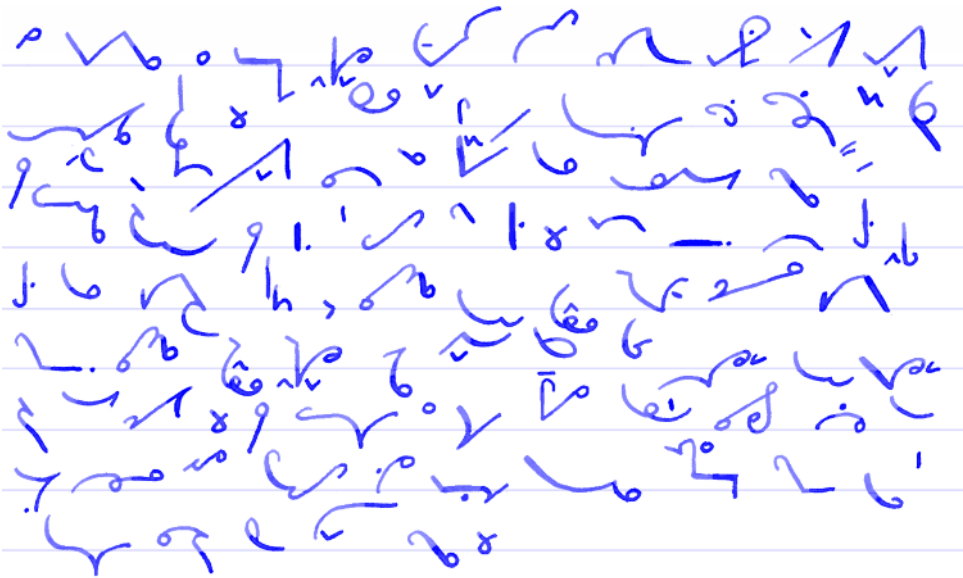
Fraser's Numbers

This article practises writing numbers in shorthand outlines. Most of the number outlines are quite short and as long as the number is isolated in the sentence, it is often quicker to write the outline. Where numbers are occurring all the time, both short and long, it might\* be clearer to write the Arabic numerals. It all depends on context\* as to which will be more suitable, and that applies also to the transcription, where again the isolated number is best spelled out, and larger numbers typed in numerals. A few must always be vocalised, such as ten and eighteen, also eight and eighty so that they do not look like the numeral one. Seven must have a clear hook as it is similar to several. The outline

for six is preferable when alone, as the numeral is too much like another outline. An Arabic numeral poorly written can be identified by a wavy line underneath, so you don't puzzle over whether it is an outline or longhand. Numbers are all but unguessable if they are not written clearly, and there is no such thing as the transcription of a number being "nearly right".

\* "it might be" Not phrased, to differentiate from "it may be"

\* "context" Always write in the Con Dot, and not using proximity, so it cannot be misread as "text"

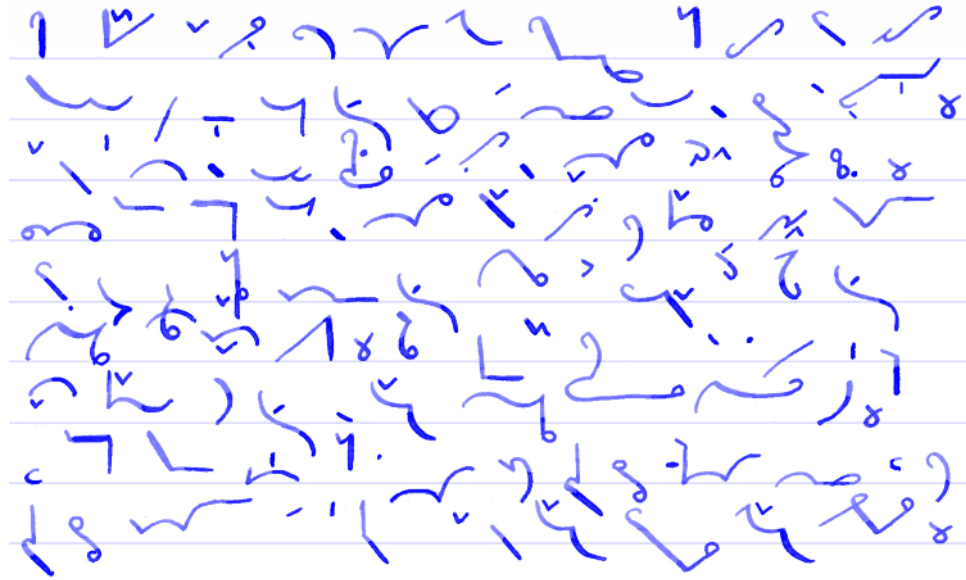


Fraser's Numbers

As the purpose is to get the outlines thoroughly learned, you will have to resist the urge to write numerals at this time. As soon as I told our fictional friend Fraser about this subject, he offered to rewrite some of his diary for us, inserting the numbers and quantities of everything he did on one particular day. I am giving him ten out of ten for his helpful attitude to the hundreds, if not thousands, of fellow shorthand writers\*, who will be practising

hundreds of thousands of outlines and thus writing faster than the millions, if not billions, of people in the world. He clearly has zero tolerance for his own hesitations, aims for nil mistakes, and wants everyone else to gain the benefits of targeted practice, even on fairly simple stuff like numbers.

\* Omission phrase "short(hand) writers"

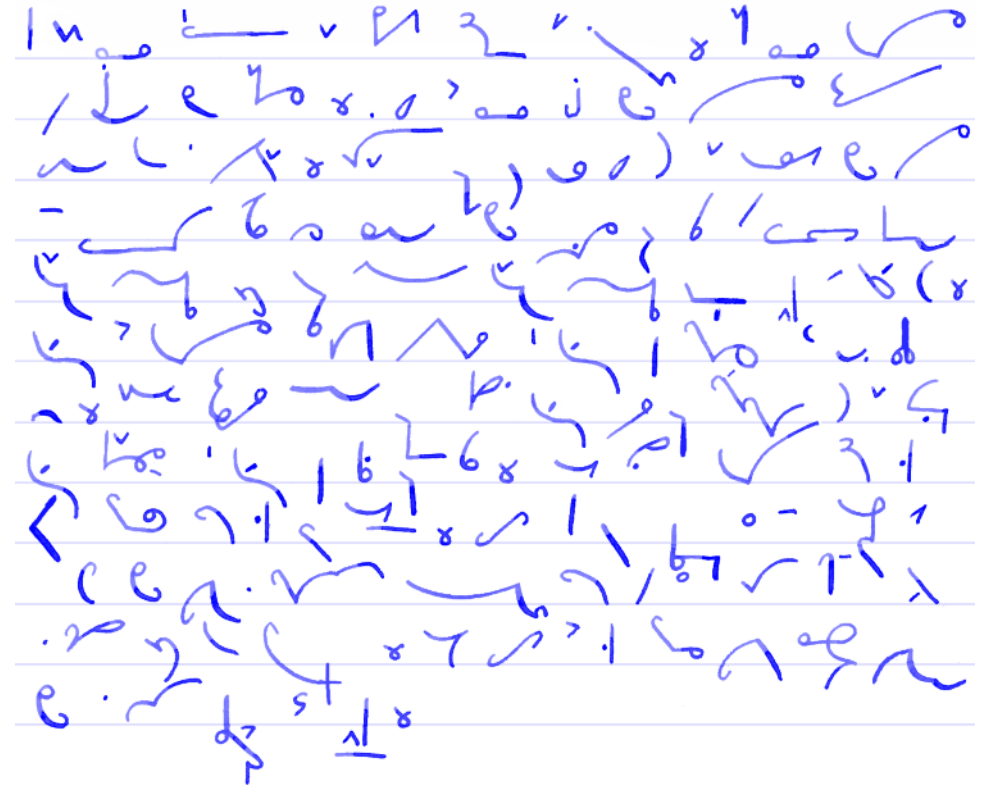


### Fraser's Numbers

Dear Diary, I rose very early and for breakfast I had one apple and one banana, each cut into four pieces and mixed into two spoonfuls of yogurt. I put on my two new trainers and ran two miles around the streets. Sometimes I can get in the two miles by running three times round the park playing field, but this morning I decided to make four laps of the nearby pond, and then four lengths of my road. All

this took about three quarters\* of an hour, but today my timing was four to five minutes longer than usual. When I got back home, I had a meal of three tablespoons of oatmeal mixed with three tablespoons of milk, and on top I put five blueberries and five raspberries.

\* "quarters" Optional contraction

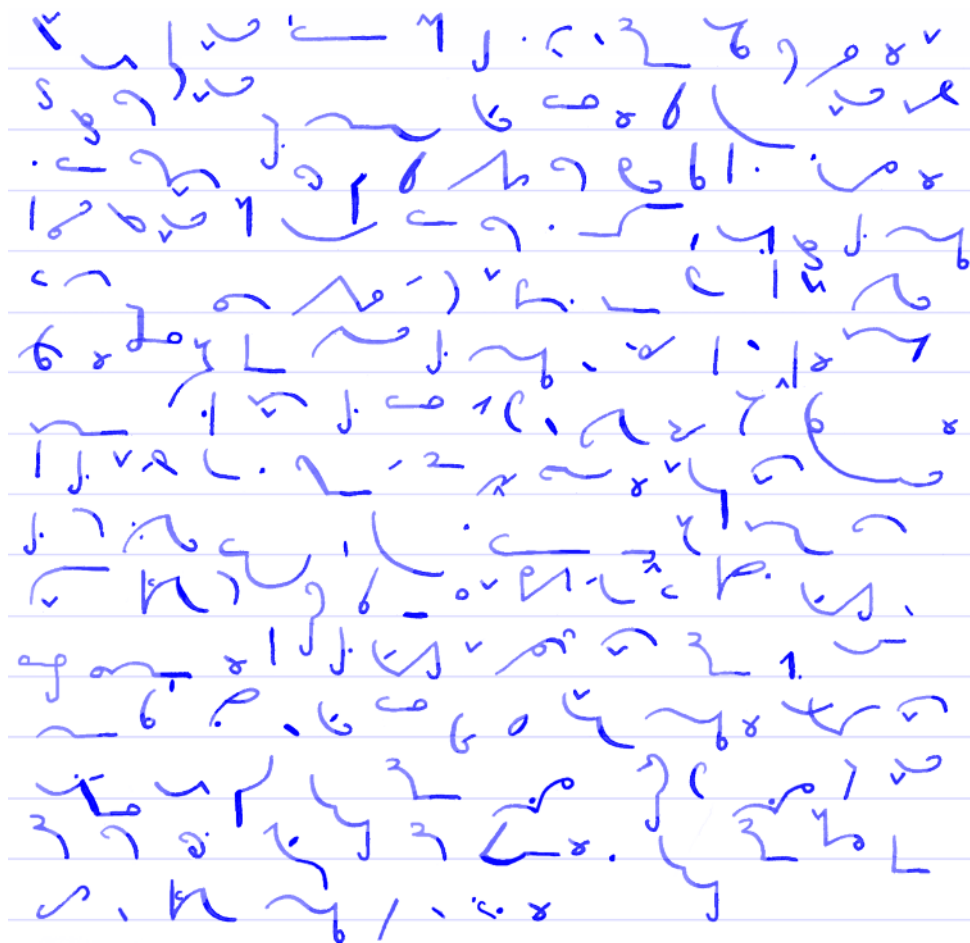


### Fraser's Numbers

At about six o'clock I started work on the computer. I had six folders each containing several items. The first of the six contained seven letters that were waiting for a reply. I like to do the easy things first, so I answered the seven letters quite quickly, and this meant sending seven emails to them, which is much quicker than taking five minutes to print pages and another five minutes to go out and post them. Four of the folders held reports on four different premises that need decisions made. I knew that this was going to take at least four hours to do properly\*, so I allocated four

time slots on four different days to do those. In the last folder were eight job applications from eight people in the company. One had to be discarded as quite unsuitable and the other seven will have a preliminary interview, from which I will draw up a shortlist of three for further attention. Only one of the eight applicants will be successful, leaving seven a little disappointed with the outcome.

\* "properly" Always insert the first vowel, and the diphone in "appropriately" as they are similar in outline and meaning



### Fraser's Numbers

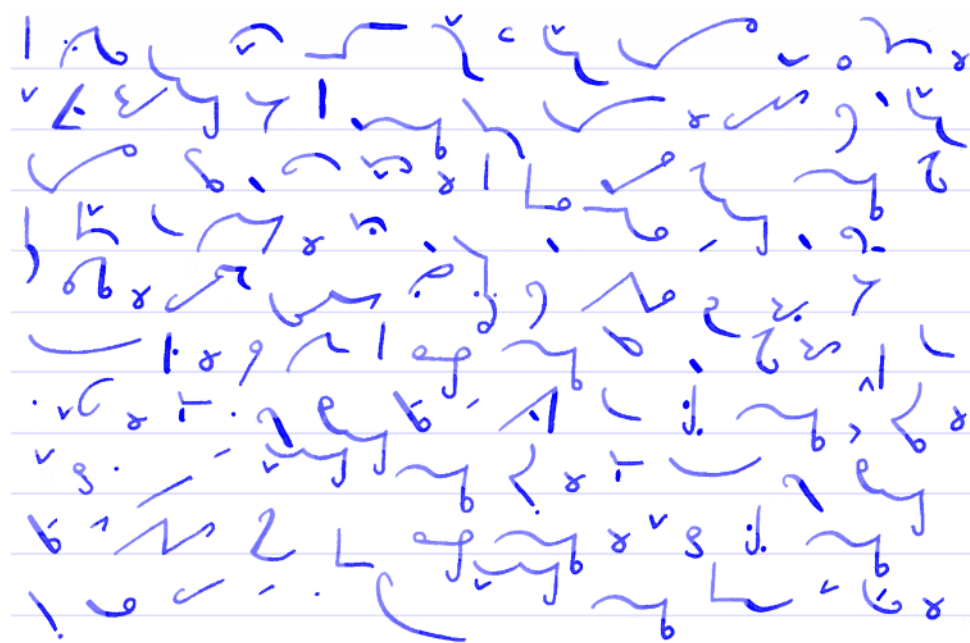
By now it was nine o'clock and I had done a lot of work in those three hours. I planned to spend from nine to ten making phone calls. Just after nine I received a call from my friend who had just returned from seven days at a conference. At half past nine I had another call from a colleague who needed to spend ten minutes with me to discuss some reports and so I told him to come over at about eleven this morning. I think it will take longer than ten minutes to sort it all out. I managed to make eight of my ten calls, and the other two will have to wait until this afternoon. At ten I stopped for a break and walked round the garden. I fed my ten or eleven goldfish, but

after a quick count I think I may have more like twelve or thirteen, which is good as I started off with at least\* fourteen to sixteen some time ago\*. At ten fourteen I resumed my work and did in fact\* make those last two phone calls within the first five minutes. Unfortunately my inbox now showed fifteen work emails and thirteen other emails, of which nine were from friends and four were junk. The fifteen work items took one to twelve minutes each to complete.

\* "some time ago" Halving to represent the T of "time"

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

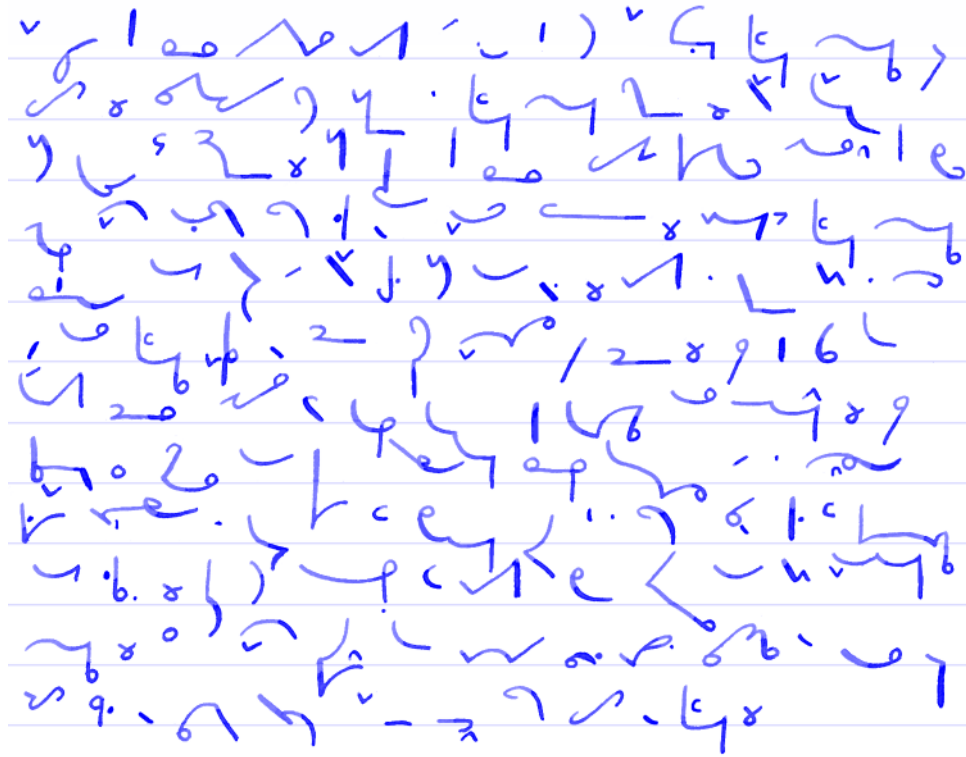
\* Omission phrase "in (f)act"



### Fraser's Numbers

At eleven fifteen my colleague arrived with five folders under his arm. I joked that we only had two minutes per folder. We went through all five folders, plus two more of mine. It took us two hours and fifteen minutes and then it was time for lunch. I made two pizzas, two coffees and two fruit salads. We agreed that finishing the last three reports would have to wait until another day. He left at sixteen minutes

past two, and then I went out for a while. I caught a number seventeen bus, and rode for eighteen minutes to the shops. I spent an hour and nineteen minutes shopping. I caught another number seventeen bus and the return journey took sixteen minutes. I spent eighteen minutes putting things away and a further nineteen minutes talking on the phone.



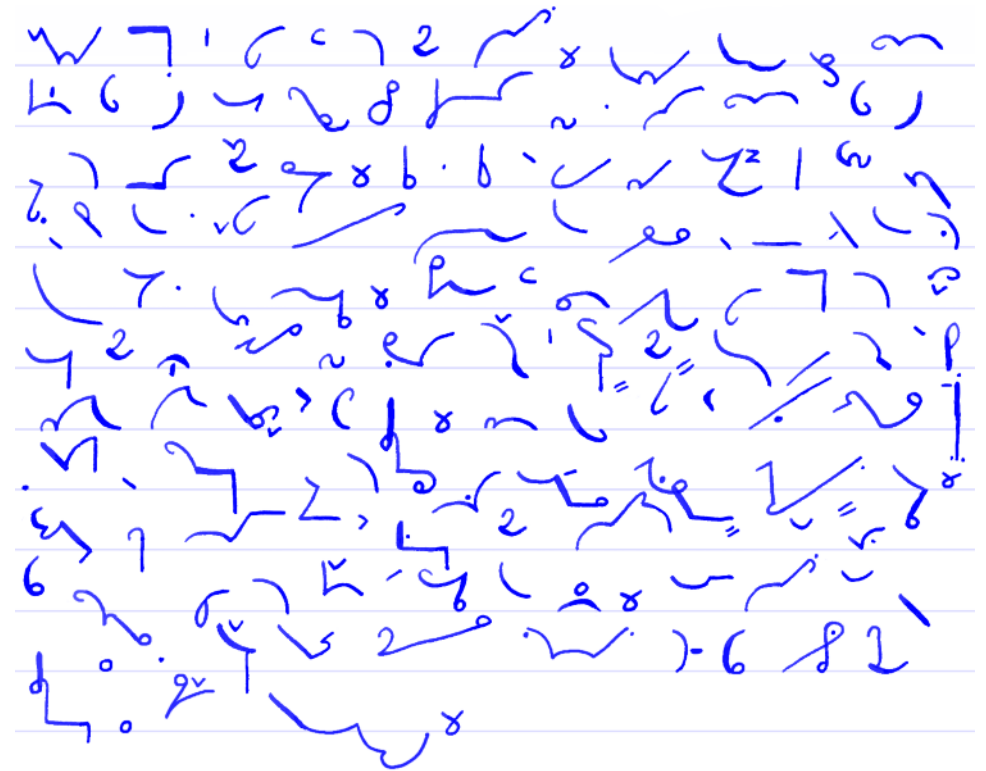
### Fraser's Numbers

I still had six reports to read and comment on, so I allocated twenty minutes to each one. Halfway through I took a twenty minute break. By five I was finished with the work, I had dinner at six, watched the television and news at seven, and visited my neighbour from eight to nine o'clock. I enjoyed twenty minutes soaking in the bath, and by ten I was in bed. I read a book about a man who in his twenties decided to walk thirty miles each week. He did this for forty weeks, and was able to visit fifty different villages in his county. He described his journeys in detail, passing sixty farms, and an amusing\* tale of

crossing a field with seventy sheep on a very hot day with temperatures in the eighties. It was so interesting that I read several chapters in about ninety minutes. As my schedule for tomorrow seemed to list hundreds of things to do, I went straight to sleep before I could\* count from one to twenty. (1177 words)

\* "amusing" "amazing" Always insert the vowel

\* "I could" Not phrased, to differentiate from "I can"



### Learning Quotes

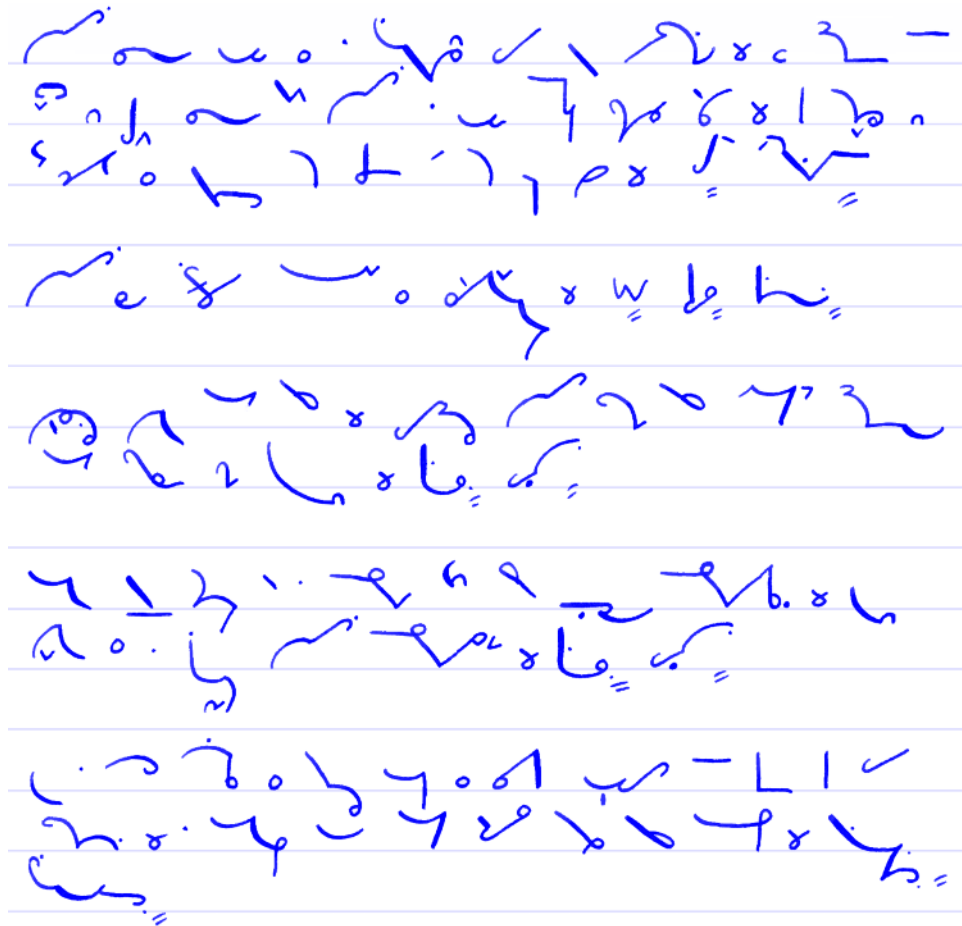
I hope you are\* getting on well with your shorthand learning. If you are having to spend more time\* at home\* than usual in the present circumstances, it is likely you have a little more time\* than usual to achieve your goal of shorthand skill. It is a test of whether you are enjoying it that you have to remember to stop for a while, rather than looking for reasons to "come up for air" after only a few minutes. Starting with some reading will get your mind into shorthand mode, and once you have safely arrived on Planet Shorthand for your hour or two of study, you will have left behind all the other distractions. You may even achieve that rare and precious commodity, the ability to forget to check your email

inbox, and Facebook and Twitter pages. That would be the true mark of the dedicated\* shorthand learner, not to let those fripperies steal your time and energies for self-improvement. In fact\*, learning not to be distracted is a vital part of the shorthand writer's armoury, so this "resistance training" is highly beneficial.

\* Omission phrases "I (h)ope you are" "at (h)ome" "in (f)act"

\* "more time" Halving to represent the T of "time"

\* "dedicated" "deducted" "educated" Always insert a vowel, to differentiate



### Learning Quotes

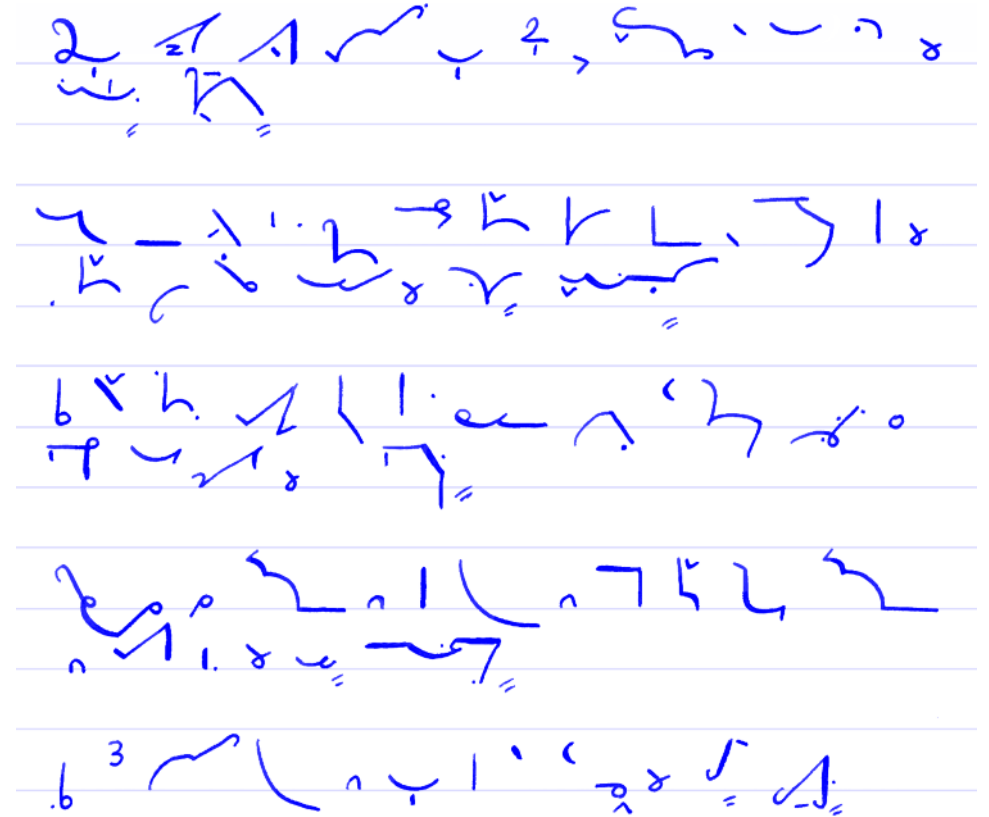
Learning something new is a fabulous way to be refreshed. When work can grind you down, something about learning a new activity thrills the soul. It reminds you that the world is bigger than your desk and your to-do list. John Ortberg

Learning is not compulsory, neither is survival. W. Edwards Deming

Losers live in the past. Winners learn from the past and enjoy working in the present toward the future. Denis Waitley

Never become so much of an expert that you stop gaining expertise. View life as a continuous learning experience. Denis Waitley

If a man empties his purse into his head, no one can take it away from him. An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest. Benjamin Franklin



### Learning Quotes

There is no royal road to learning; no short cut to the acquirement of any art. Anthony Trollope

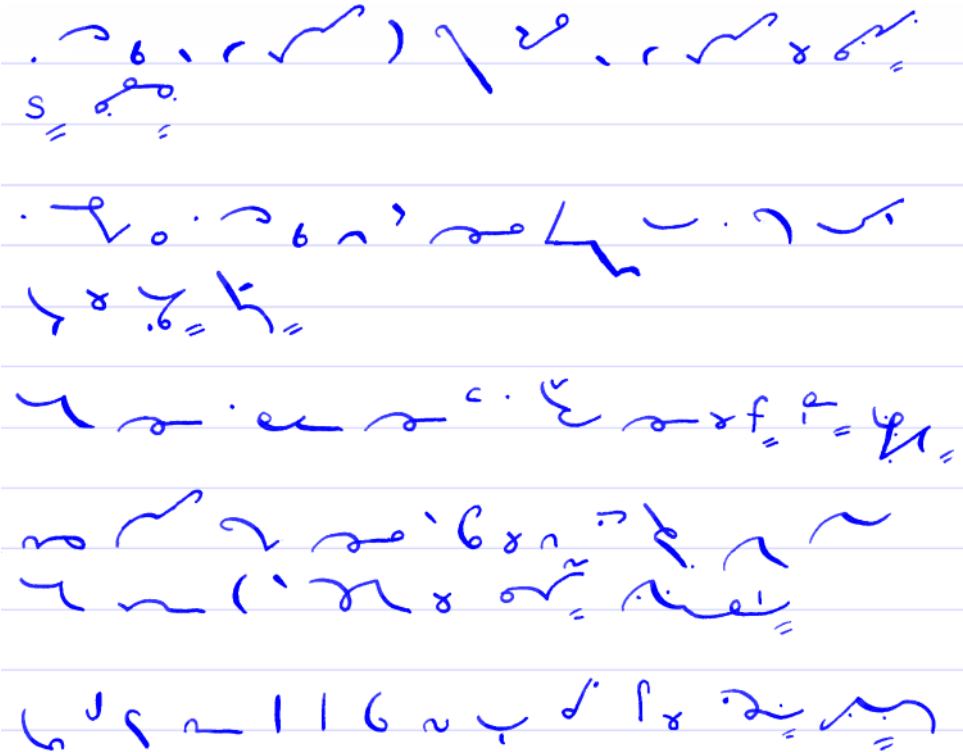
Never give up on a dream because of the time it will take to accomplish it. The time will pass anyway. Earl Nightingale

It is by attempting to reach the top at a single leap, that so much misery is caused\* in the world. Cobbett

Perseverance is the hard work you do after you get tired of doing the hard work you already did. Newt Gingrich

It's what you learn after you know it all that counts. John Wooden

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



Learning Quotes

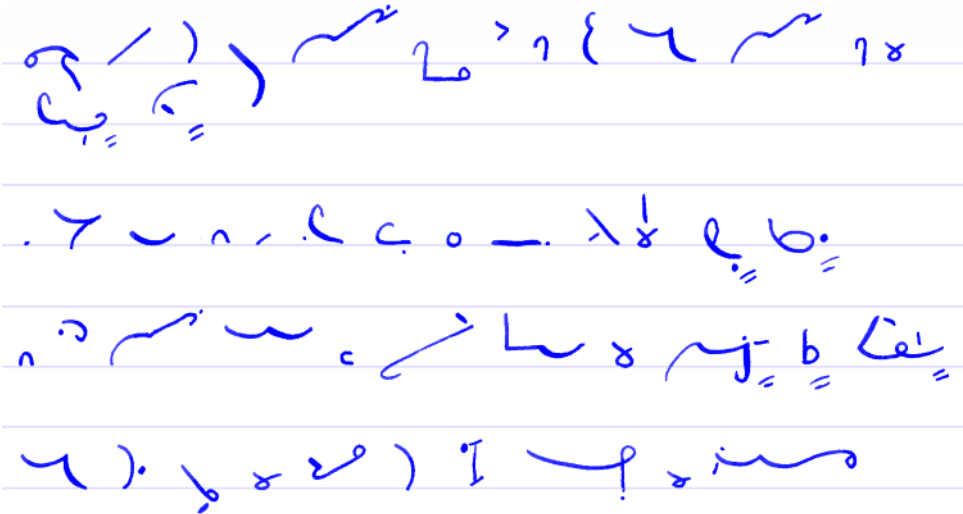
The man who is too old to learn was probably always too old to learn. Henry S. Haskins

You must learn from the mistakes of others. You can't possibly live long enough to make them all yourself. Samuel Levenson

An expert is a man who has made all the mistakes which can be made in a very narrow field. Niels Bohr

If you do not believe you can do it then you have no chance at all. Arsene Wenger

Never mistake a single mistake with a final mistake. F. Scott Fitzgerald



Learning Quotes

Some people are so busy learning the tricks of the trade that they never learn the trade. Vernon Law

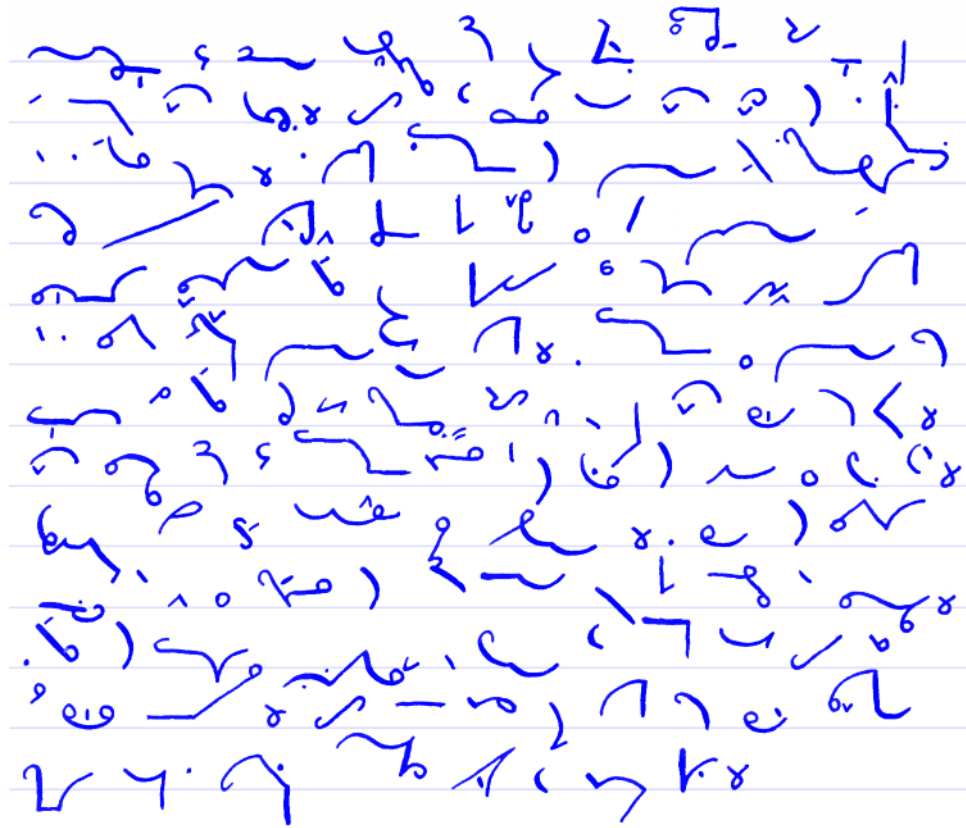
You aren't learning anything when you're talking. Lyndon B. Johnson

The only thing you should ever quit is giving up! Steve Pfister

Never say, 'Oops'. Always say, 'Ah\*', interesting'. Anonymous (544 words)

\* "Ah" Using the placeholder stroke, against which to write any vowel accurately





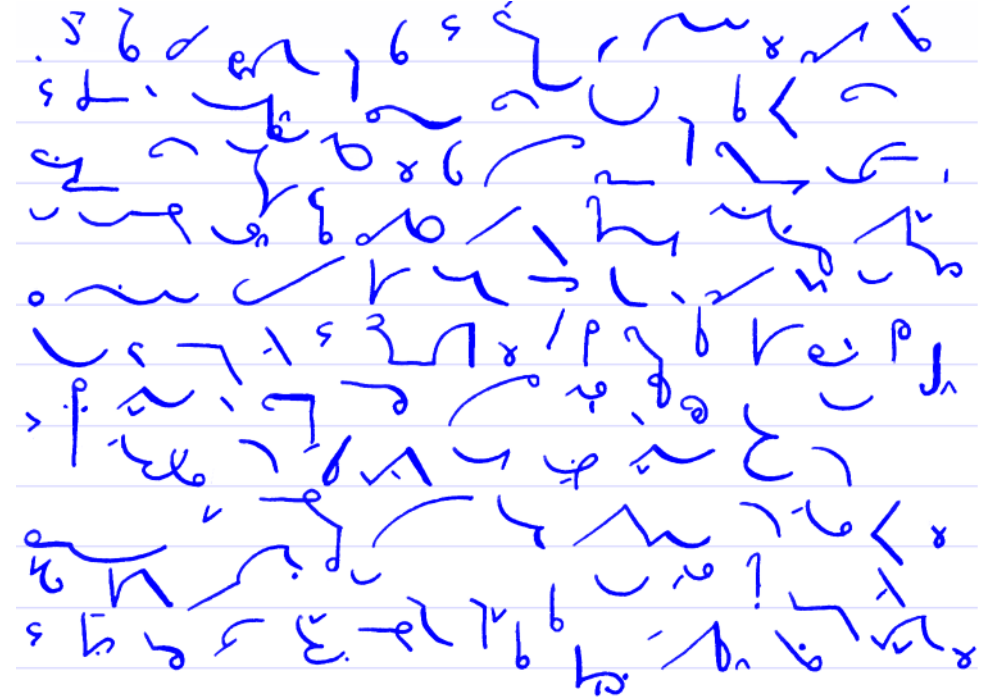
### Termination

Many years ago, when the weekend newspapers were full of jokey cartoons, I would cut out and keep my favourites. One that sticks in my mind was a depiction of an office room. An older clerk was looking up apprehensively from his rather low-down desk at the sight of his large, looming and smugly smiling boss filling the doorway, with his arm round the shoulder of a happy and bright looking young lad. The clerk is looking very glum, as the boss says, "Perkins, I want you to teach my son your job." My sympathies were with the clerk, of course, on whose face was written his every thought. This would not be the last

blunt announcement\* he would be receiving. The son was happily ignorant of how his progress was going to be at the expense of someone else. The boss was clearly impervious to everything that got in the way of his and his son's careers. One can almost see the lad very soon sliding directly into a well-paid management role, without too much delay.

\* "announcement" Using the -nt suffix, as "-ment" would not join clearly

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



### Termination

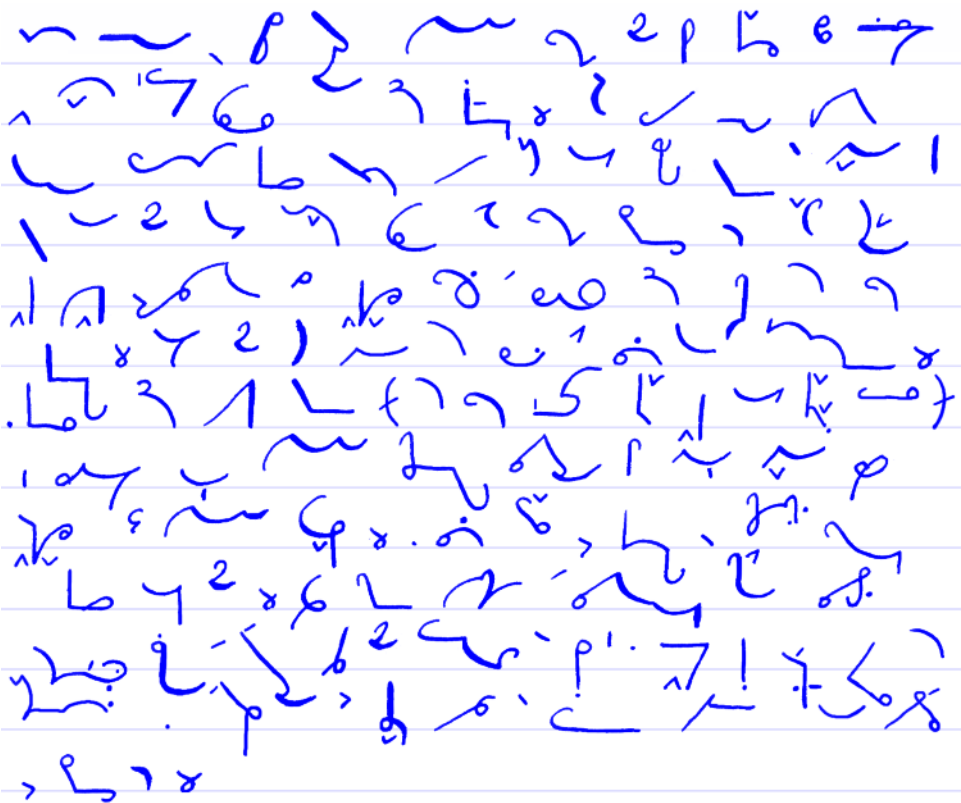
The point of this story is that you will have to do this with the plodding old longhand. You are the boss with the task of introducing something more efficient to do its job, more energetically, more enthusiastically and faster. Then later on you can break the unwelcome but not unexpected news that its services are to be terminated, and enforced retirement is imminent, where it will never again have to worry about not being able to keep up with the workload. Much as it protests at first\*, it will soon settle down to the sedate writing of greetings cards, letters and notes to friends, filling in official\* forms, or, just

to rub in the insult, writing your signature on the acceptance letter for that reporting or office job. On the other hand\*, it will be relieved not to have to tie itself in knots trying to keep up with a torrent of words and will finally\* accept its demotion and reduced pace of life.

\* Omission phrases "at (fir)st" "on the oth(er h)and"

\* "official" "finally" Always put in the first vowel, as these are similar if not neatly written



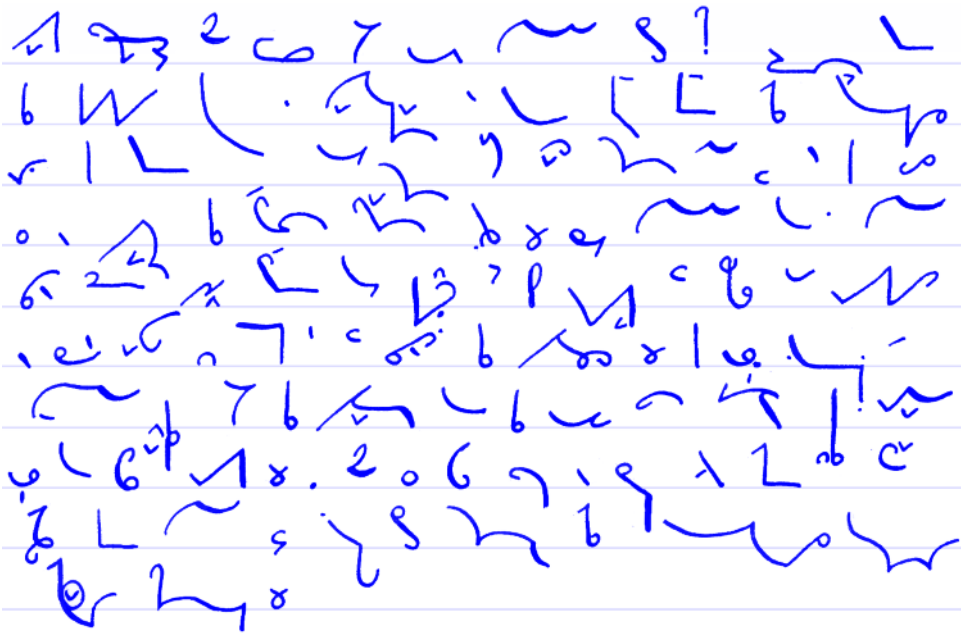


Termination

I am going to suggest banishing longhand from the shorthand study times, as that is exactly how my college lessons were conducted. Although we could not help having normal text before our eyes in the instruction book, all writing had to be in shorthand for the entire lesson, and that from the spoken word, either saying out loud to oneself\* as the outlines, phrases and sentences were drilled, or from dictation. Only shorthand was written or seen, and the same for homework. The takes were read back (or very occasionally typed out in the typewriting class) but certainly no longhand transcription\* happening at all, and no writing lists of outlines with the longhand alongside. The same applies to the temptation\* to transliterate\* printed text into shorthand.

This will practise leisurely and heavy-handed drawing, hesitation, rumination, considering and pondering, which is the shorthand equivalent of sitting on a couch eating potato chips or ice cream, the opposite of the desired result of quick recall in response to the spoken word.

- \* "oneself" Omits the N
- \* "transcription" Omits the N and R, to differentiate from "describe" and derivatives
- \* "temptation" Omits the P, therefore M stroke not Imp
- \* "transliterate" Omits the N

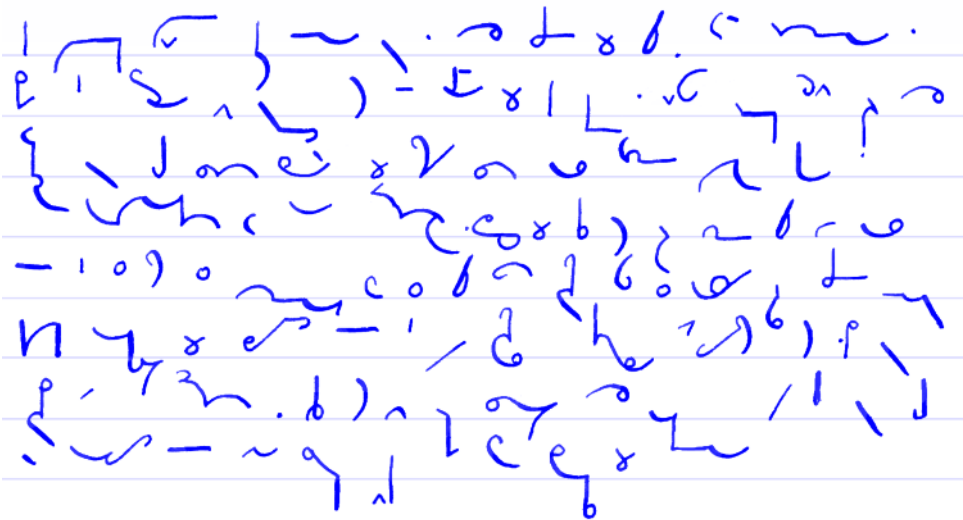


Termination

Right from the beginning of the shorthand quest until now, longhand has been trying to claim back its territory, after a lifetime of being "top dog" and it is pointless to let it back in the room, eyes, mind, arm and hand, when all it wants to do is reassert its former\* prime position. Send the longhand for a long, slow walk round the block for the duration of the study period, with instructions not to return too soon, while you get on with honing its replacement. It needs evicting and locking outside, until it

is required for its new more humble duties of writing notes for others to read. The shorthand is then free to speed up and take flight, and this will not take long when the competition has been removed and its interference firmly and decisively terminated. (652 words)

\* "former" Special outline, to differentiate from "firmer, farmer" and "former" one who forms



**Black Hole**

It looked like it was going to be an impossible task. Just the thought of making a start on planning how to begin\* was quite daunting. It took a while to get around to telling myself that it would have to be done some time\* soon. There are some things that you can leave doing for a long time\* without any harmful consequences. It is easy to think you can just let things go on as they are, as making the effort is just more trouble than is necessary, but this task could not be delayed indefinitely. As we cannot go on our travels at present and

the weather was set to be stable and warm, the decision was made to do the seemingly impossible undertaking, which had to be done all in one go, and not spread out over several days.

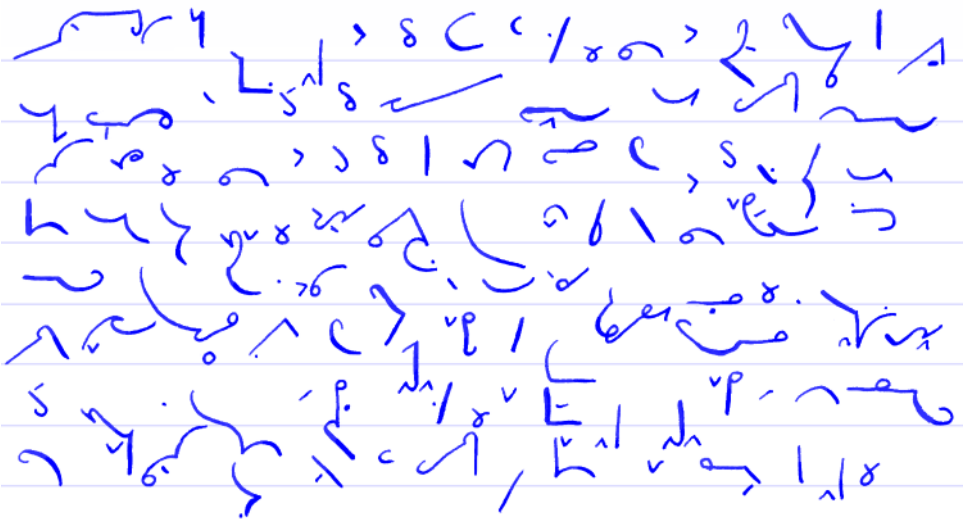
- \* "to begin" Based on the short form phrase "to be"
- \* "some time" Halving to represent the T of "time"
- \* Omission phrase "for (a) long time"



**Black Hole**

The challenge ahead of us was finding the small slow leak in the pond liner. At the far end, where the ground is lower than the pond, a small accumulation of water was constantly appearing below the granite blocks that hold up the plant bed at that end. The water does overflow in that area when the pond is topped up, but this was

happening more regularly than was reasonable. The result of all this was the necessity to top up more often than usual for the summer evaporation, and that is not good for the fish. We let the water level reduce until it stopped, which let us know the level the leak hole was at.



**Black Hole**

Reluctantly I had to dig\* out all the plants along that edge. Some of the shrub branches had rooted into the clumps of pond plants and were growing in the water, making little islands. Some of the pond plants had also crossed over to the plant bed, which was now damp enough for them to thrive. I wondered, hopefully, if there might just be some syphoning action going on if there was a soil bridge of any sort, but this was not the case. The butyl rubber

liner is wrapped over and down the side of large thick planks all round the pond, to provide a firm and stable edge. I dug out down the side and my excavation very slowly filled up with water each time I scooped it out.

\* "to dig" Helpful to insert the vowel, as being out of position it could be misread as "to take"

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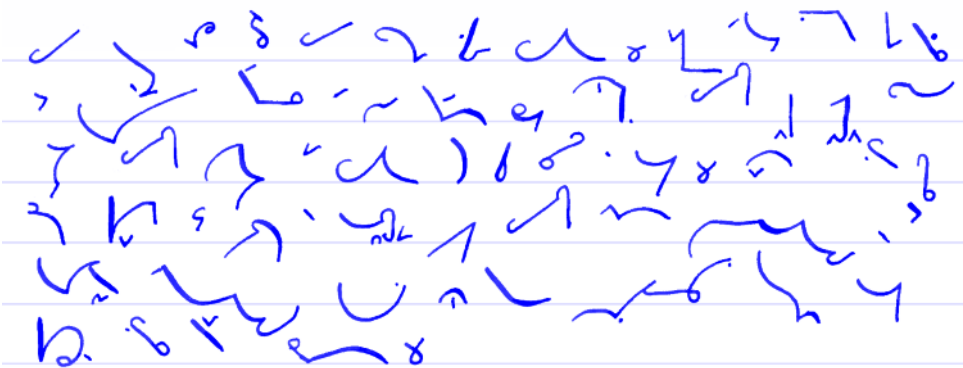
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**Black Hole**

We pushed the islands of plants away from the edge of the shelf. I took off the cap at the base of the filter box and let the pump send the muddy water out and down the garden, until the water level on the shelf was just half an inch. My apple trees were delighted with the river of nutrient rich

water, and I am looking forward\* to all the valuable and beneficial fish mud being miraculously formed into delicious apples by September.

\* Omission phrase "looking fo(r)ward"

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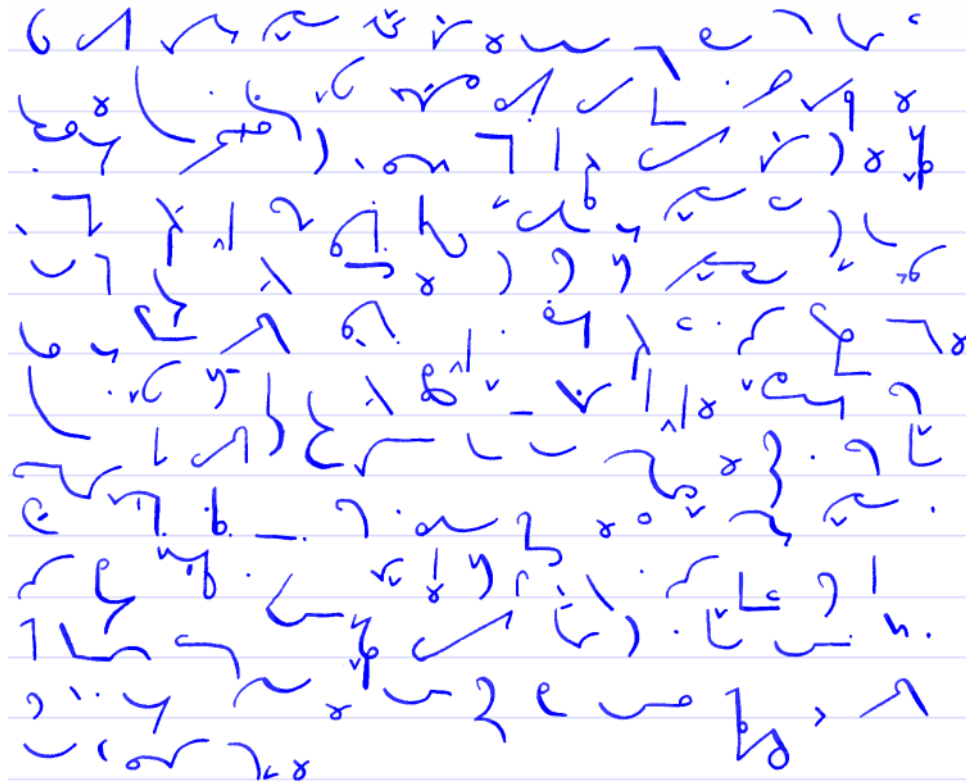
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### Black Hole

Then we had to lift the liner and find the hole. Nothing could be seen, or felt with fingers. After a fair while of fruitless searching we took a rest to reconsider. The only recourse was to somehow get it to tell us where the hole was. I decided to get the puddle out from the silty depression on the shelf under the liner, in order to\* see if any of it filled up again. So there I was, reclining on the soil, face under the black rubber, slopping out a sandy puddle with a little plastic cup. After a while I saw it was filling up as fast as I could bail\* it out. I squinted very carefully at the water to look for any movement. There was a very tiny

flow of muddy eddies coming from a certain direction. As I moved the liner a little, suddenly I noticed a chink of light! I was told to put a little twig through it, and it became clear on the other side where the fault was, a tiny nick about a third of an inch long. In fact\* there were\* several nicks and disturbances to the rubber in that small area.

\* Omission phrases "in ord(er to)" "in (f)act" "there (w)ere"

\* "bail" This meaning of the word can also be spelled "bale"



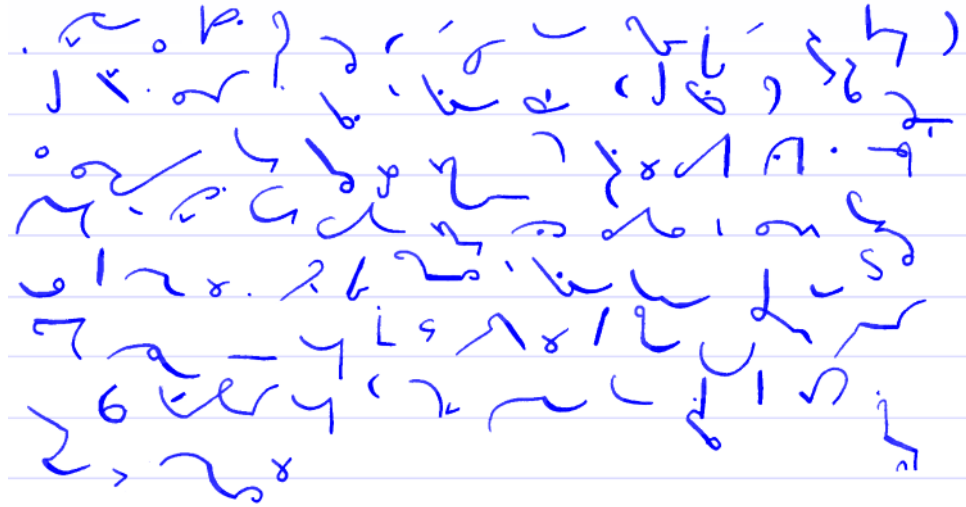
### Black Hole

It was all easily repaired with a large band aid made of a piece of spare butyl and the specialist\* ultra sticky "cold glue" rubber tape. It was less a tape and more a roll of thick black gooey rubber enclosed between wax paper strips, and needed careful handling to get it in position with minimum contact with fingers. It was a relief to get the patch on top of it and pressed down. Its extreme stickiness was very encouraging, though, as no water could

possibly get through. At last it was truly\* mission accomplished, with great relief, and we left a foam kneeling pad in the depression under that part as an extra precaution against stressing the repair.

\* "specialist" "specialised" Always insert the last vowel, to differentiate

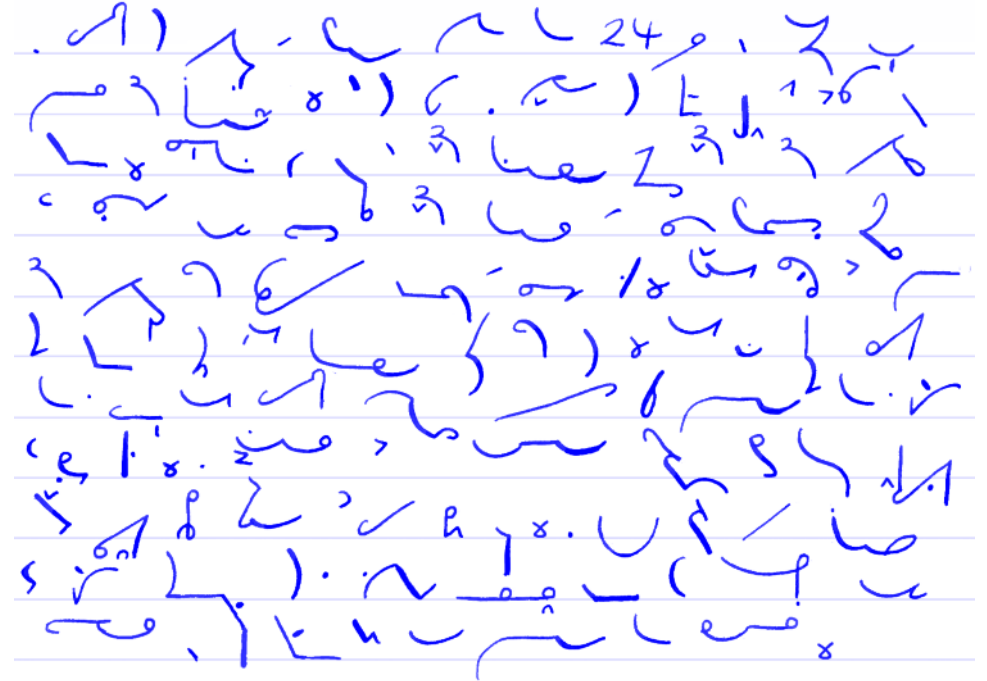
\* "truly" "utterly" Always insert the last vowel



### Black Hole

The liner is at least 30 years old and still in perfect condition, and I believe the damage was done by a small piece of paving stone that had been placed there all those years ago, as somewhere for the birds to stand to drink or bathe. We had laid an extra length of lining along the shelf to protect the main surface, but somehow over the years things

had moved. The rough edge of the fragment of paving, having disappeared under plant growth, must have come into contact with the rubber. Large strong fish regularly pushing themselves forcefully into that area, looking for edibles, had also contributed to the movement.



### Black Hole

The water was refilled and everything left for 24 hours to ensure no leaks were continuing. All was well, the liner was tucked down and the soil put back. Scruffy old bits of wire fencing and chicken wire were replaced with smart new green wire fence, and some evergreen\* shrubs were replanted from elsewhere, to cover and screen the edge. Finding the source of the leak was the big issue, not the fixing which was very easy. In the end, it was the search for a clue in the water movement, rather than just looking for a hole, that saved the day. The annoyance of the

nagging problem has been far outweighed by the huge satisfaction of achieving what we set out to do. The fish I believe are convinced that the whole escapade was an elaborate\* excuse to give them interesting new corners to poke about in looking for snacks. (1056 words)

\* "evergreen" Insert the last vowel, as this is similar to "overgrown"

\* "elaborate" Compare the outline for "laboured" L plus halved Br stroke