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Blogs - 2021 - January

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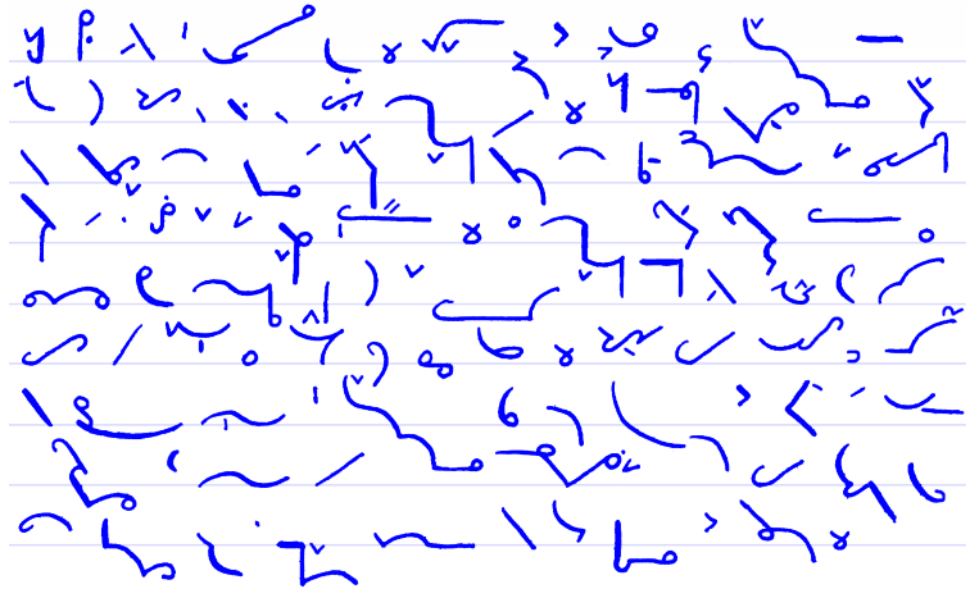
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PDF Date: 23 December 2024



New Year Fireworks

I did not stay* up on New Year's Eve. I like to hear all the noise when the fireworks go off, so I went to bed to await the midnight hour. I had extra pillows piled up behind me, books and Ipod* before me, toes warming on the hot water bottle, and a constant eye on the bedside clock. As midnight approached, I remembered that the clock is sometimes several minutes out, so I quickly got up and found the other little one which I know is only three seconds fast. I wondered whether anyone would actually be spending their* money on fireworks this year, after all the job and income problems that many are experiencing, or whether they would be

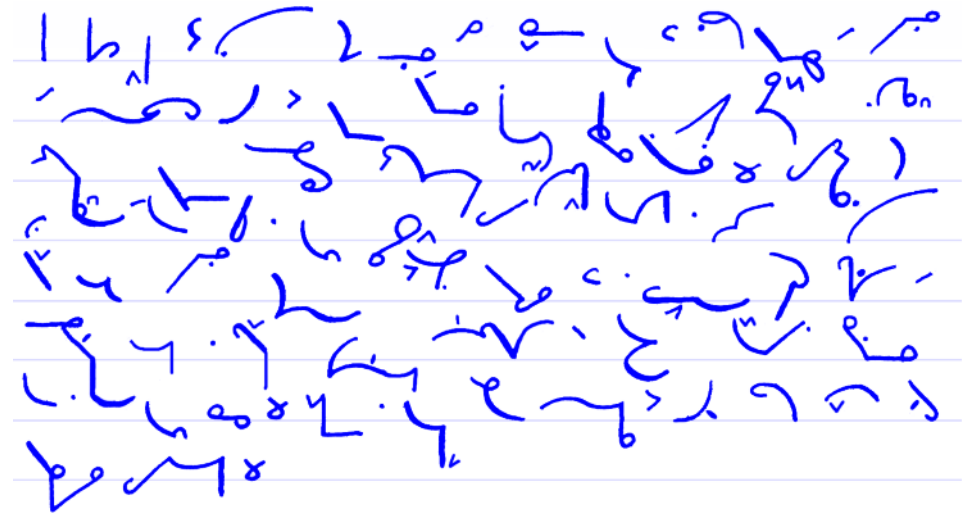
even more determined to have a good time, to make up for the difficulties of the past year*.

* "stay" "sit" Helpful to insert the vowel, as the meanings are similar, and essential to insert it if either of these are out of position in a phrase

* "Ipod" "Ipad" Insert the second vowel to differentiate

* "spending their" Doubling to represent "their"

* Omission phrase "pas(t) year"



New Year Fireworks

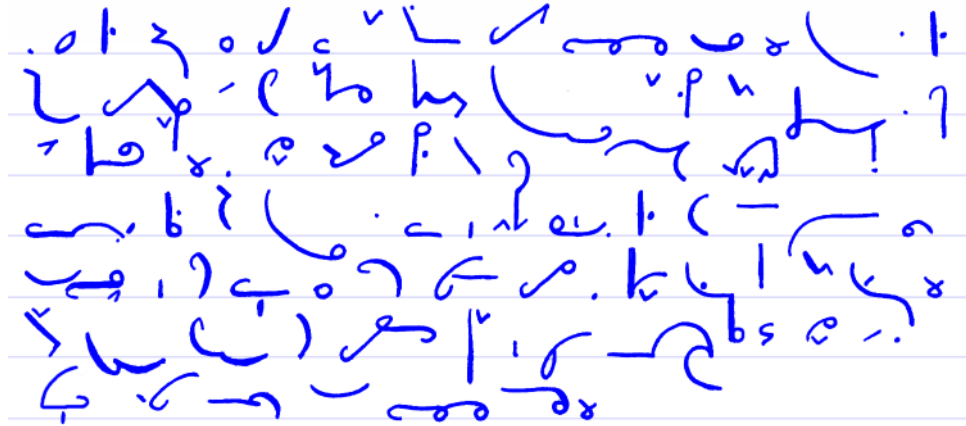
It turned out that the latter was the case, as the sky filled with star bursts and rockets, and many more than usual of the big box continuous displays, reaching higher altitudes* and producing bigger explosions and very much* louder bangs. One of these* was let off just a few houses away, followed a little later by individual rockets, zooming noisily upwards with a glowing orange trail and exploding into a bright illuminated umbrella of falling fiery specks for a few seconds. I took a video of

several minutes of the show from my open upstairs window.

* "altitudes" Always insert the first vowel, to distinguish from "latitudes"

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

* "one of these" Always insert the vowel in "those" and "these" when they are out of position in a phrase

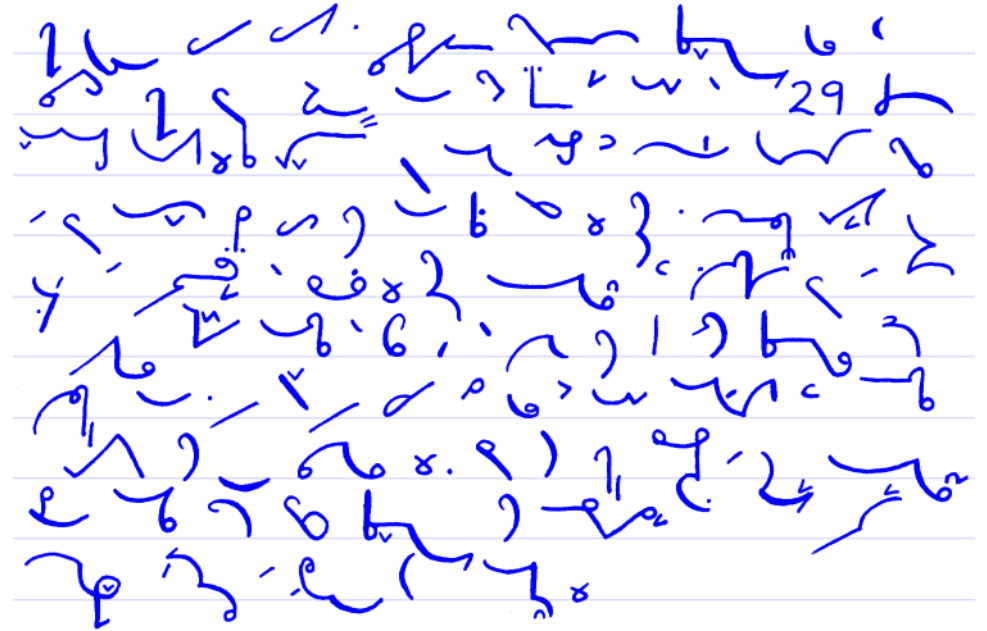


New Year Fireworks

The first day of the year is generally when I pack away the Christmas things. After a day of doing website and other items, at the end of the afternoon I set about dismantling the tree and the decorations. The lights always stay up throughout the month, to lighten the gloomy days, although if there is a cold but sunny* day,

they can look somewhat incongruous, but their glow is very welcome once the daylight fades at about four. By the evening, everything was once again tidy, but still colourful with the lights and an alcove wall covered in Christmas cards.

* "sunny" "snowy" Always insert the vowels



New Year Fireworks

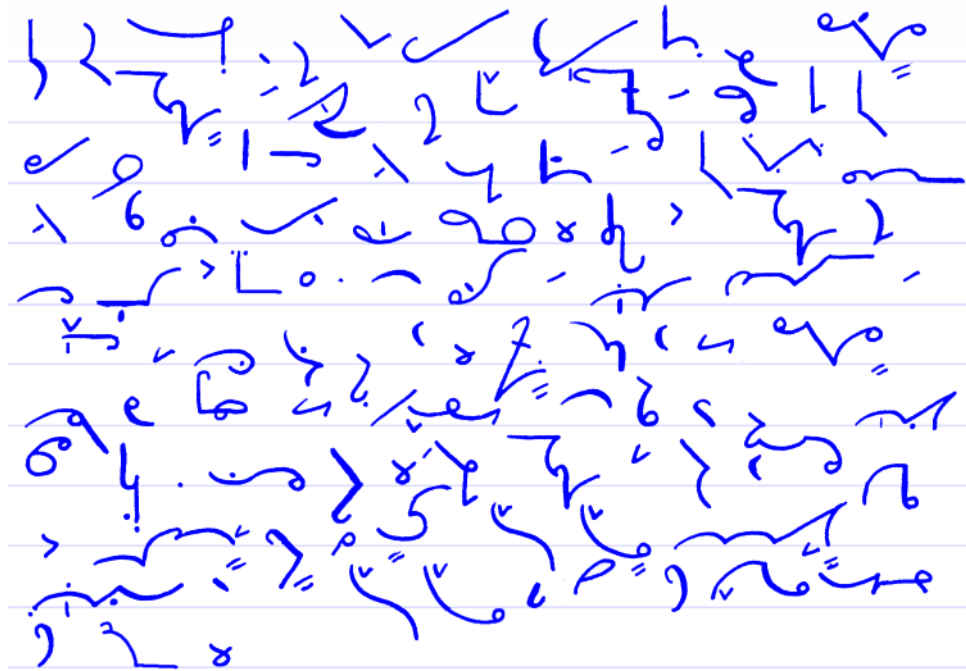
During the evening we watched a historical programme describing the events that happened during the Blitz of London, in particular the attack on the night of 29 December 1940. I like to be informed and understand what my own family members and people in my city went through in days past. There was a mixture of real film footage and re-creations* of scenes. There were* interviews with elderly people, and readings of diary entries of others, who all lived through it and their descriptions* were illustrated in an hour by hour story as the events of the night unfolded, with actors to represent their young selves. The

subject was treated sensitively, and seeing the interviewees standing in those very places describing their experience really emphasised the horrors and suffering they endured.

* "re-creations" Must have the hyphen, as "recreation" has a different pronunciation and meaning

* Omission phrase "there (w)ere"

* "descriptions" The contraction is not used for the plural, as that would be too similar to "discourse"



New Year Fireworks

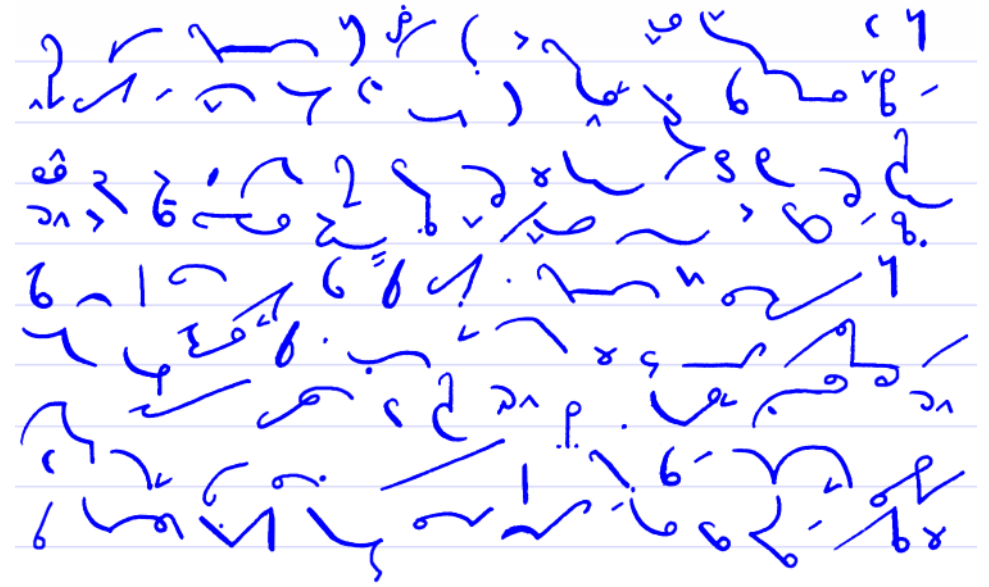
It was especially interesting to see the part where they were attempting to save St Paul's Cathedral, and rushing through the tiny corridors* and stairs at the top, as we ourselves had gone up into the dome and top parapet some time ago*, up those same narrow stone staircases. Destruction of the Cathedral was the main goal of the attack, as an important social and emotional landmark and icon, but the mission failed to achieve that. Churchill ordered that "St Paul's must be saved at all costs", recognising the importance of this building to Londoners' morale, as well as defeating the enemy's objective. Opposite* the Cathedral, on the path that leads to the

Millennium Bridge, is the National Firefighters Memorial, commemorating all firefighters who have lost their lives in the course of their work.

* "corridors" Compare with the outline for "girders" which has a hooked D, to help distinguish

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

* "opposite" Helpful to insert the first vowel, and the diphthong in "beside" as these are similar in shape and related in meaning

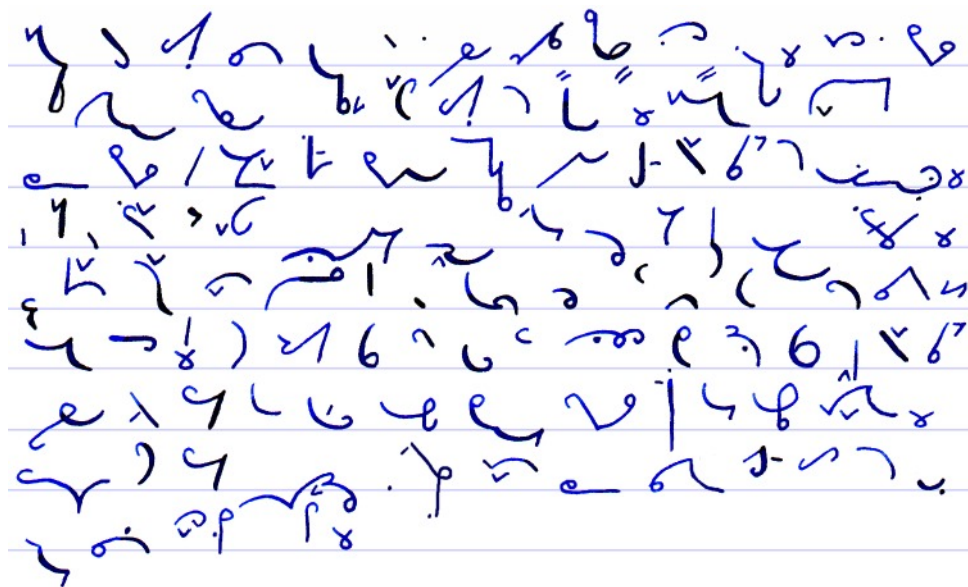


New Year Fireworks

Throughout the whole programme I was constantly thinking of the previous night's fireworks that I had watched, and my only thought now was how painful those sights and sounds would be to those who lived through the Blitz years. Having spent several years travelling around all the corners of London, I recognised many of the places and streets, and this made it more real than just watching a programme about somewhere I had never visited and that was just a name on the map. When

the current restrictions are lifted and we are once more* able to travel around the city, the various locations around that area will seem rather different, remembering this and earlier history which is for the most part* buried beneath the smart modern office buildings, shops and roads. (734 words)

* Omission phrases "wu(n)s more" "for the mos(t) part"



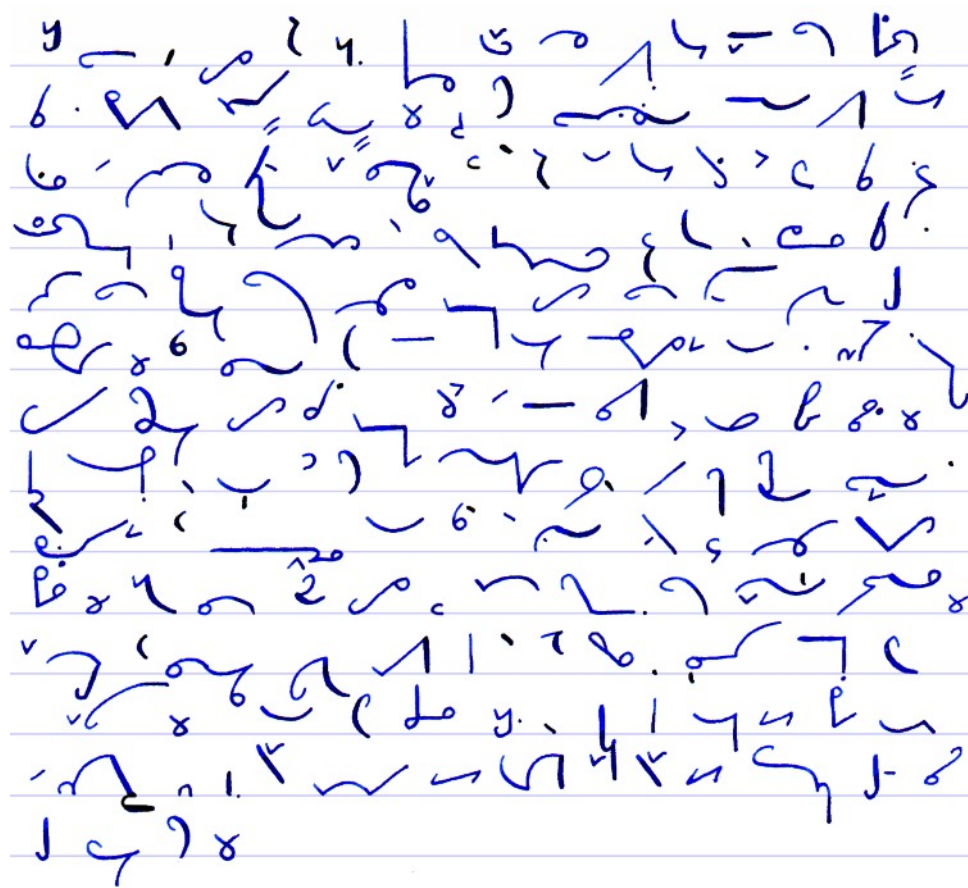
Strong Man

I have just been watching some videos of a recent World's Strongest* Man competition. I am not a sports-loving person, either watching or doing. I never liked school sports which, unlike adult sporting activities, are not done by choice or inclination. But I had to comply, all the while impatiently counting off the years until it was no longer compulsory. When that time arrived, my legs had two favourite words that made them very happy: "Never Again!" So I watch this particular event with amazement* as they wear themselves out

by choice, using up energy for fun, instead of saving the precious commodity for the necessities of life. Clearly they are energy millionaires, the opposite of my school self, and don't want or need to have the same mindset at all.

* "strongest" Optional contraction that omits the hard G sound

* "amazement" "amusement" Always insert the vowel in these and all their derivatives

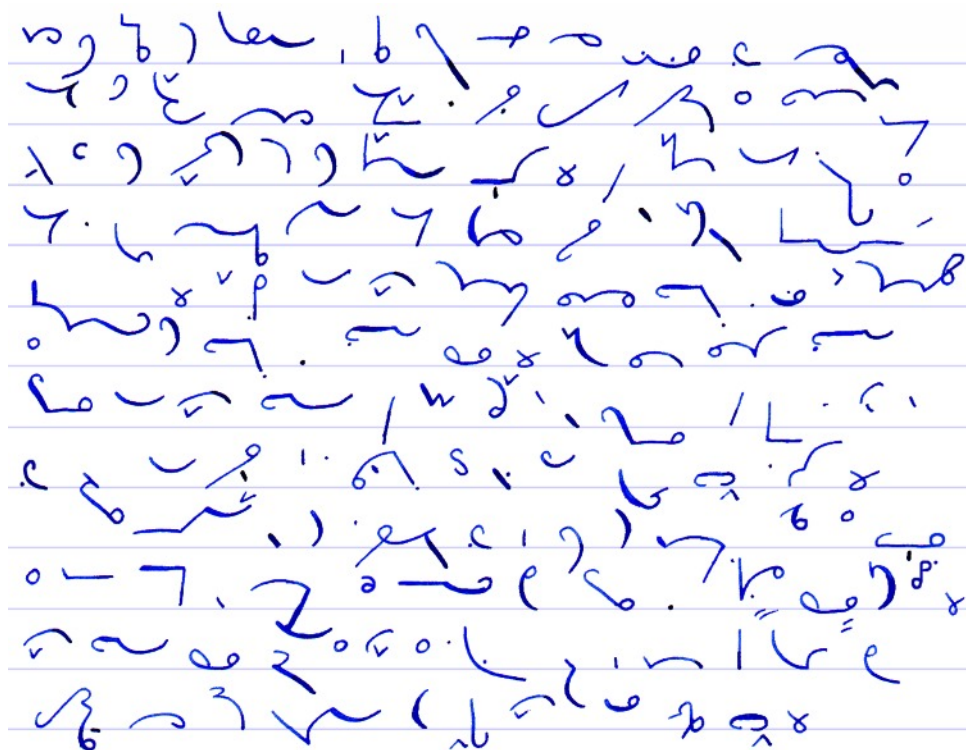


Strong Man

I do not care who wins, although I did at times find myself rooting for the guy from Dartford, which is a suburb of Greater London. But when they are grimacing, going red in the face and limbs juddering, I sympathise with all of them, not for the pain of the effort, which is completely self-inflicted*, but for that moment of super-determination when they have to squeeze just a little more strength from their muscles, to get one more log lift done successfully. That is something they can only experience in an actual competition, where there is only one chance to get the points and go ahead to the next stage of

the heats. It would be interesting to know what their mental ruses are during training, creating a scenario that counteracts any thoughts of letting up when the muscle burn starts. I have some shorthand ones when I am practising from my own recordings. I imagine that someone else will have to read it all, and that stops the scrawl getting ever wilder. In other tasks I tend to divide it into "start now, and you will be glad you did by tomorrow" followed by "quarter done, half done, nearly there".

* "self-inflicted" In second position, to accord with the vowel of "self"



Strong Man

I am not sure why it is so fascinating, but it is probably because the most intense effort must be made* in that short final moment, unlike a race where the runner has more time* to catch up with their rival or their timing goal. Each item in the competition is only a few minutes long, in which they must use all of their ability*, technique and determination. I sit in my armchair, sometimes gripping the ends of the armrests, as they are gripping the granite stones. I have some small granite blocks in my garden, each about the size of two bricks, which took a lot of effort to place in rows on a sloping plant bed, in order to* even the ground a little. Carrying two was a reasonable effort, but three was too much*, and that is as close as I can get to imagining what is going on as they place the Atlas Stones on their stands. My garden

stones would be as light as a feather to them, but to me it felt as if one of those* men were pulling them out of my hands and towards the ground.

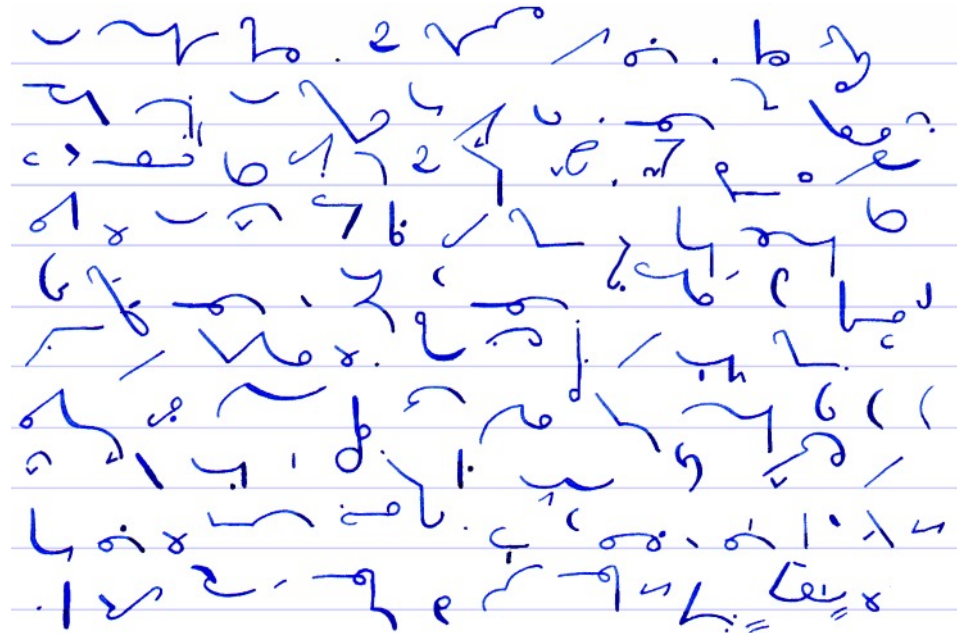
* Omission phrases "mus(t) be made" "in ord(er) to"

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

* "ability" Using the suffix method to represent the whole word

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

* "one of those" Always put the vowel in "those" "these" when they are out of position in a phrase



Strong Man

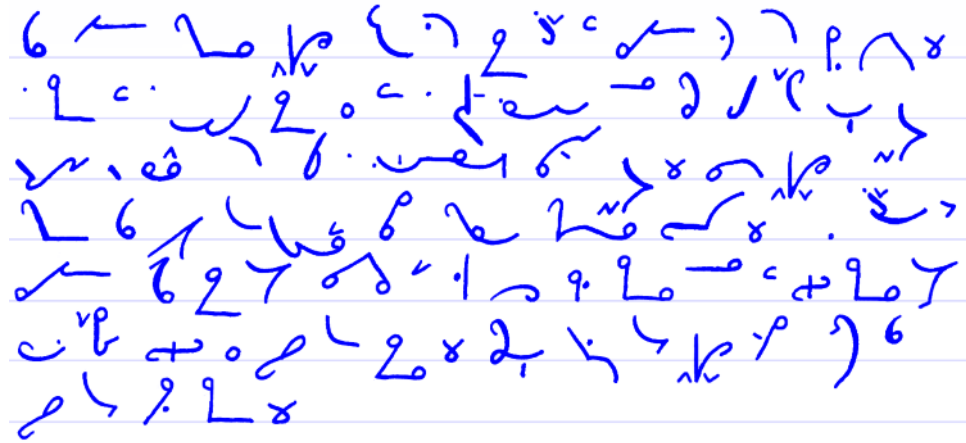
In mental terms, the shorthand parallels are the same, the demands and pressures can only be imitated, in preparation for the real event, the exam or the business meeting with all the executive faces watching your shorthand pad, whilst the actual speaker is racing ahead. In my college days we practised to achieve 20 words a minute* faster than the proposed exam, to ensure that exam nerves and other difficulties did not wreck our performance. The Strong Man contenders are no doubt practising with heavier weights, longer distances and more lifts per

minute than they think might be needed on competition day, knowing that their rivals are doing the same. I came across a quote that seems to sum it all up: "The difference between ordinary and extraordinary is that little extra - Jimmy* Johnson". (662 words)

* Omission phrase "words (a) minute"

* "extraordinary" Optional contraction

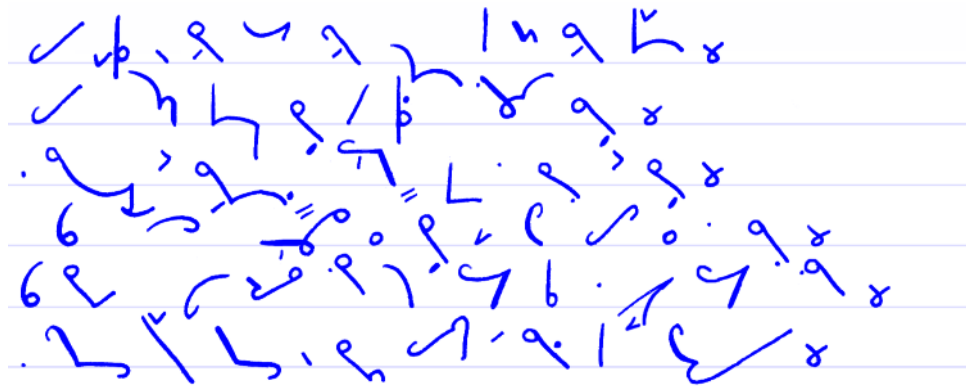
* "Jimmy" Must have final vowel to distinguish from "Jim", names are generally best written fully vocalised



Super Soup

This article practises outlines that have R Hook combined with Circle S or Stee Loop. A stroke with an initial hook is called a double consonant, because there is generally either no vowel between the two sounds, or just an unaccented slurred vowel. Some outlines break this rule for convenience, such as "person, terminus,

girl". The combining of the circle and this hook only happens on the eight main straight strokes, because with curved strokes only the inner side of the curve is used for hooks. There is no pair for the outline "such" and therefore that is used for the Hay stroke.



Super Soup

We decided to sup in the upper room at about supper time.

We ordered tomato soup which tasted absolutely super.

The superintendent of the Supreme Club took a sip of the soup.

This man guzzles his soup but the other one is a sipper.

This sport will always sap your energy, it is a real energy sapper.

The broken pipe began to spew water and spray it everywhere.



Super Soup

The sailors were praying as the sea was spraying them with cold water.

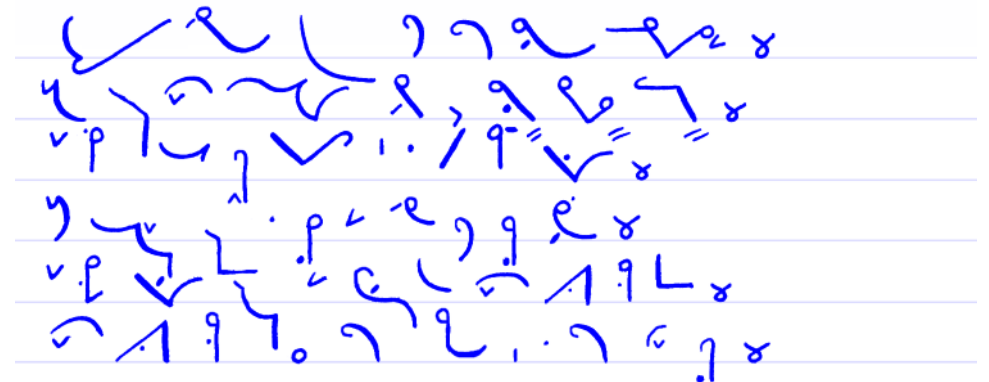
They had to spay the animal to stop it spraying everywhere.

She was a spry old person who worked as a spy many years ago.

We were surprised that the pies for supper turned out so well.

The set of spice bottles was a special surprise gift from Pru.

They brought the girls to the subway to wait for Sabrina.



Super Soup

They were sobbing after their very sobering experience.

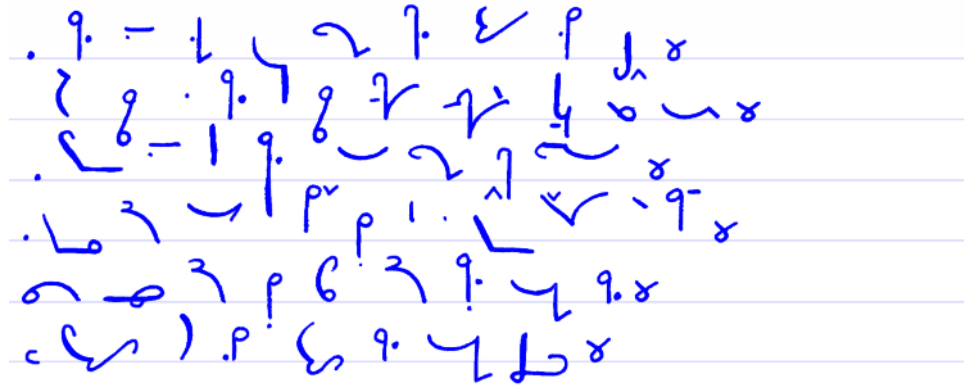
I have paid my monthly sub to the Sabre Sports Club.

I sat in the outer barn on a large straw bale.

I was invited to take a seat on the soft three seater sofa.

I set the bowl of food on the floor for my red setter dog.

My red setter is very strong but a very light eater.

**Super Soup**

The stray cat ate the food from the tray that we set down.

Although he is a stray, he is utterly* and truly* devoted to us now.

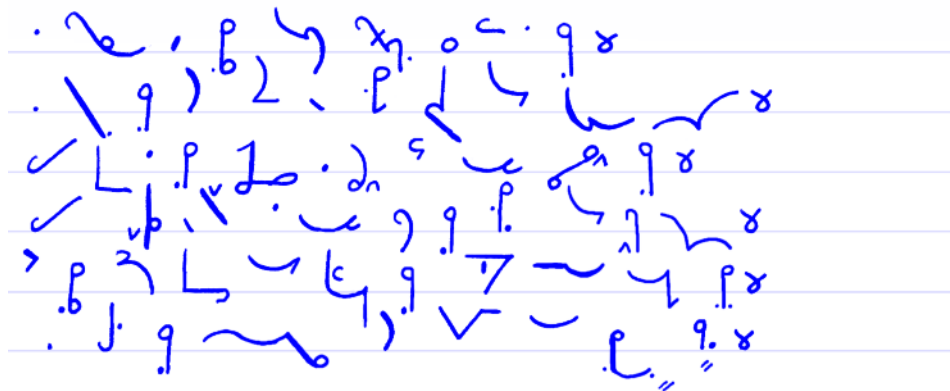
The black cat had strayed in from the outer garden.

The pigs were in the sty sitting on a big pile of straw.

Some guests were sitting, others were straying into the street.

When everyone was seated, they went straight into the discussion.

* "utterly" "truly" Always insert the vowels

**Super Soup**

A person who sits for their portrait is called a sitter.

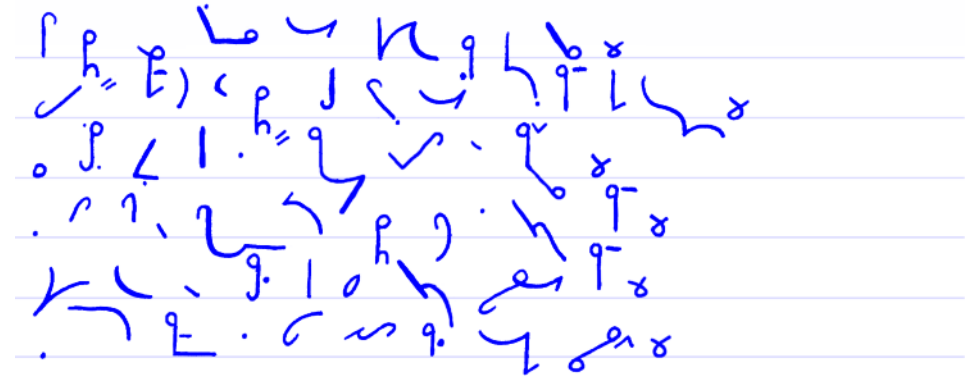
The baby sitter was asked to set the table for the evening meal.

We took a seat and discussed the issues with the new house sitter.

We decided to buy a new three seater settee for the outer room.

All the seats were taken in the twenty seater coach going into the city

The ten seater minibus was parked in Sydney Street.

**Super Soup**

Tell Stu to stow the bags in the twelve seater touring bus.

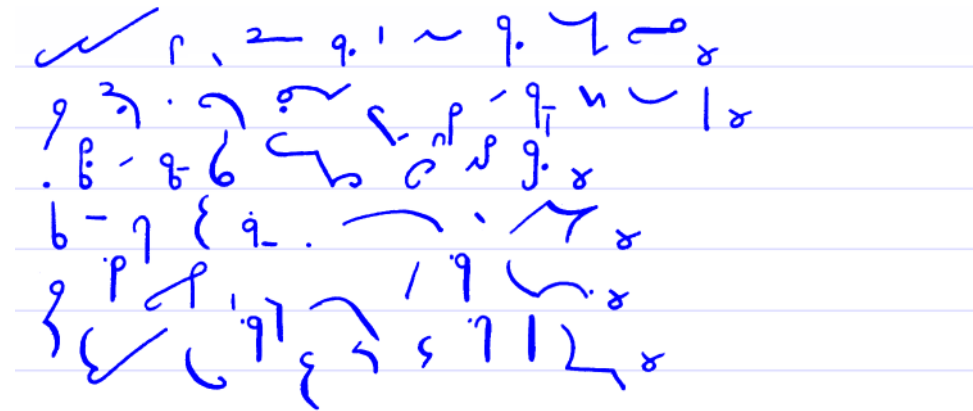
We saw that Stu had been playing in the straw at the farm.

His satin jacket had a strange pattern of stripes.

The child tried to drink her stew through a paper straw.

She will have to strain it first before using the straw.

The car struck a wall and went straight into the house.

**Super Soup**

We were told to walk straight on and not stray onto the grass.

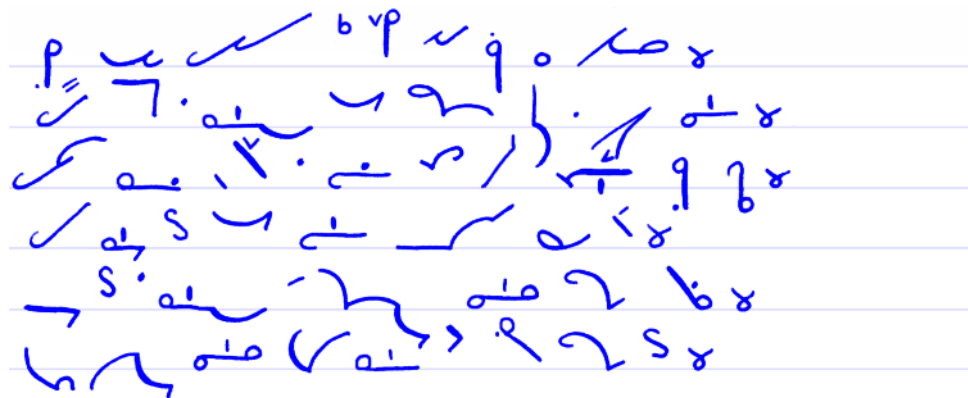
He wore a very smart blue suit and strutted about in it.

The stays and struts on this equipment will not stand the strain.

It is quite true that they construed the matter all wrongly.

He was sad yesterday but today may be much sadder for him.

They were even sadder when they heard that the adder had escaped.

**Super Soup**

Sid knew we were on his side and would consider his request.

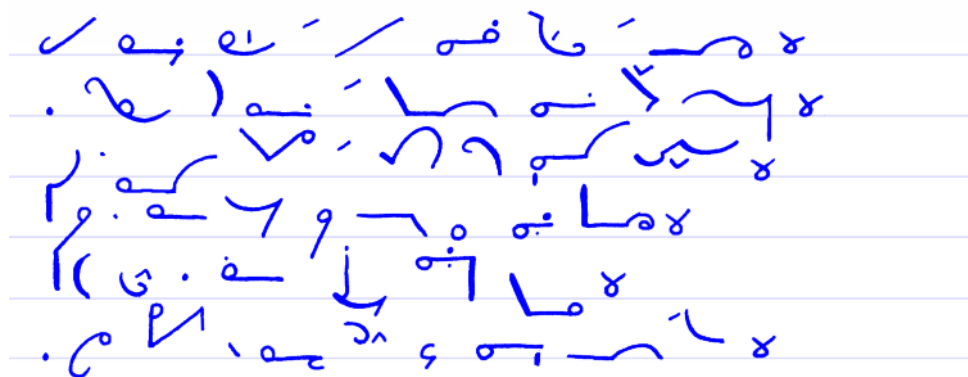
We got a soaking in the storm, it was a real soaker.

We will seek to buy an acre of land on which to grow cedar trees.

We soaked the plant in the ochre coloured stone pot.

Give the plant a soaking and remove the suckers from the base.

If you leave the suckers, they will suck all the sap from the plant.

**Super Soup**

We seek the sun and are seekers of fun and games.

The person was sick and became sicker by the minute.

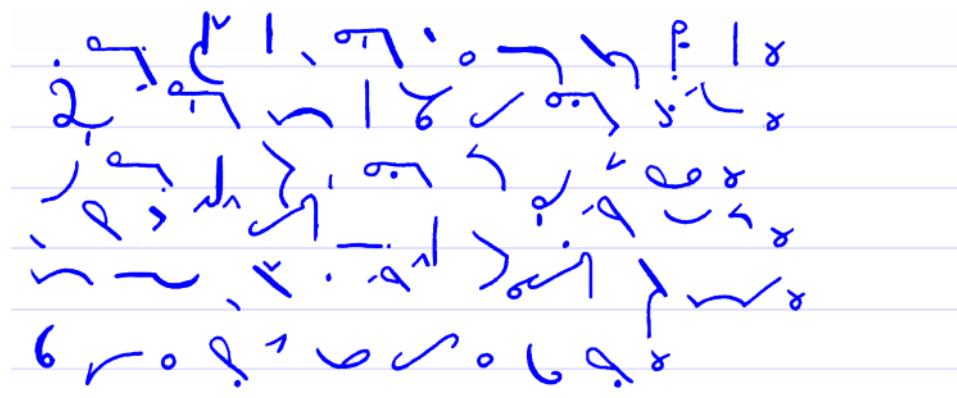
She had a sickly appearance and also very scrawly handwriting.

He had a sack in which he kept his secret* documents.

They found a sack containing the sacred* books.

The wheels started to skew around when the screw came off.

* "secret" "sacred" Distinguishing outlines

**Super Soup**

The scuba diver had to scrub all his gear before stowing it.

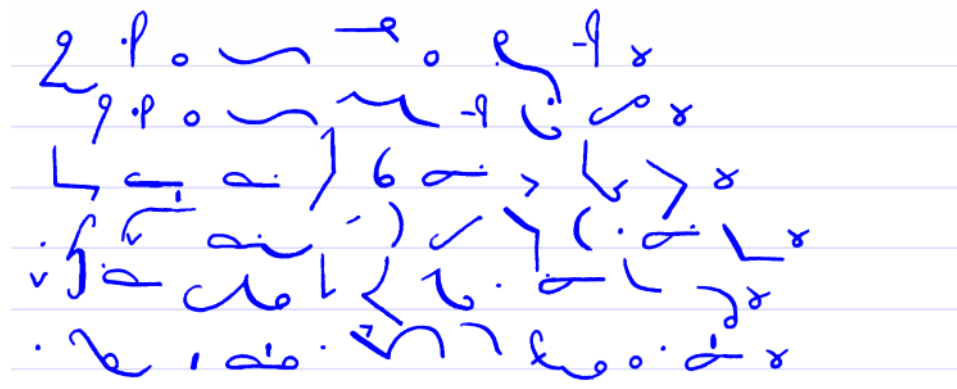
There is no scope to improve it unless we scrape the paint off.

She skipped down the path but scraped her shoes on the stones.

To stop all the water coming out, push the stopper in hard.

I am going to buy a stoppered hot water bottle tomorrow.

This hill is steep and the next one is even steeper.

**Super Soup**

He could not state his name because of his severe stutter.

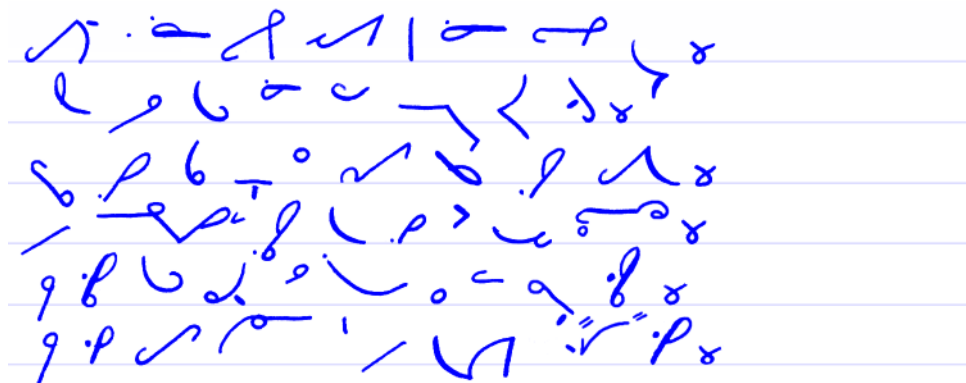
He stated his name and never stuttered even once.

Take the glue stick and attach this sticker to the top of the page.

The children like sticking and so we bought them a sticker book.

I stack shelves at the shop and have been a stacker for years.

A person who stokes a boiler or furnace is a stoker.



Super Soup

We saw a stag yesterday and watched it stagger across the field.

Staff hours have been staggered in order to* keep the shop open.

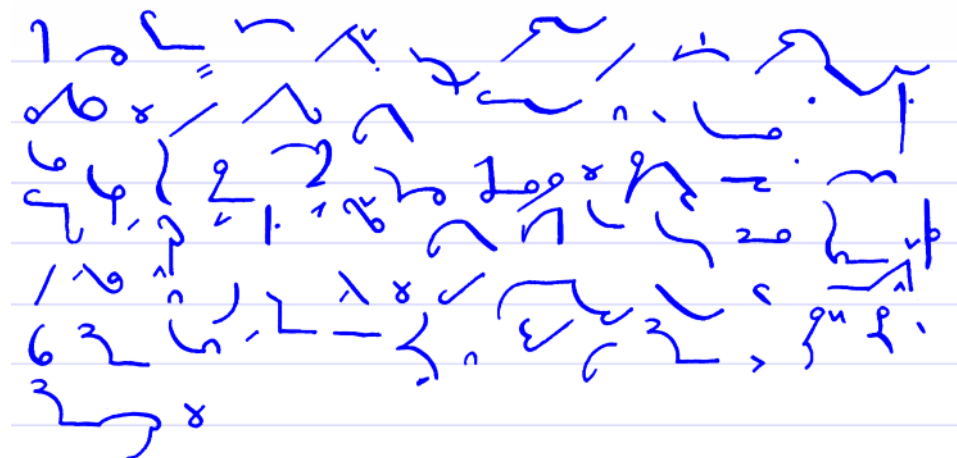
Please stitch this coat, as you are the best stitcher we have.

Our experienced stitchers have stitched all the new garments.

He stages fashion shows and his company is called Super Stagers.

He staged one last week* on our village
hall stage. (937 words)

- * Omission phrases "in ord(er to)" "las(t week)"



Short Letters 20

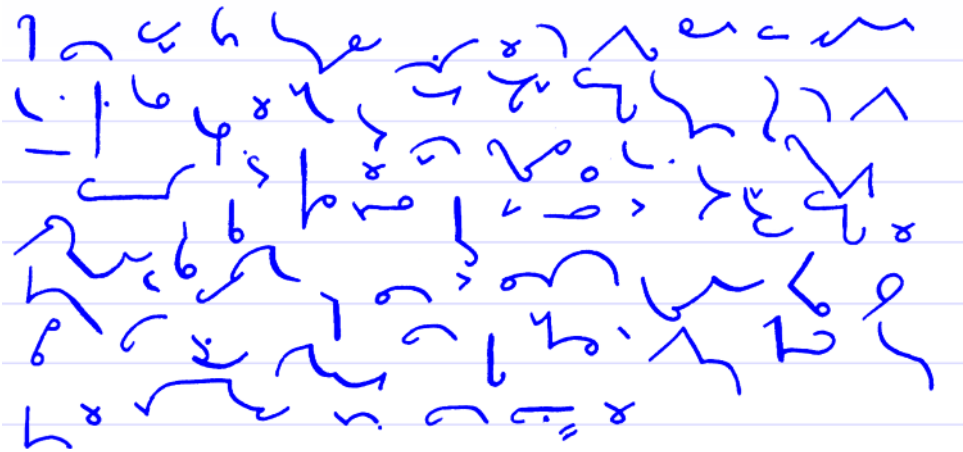
Dear Miss Black, I am replying to your enquiry regarding our home refurbishment* services. Our representative will be calling you to fix a date for his visit, so that he can measure the rooms and discuss requirements*. He will be able to give you an immediate* quotation and printout on the day, and the price will be held for four weeks, so that you can decide which options you wish to take up. We look forward to being* able to carry out this work for you and can assure you that we will work to the highest standard of workmanship. (100 words)

* "refurbishment" Keep the last stroke clearly halved, so it does not look like Ing

- * "requirements" An intersection can often go alongside, if writing through the stroke is not entirely clear

* "immediate" Keep the last stroke clearly halved and thick, so it does not look like "minimum" which would make sense in this context

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



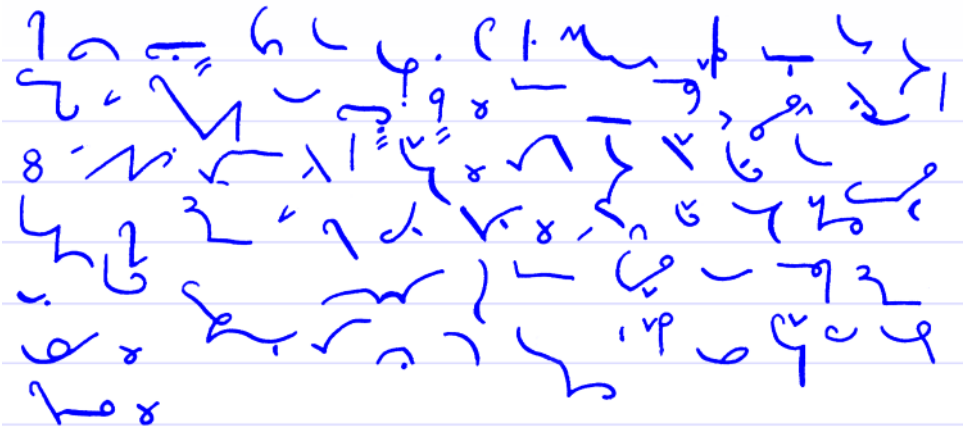
Short Letters 20

Dear Mr White, Thank you for your recent email*. Your representative has now called and we now have a date for his visit. I have filled in the online quotation form, so that your rep can quickly complete the details. My preference is for a full property refurbishment, but this does of course depend on the cost of the final quotation. It may be that we will have to do some of the smaller finishing jobs ourselves, such as wall painting, leaving the more difficult

items of repair and decoration for your team. I look forward* to meeting Mr Gray. (100 words)

* "email" Insert the first vowel, so it is not misread as "mail". This is essential in the past tense, where the outlines are both on the line.

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



Short Letters 20

Dear Mr Gray, Thank you for visiting the other day and I have now decided to go for the full quotation on the property in Green Street. I can give access to the house, opening at eight* and returning to lock up at five. I will be available by phone for queries at any time during the work on the number shown below. Should you find any other* items that need attention, please let me know immediately so that I can

authorise any extra work necessary. I will meet your foreman on site next Friday in order to* inspect progress. (100 words)

* "eight" Generally best to write the numeral for this

* Omission phrases "any oth(er)" "in ord(er to)"



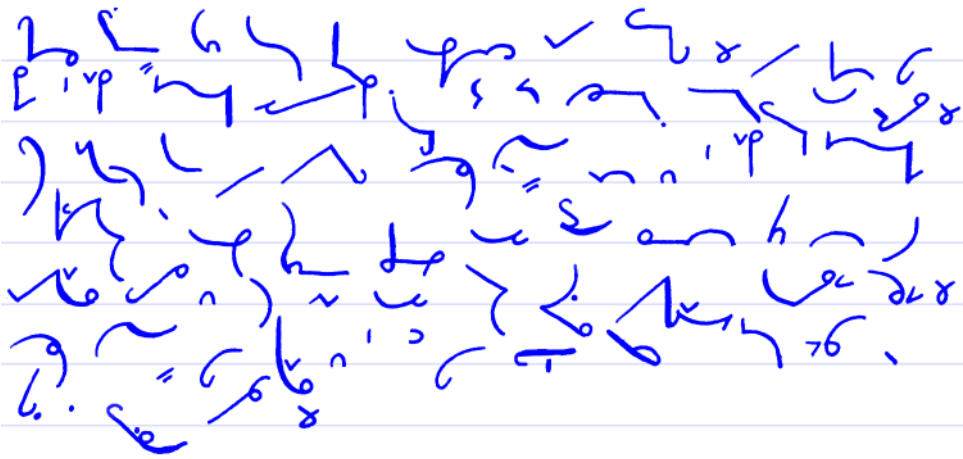
Short Letters 20

Dear Mrs Redman, I met with your representative yesterday to discuss the arrangements for landscaping* of the garden at the property in Green Street. She was able to produce a revised plan of the works, with some very helpful suggestions on changes that would be beneficial, which I agreed with. Once the paths and low walls are complete, I can then meet again with her to confirm the planting scheme, and I hope this* can be done in good time for the

summer growing season. I am really looking forward* to seeing the project get underway. Best regards, Miss Black. (100 words)

* "landscaping" It is the halved L stroke that has to be in position, so it is irrelevant where the P stroke ends

* Omission phrases "I (h)ope this" "looking fo(r)ward"



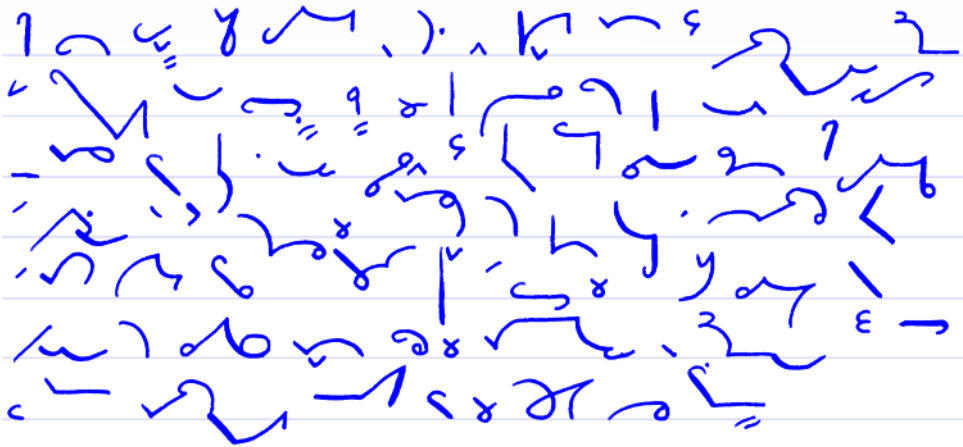
Short Letters 20

Dear Miss Black, Thank you for your deposit instalment of our quotation. Our team will start on site on Monday and we are confident that the hard landscaping can be completed in two weeks*. Therefore I have arranged for our representative Mrs Long to meet you on site on Monday the 12th of next month, so that you can discuss the new planting scheme, which you may wish to revise once you see how

the new path shapes redefine the various areas. Mrs Long will advise you on what will grow best on your soil to achieve a pleasing* result. (100 words)

* Omission phrase "two wee(k)s"

* "pleasing" "pleasant" Insert the vowel, as these are similar in outline and meaning



Short Letters 20

Dear Mr White, I just wanted to say how delighted I am with the refurbishment work on the property in Green Street. It looks very different now and one could almost believe it was a new house, with the top quality heating system, larger windows and repainting of all the rooms. I must say* your team have done a marvellous job and

also left the place absolutely tidy and clean. I shall certainly be recommending your services to my friends. I look forward to working with you again when I come to refurbish the garage building. Yours sincerely, Miss Black. (100 words)

* Omission phrase "I mus(t) say"



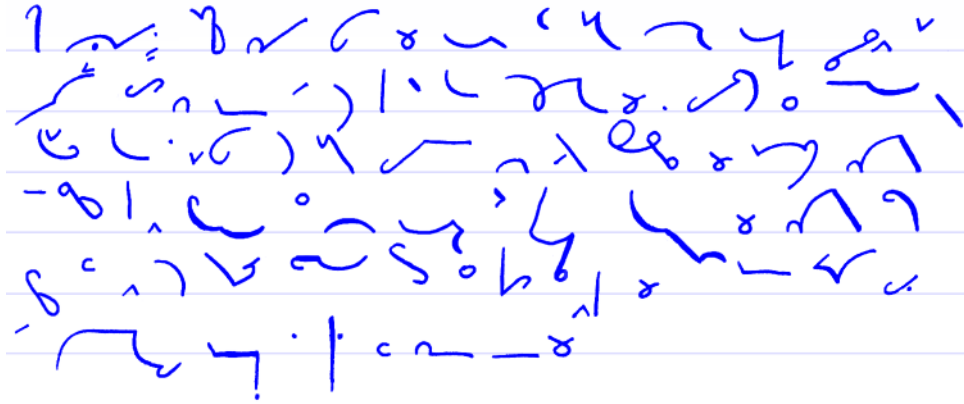
Short Letters 20

Dear Mrs Long, It was a real pleasure to talk to you last week* about the planting of the garden. I was surprised how much larger everything looked with the new paths and sitting* areas, and I was very interested in your suggestions for revising the plan. I would like to go for Plan Number 2, which includes evergreens by the pond area and a selection of small fruit trees on

the side area. I am really looking forward to seeing all this take shape, and watching it settle in and mature over the summer. Thank you for your help. (100 words)

* Omission phrase "las(t w)EEK"

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

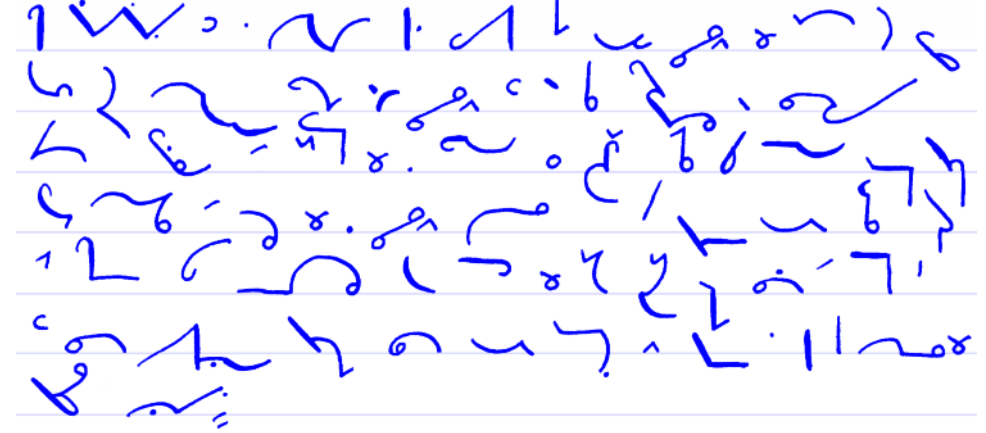


Short Letters 20

Dear Mary, I trust you are well. Now that I have moved into the house, I really want you to come and see it all for yourself. The weather is going to be fine for a while, so I hope* we can meet up as soon as possible*. I am sure you will be quite surprised at how everything has improved now that all the changes have been made*. You will be

very pleased with how your part of the garden plan has turned out. I can hardly wait and look forward* to getting a date when you can come. (100 words)

* Omission phrases "I (h)ope" "as soon as poss(ible)" "have bee(n) made" "look fo(r)ward"



Short Letters 20

Dear Barbara, What a lovely day we had at the new house. I am so pleased for you, especially moving from the old house with all its problems to somewhere much more* pleasant* and quiet. The garden is delightful and it is just going to get better over the months and years. The house looks much bigger now that it is painted and the dark wall colours have gone. I think I shall have to do the same and get on with some redecorating before the

summer, now I can see how big a difference it makes. Best wishes*, Mary. (100 words) (Total 900 words)

* Omission phrase "much m(ore)"

* "pleasant" "pleasing" Insert the vowel, as these are similar in outline and meaning

* "best wishes" Upward Ish in order to join the phrase