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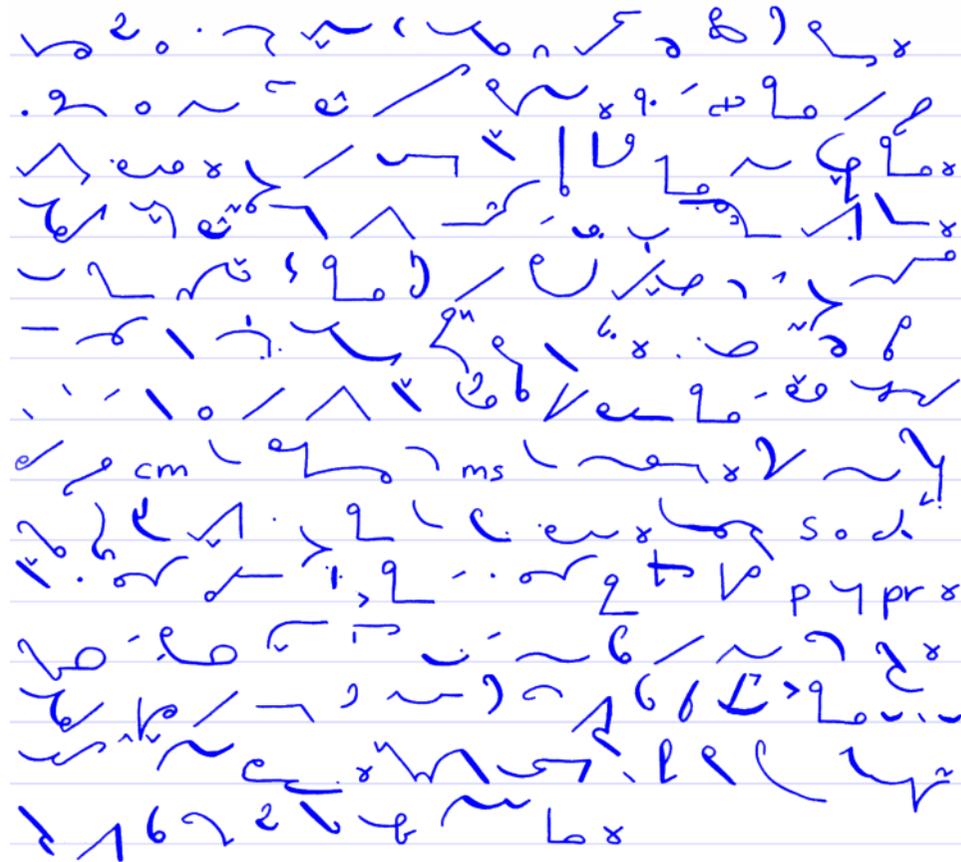
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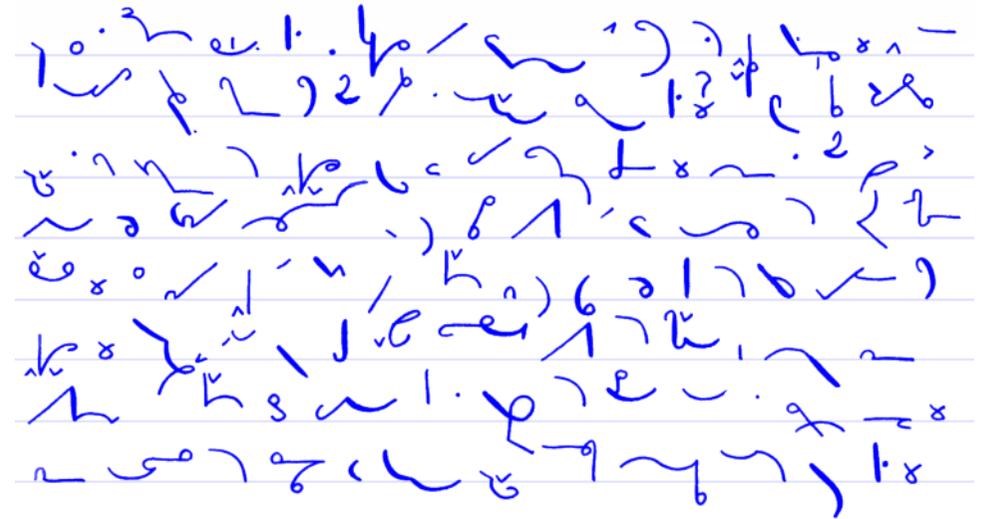


**What Is Pitman's Shorthand?**

Pitman's Shorthand is a method of writing that enables you to record words as fast as they are spoken. The system is written according to sound rather than spelling. Straight and curved strokes are used to represent the consonants. Vowels are indicated by dots, dashes and ticks written alongside the strokes. In this way the entire sound can be represented accurately and needs no guesswork to read back. In practice, you will find that the strokes on their own are sufficient to recognise the word and the vowel marks can mostly be omitted, enabling the higher speeds to be achieved. The commonest words such as "to, of, and, be, is" are represented by short forms, which are single strokes and signs, in the same way as we use cm for centimetres

or MS for manuscript. There are many abbreviating principles, so that you do not have to write a full stroke for every consonant. For example S is shown by a small circle added to the stroke and a small hook at the beginning turns P into PR. Prefixes and suffixes like con-, -ing and many others are written very briefly. In this way outlines are kept short and in fact\* Omission phrase "in (f)act" they are more readable than just joining all the strokes end to end in one long squiggle. I hope you will be encouraged to study the subject further and eventually be able to read this from the shorthand above instead of the longhand text. (245 words)

\* Omission phrase "in (f)act"



**Shorthand About Town**

Today is a warm sunny day, the daffodils are blooming and the fresh air outside beckons. How can anyone possibly practise their shorthand on such an inviting Spring day? However, it is always possible\* to find an opportunity to practise your outlines, even when away from your desk. Make a shorthand list of the written words that you are most likely\* to see, such as road and building names, or shop and traffic signs. As you are out and about, each time you

see these words do your best to recall their outline. Obviously, not to be done whilst crossing the road or driving, but maybe you can redeem the time spent waiting at a bus stop or standing in a supermarket queue. You can increase your skills without having to find extra minutes in your busy day. (138 words)

\* Omission phrase "it is always poss(ible)" "mos(t) likely"

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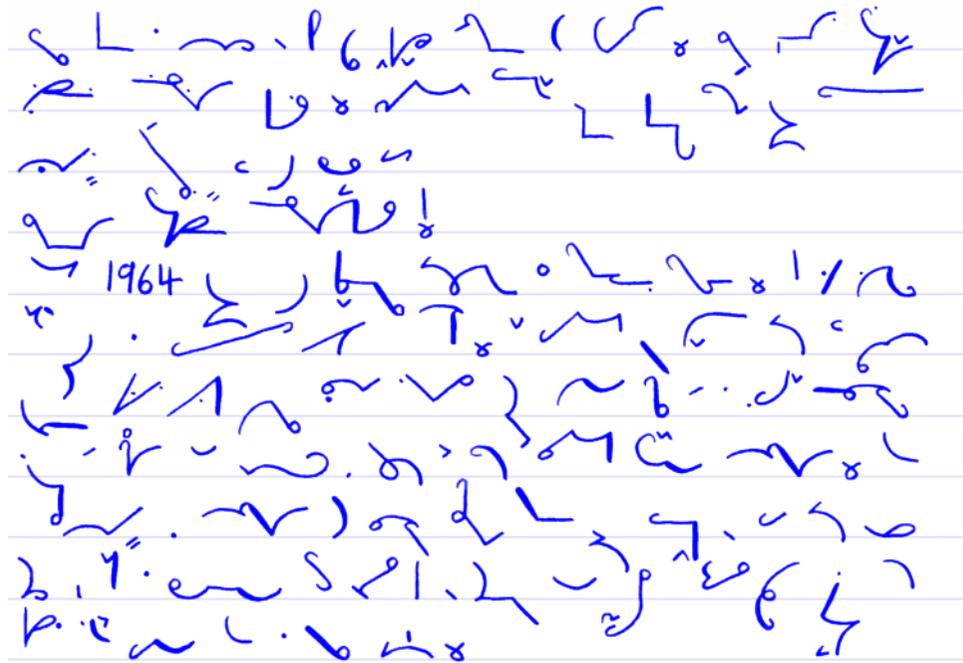
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**Practically Perfect**

Please take a moment to study these outlines and practise them thoroughly:

super collie fragile elastic expel dishes

You are now qualified to take dictation from the film character Mary Poppins when she sings:

Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious!

In the 1964 film, she described herself as "practically perfect". At age 11, I thought she was a wonderful role model. I wanted to be like her, with slim figure, cherry red lips, smart appearance, especially the long

dress, and a shining example of confidence and self-control, not to mention possessor of the very handy flying umbrella. For Mary, the umbrella was simply transport back to her cloud to await her next assignment, but I had a sneaking plan to use it to escape any situation that was less\* than congenial, or at least\* avoid waiting for a bus home.

\* "less than" Downward L in order to make a join in the phrase

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

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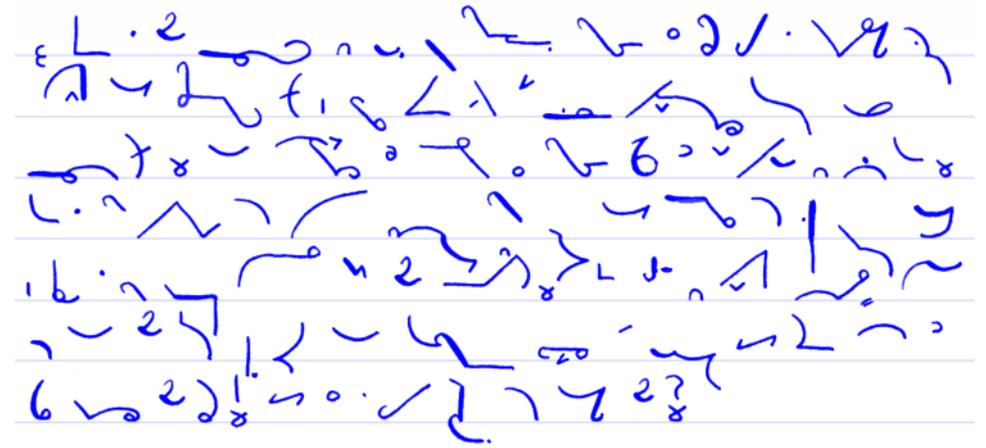
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**Practically Perfect**

When you take a shorthand examination, you need to be "practically perfect" as there is generally a percentage of error allowed in the transcription (but please check up on the exact requirements for your next exam). In employment, what is expected is "perfect" and this is what I recommend you aim for. For a particular report or letter, you may have the liberty to

fill in gaps or edit poor English, but it is not an opportunity to get lax about shorthand accuracy. Why don't you write Mary's long word in shorthand on your teeshirt in fabric crayons and underneath "Ask me what this Pitman's Shorthand says!" as a way of advertising your knowledge of shorthand? (251 words)

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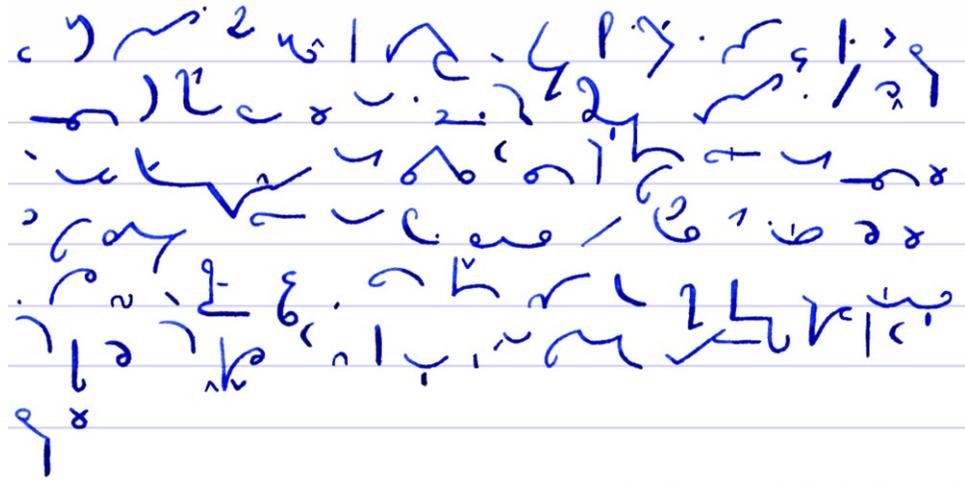
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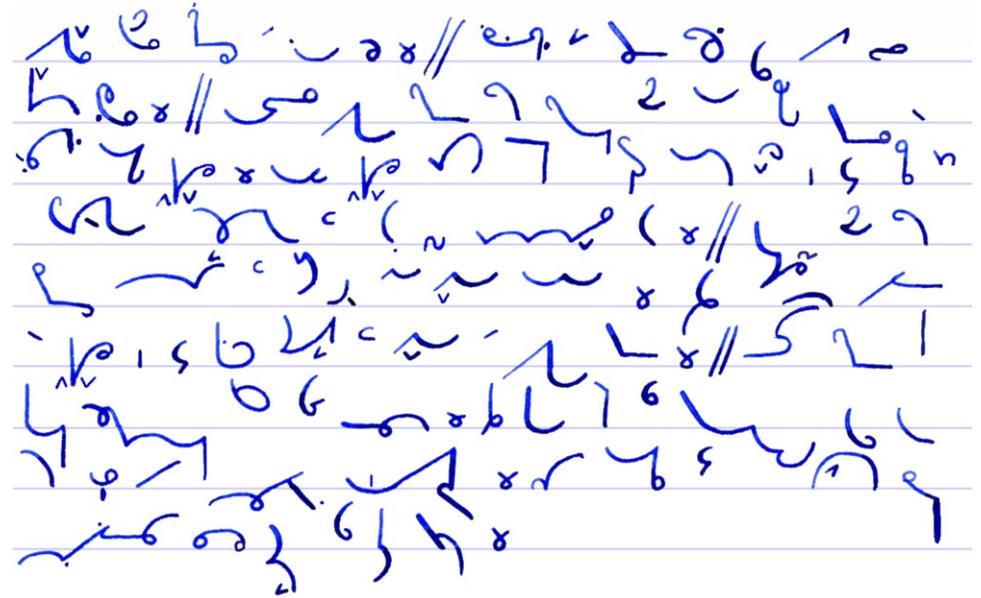


**Exams Looming**

When I was learning shorthand, I found it helpful to change the study approach a little when the day of the speed exam was drawing near. In a week or two there is no time to learn a large amount of new vocabulary, in the hopes that some of it will occur in the exam. What will certainly occur

in every sentence are short forms and the commonest words. The less you have to struggle with these, the more time you will have during the dictation to deal with unknown or difficult words, or outlines that you do know, but not well enough to recall at that speed.

Horizontal lines for writing notes.



**Exams Looming**

- Revise short forms, contractions and common words.
- Concentrate on the basic phrases, these are the greatest time-savers.
- Increase reading practice from printed shorthand in instruction books, to consolidate knowledge of outlines. New outlines also get planted in your mind but without the stress of you overloading yourself with thinking you have to memorise them.

• Visualise shorthand from spoken material, with eyes shut and not writing anything. This will\* improve recall of outlines but without the tension associated with writing and reading back.

• Occasionally practise at 20 wpm faster than the exam. It is the doing of it that is beneficial, even if your notes are miserably unreadable. You will notice that the lower speed miraculously seems easier than it was before.

\* "this will" Downward L to enable the phrase to be formed

Horizontal lines for writing notes.



**Exams Looming**

Shorthand knowledge is only part of the picture. Two other things need attention: you, and your materials.

- Take frequent short breaks away from your desk. A short walk will give your brain a rest and greatly improve the quality of your study time when you return. This is not a waste of time\* but essential maintenance of your most precious asset!
- Get plenty of rest, especially the day or two before the exam. Tiredness will undo all your previous hard work.

- Prepare your materials well ahead of time. Go through all the notepad pages so that none are stuck together, removing any that have marks, greasy spots or creases. Using best quality smooth non-absorbent paper makes a big difference to writing speed.
- Clean the pens and fill with fresh ink the day before, so that the nib is not clogged or dried out. Get pencils ready sharpened.

\* Omission phrase "was(te of) time"

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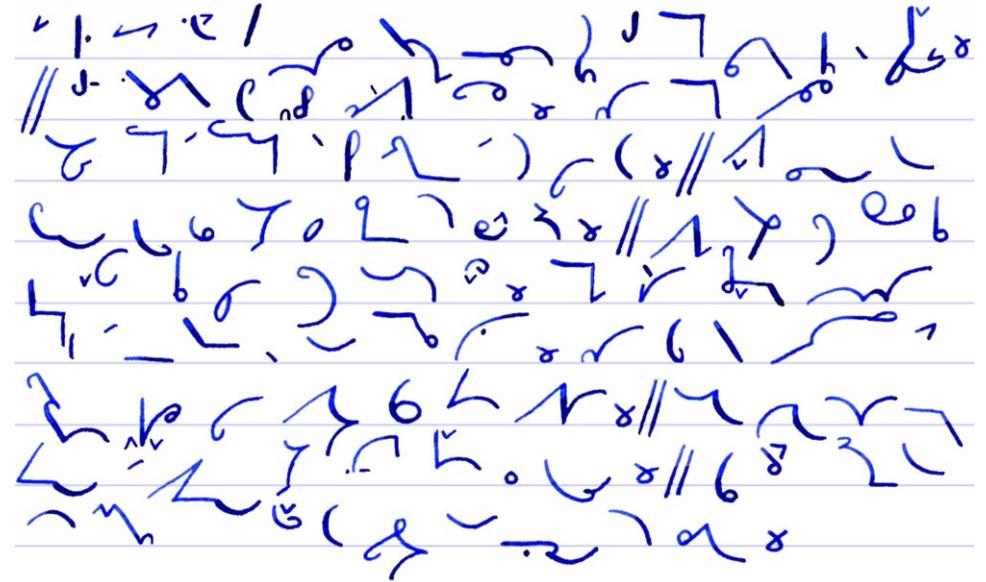
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**Exams Looming**

On the day:

- Avoid large meals before the exam, so that you do not get sleepy due to digestion.
- Don't absorb other students' worried remarks. You will get results in relation to the\* quality and quantity of study and practice, and so will they.
- Write something for everything, even if it is only the first stroke or sound of the word.

- Read the passage through as soon as it is dictated, while it is still fresh in your mind. Get the whole transcribed immediately and come back to any gaps later. You will then be relaxed and the problem outlines will reveal themselves much more readily.
- Never leave early, keep checking and rechecking until the allotted time is finished.

These points worked for me and I hope you find them useful in gaining your certificate. (511 words)

\* Omission phrase "in (re)lation (to) the"

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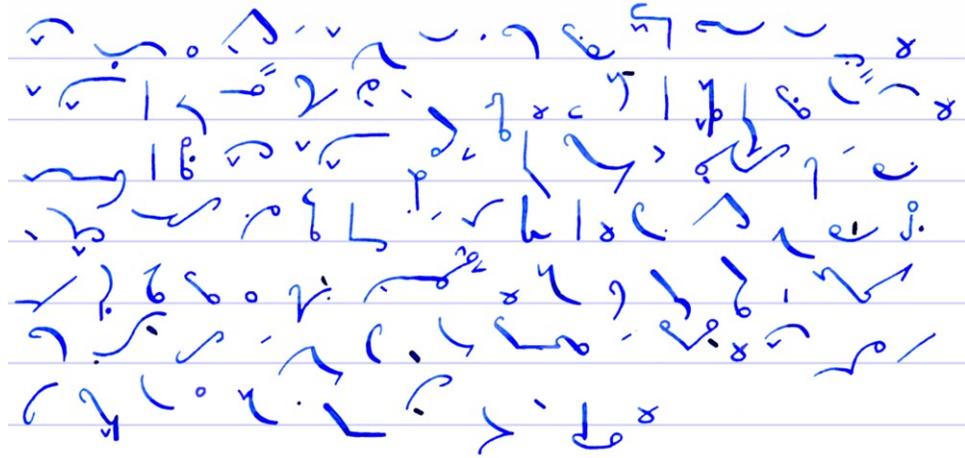
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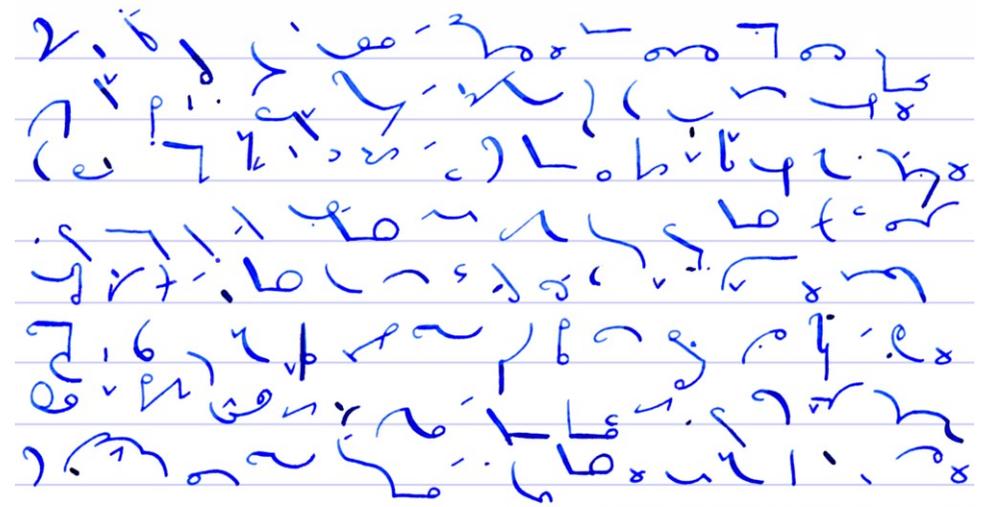


**Meet Robin**

My name is Robin. I live in a very pleasant quiet garden in Kent. I like it here because there are lots of bushes and trees. When I saw it I decided it was the place for me. To make sure it stays mine I like to sit on the top branch of the hawthorn tree and sing, to remind anyone else that it is taken and I will defend it. Every robin should have his

own self-contained country estate and this place is truly luxurious. I have three bird baths but I prefer the very shallow one and leave the other two for the blackbirds and sparrows. My meals are well provided for, as I have a big lawn full of dinners.

Horizontal lines for writing practice.

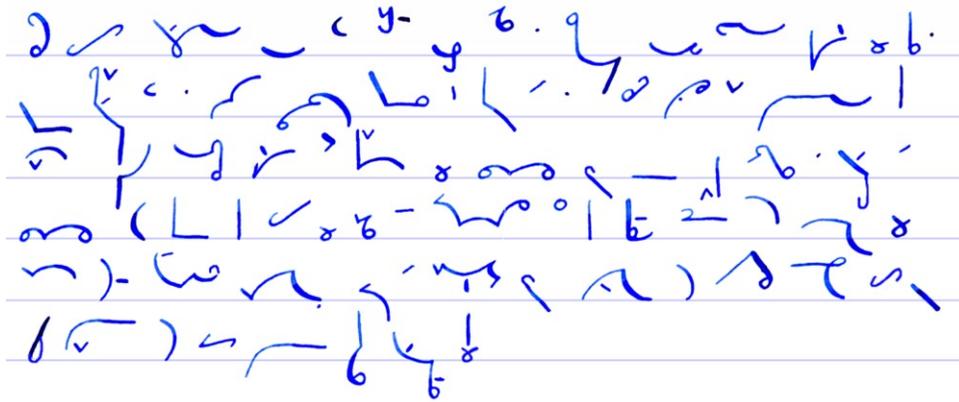


**Meet Robin**

There are two compost bins full of insects and worms. I can sometimes get someone to take off the lid, by sitting on a nearby branch and warbling, so that they know I am interested. They soon get the idea of what I want and when their back is turned I dive inside and have a rummage. The people keep putting up nest boxes and now we have four bluetit boxes (with small entrance hole) and two boxes for me with

the open front that I like. I am very grateful but this year I have decided to use the garden shed, as it is more spacious, less draughty, and safer. As soon as I started the foundations, old leaves and bigger twigs, the people very kindly removed their lawnmower, some garden forks and a few boxes. Now I have it all to myself.

Horizontal lines for writing practice.

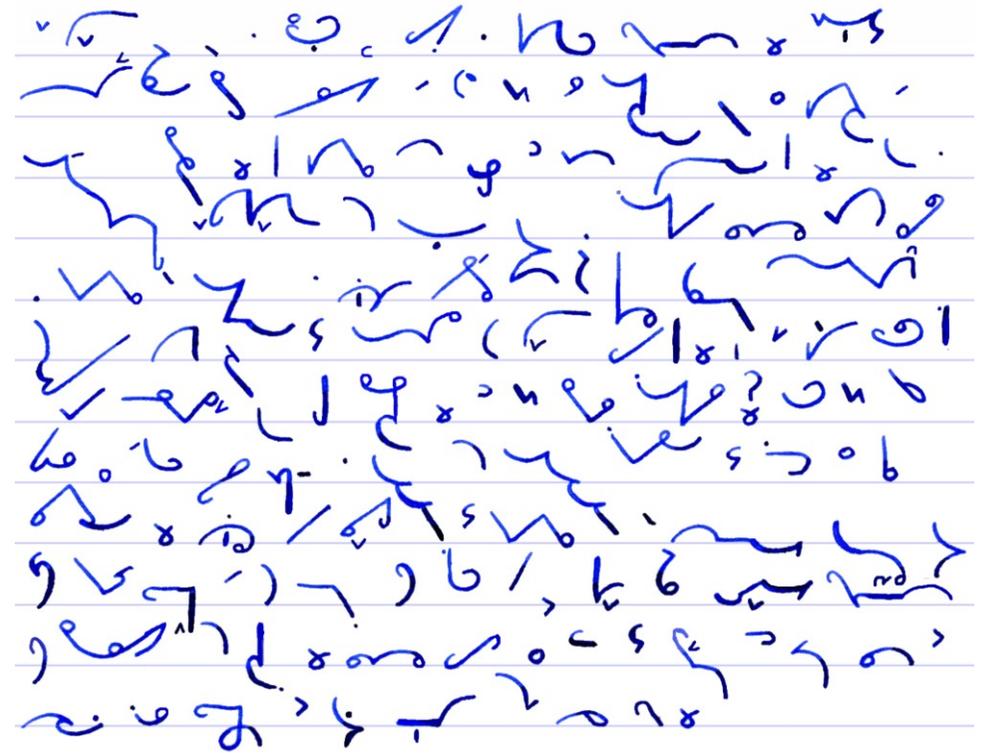


**Meet Robin**

There is one puzzling thing that I don't understand and that is a strange new garden tool. It is a big tripod with a little silver box on top and a sort of lens eye looking at my shed entrance hole all the time. Sometimes people come out and

press a button, and sometimes they take it away. I think it is quite harmless as it doesn't walk or move. I am so fortunate to live here and I know that the people love us robins because they want to be just like us, look at these photos! (366 words)

Horizontal lines for writing a response to the 'Meet Robin' text.



**Running Commentary**

I like to listen to a narration when watching a television programme. I know that the material has been researched and thought about, and is endeavouring to be as helpful and informative as possible. It helps me understand what I am looking at. For a wildlife or nature film, the commentary sometimes also serves the purpose of injecting an emotional response\*, although at times this can be manipulated so that we are led to believe that the animals think like we do. But on the whole narrations add to our experience, if done sensitively. What about sports commentaries? Information about past achievements is often used to

draw a favourable or unfavourable comparison with the action as it is happening. Emotions are heightened with the purpose of making the viewers feel that they are part of the crowd, and so keeping their attention, much to the delight of those underwriting the programme through sponsorship or advertising. Sometimes one is glad that the player cannot hear some of the meaner comments, criticism of the failed goal or the missed opportunity.

\* "response" Always insert the second vowel, as otherwise this outline is identical to the contraction "responsibility"

Horizontal lines for writing a response to the 'Running Commentary' text.



**Running Commentary**

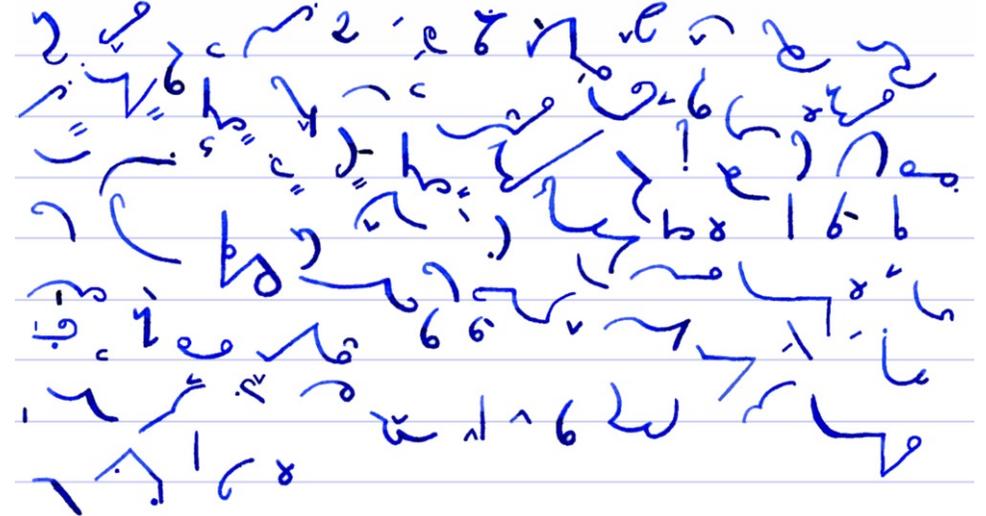
The commentary nobody\* wants is from someone who speaks out of turn, offering advice just as you are about to hit the nail with the hammer, or giving map directions when you are in a tricky or dangerous\*driving situation. They may be genuinely wanting to help or perhaps their judicious timing may have a hidden agenda to undermine. Supposing someone was sitting beside you while you are taking a fast shorthand dictation, waiting for your hand to hesitate, before they jump in with their innocent\* observation about the diminishing prospects of your being able to finish the piece and read it back. You would

only suffer this once before you dealt very firmly with them.

\* "nobody" Although this is one word, it is written with the N on the line, so that it is not misread as "anybody". It is always advisable to insert the vowel in the "no-" version of such pairs e.g. no-one, nowhere, at no time, and many other phrases.

\* "dangerous" Written thus to differentiate it from "dangers"

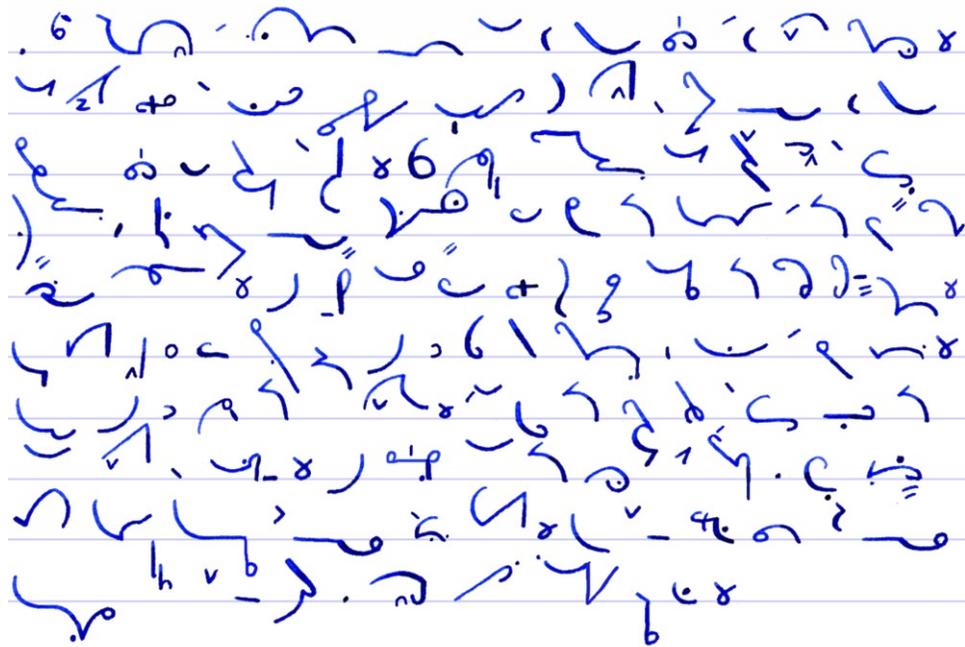
\* "innocent" Insert vowels, as it could be misread as other words - insane, unseen, or nuisance if written hastily



**Running Commentary**

I was not wise to this when learning shorthand, and suffered endless hold-ups whilst my personal internal Running Commentary Department provided me with numerous variations on this theme. I think it was in league with the Comfort Zone Department and they were both trying to save their lazy skins from further disturbances to their life of ease and

tranquil contentment. It chose its moment to intervene very carefully for maximum effect. On the few occasions when I had the sense to refuse those thoughts, I managed to catch up and continue, but never really applied myself to finding out how these essential little victories could be repeated at will.



**Running Commentary**

The thoughts of failure and alarm came in without being summoned and without my permission. In the royal courts of ancient history, no-one was allowed to approach the king without being specifically summoned, under penalty of death. This is illustrated graphically in the Bible account of Queen Esther who dared to approach King Xerxes in order to\* save her family and her people from the impending massacre. She stood in his inner court so that he would notice her from his throne-room. If he held out his gold sceptre to her,

she would then be permitted to enter and speak to him. If not, she would lose her life. Not even her privileged position of queen gave her any right to intrude. She succeeded in her mission, and the plotter, the evil Haman, also felt the effects of the king's ultimate authority. If I could cultivate some of that king's fearless attitude, I could banish the impudent Running Commentary to its fate.

\* Omission phrase "in ord(er to)"

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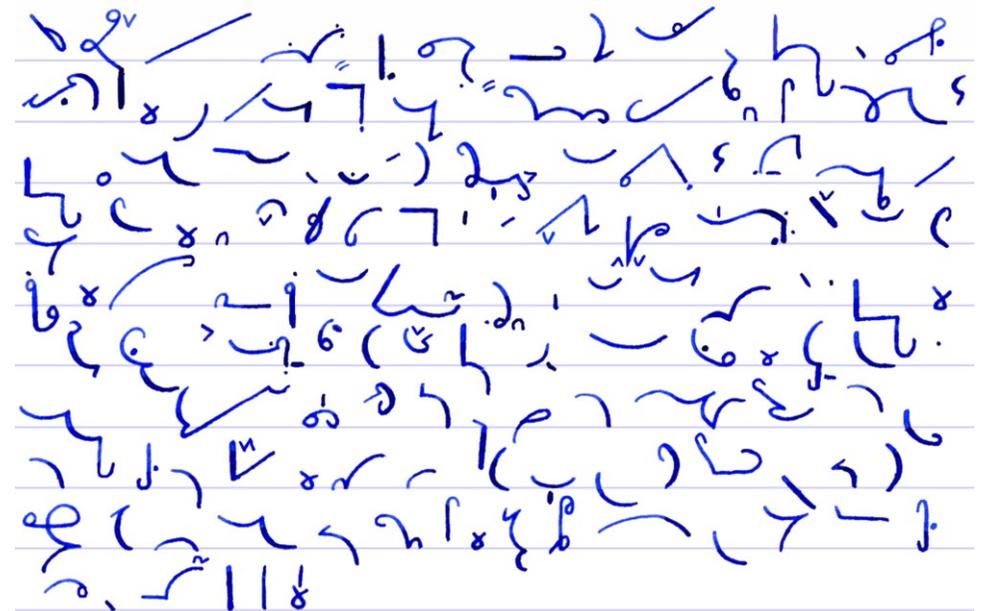
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**Running Commentary**

Past high speed writer Emily D Smith gave us the answer to this temptation to hesitate and waver. She recommended getting into the frame of mind\* where you tell yourself that the dictation is never going to end and so there is no point in hoping that the allotted minutes are nearly over. You might just as well get on and write the outlines, unimpeded by any other considerations. Later on you can consider any genuine issues, but not in the middle of a dictation. Whatever the flavour of the intruding

thoughts, they find the door shut in their face. They don't have an invitation, they were not summoned, and they are not on your to-do list, your monthly planner or even your ten-year diary. You will let them know if their application to be heard was successful, and they may never hear from you at all. I think that settles the matter, if only I can train myself to actually do it! (728 words)

\* Omission phrase "frame (of) mind"

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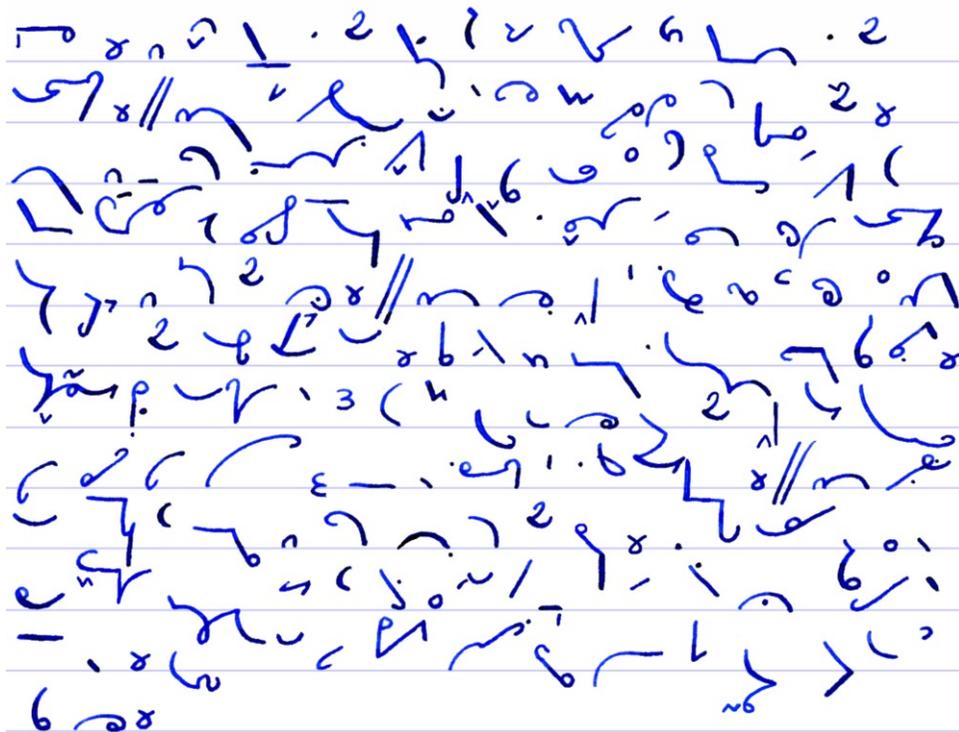
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**Pros and Cons of Shorthand**

**Cons:**

- You might become a shorthand bore although I would prefer that you became a shorthand encourager.
- You may be on the receiving end of remarks about the uselessness or difficulties of shorthand. Maybe you could very calmly write down these opinions as they are spoken and read them back flawlessly and without hesitation, accompanied of course by a smile and some friendly encouragement for them to join you on your shorthand mission.
- You may miss out on conversation opportunities with friends, as you will be visualising the shorthand instead of joining in. It is up to you to keep a firm grip on

this habit. Staying in control of what you think about, even if it means pushing the shorthand out for the afternoon, will serve well later on when you come to concentrate on a fast dictation.

- You may resent any activity that keeps you from improving your shorthand speed. The answer to this is to sing quietly to yourself "That pen is not much good" and "Pa may we all go too." If you have not yet started learning, please look at the vowels page for what this means.

\* "habit" "hobby" Always insert the first vowel, as these two are similar in outline and meaning

\* [www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand.org.uk/theory-2-vowels.htm](http://www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand.org.uk/theory-2-vowels.htm)



**Pros and Cons of Shorthand**

- You might get frustrated if you don't always have paper and pen handy for shorthand ideas when away from home. Try my little blank line miniature booklets\*, folded from a single A4 sheet, to fit in the tiniest pocket or purse. This is where your sharpened pencil stub will come in useful if you attach it to your keyring.
- You will suddenly become very selfish about your precious fountain pen and you may have to keep a supply of inferior bios for lending to your heavy-handed paper-digging friends!

- You will probably not enjoy filling in forms, or writing in longhand unless you are doing calligraphy. The time taken will seem to drag on for hours compared with what you have become accustomed to. You may feel you are back in the Stone Age producing hieroglyphics with a hammer and chisel. But this is more than made up for, when you return to your new preferred swifter method of writing, and all those frustrations will rapidly be forgotten. (617 words)

\* [www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand.org.uk/downloads.htm](http://www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand.org.uk/downloads.htm)

Handwritten shorthand notes for the 'River Cray' section, consisting of approximately 10 lines of cursive shorthand symbols.

**River Cray**

Just a moment away from the pad and pen, and time for a stroll along the River Cray while the sun is out and between the windy showers. The few downpours have put a little bit more flow in the river, and some of the silt is now stirring and producing grey

patches where it is slightly deeper. All the woodland birds are singing loudly, bluetits, blackbirds, robins and wrens, and a couple of ducks and one moorhen are picking over the weeds. (83 words)

A series of horizontal lines provided for writing the full text of the 'River Cray' section.

Handwritten shorthand notes for the 'London Marathon' section, consisting of approximately 15 lines of cursive shorthand symbols.

**London Marathon**

I like to watch the London Marathon on television, sometimes live and sometimes in the summarised reports on Sunday evening\*. It is especially interesting to me as I used to live a few roads away from Greenwich Park and know it all very well. I am always amazed\* at how many people can fit into what is normally a very peaceful and uncrowded park. I am not particularly interested in who wins the race, because I like to think that everyone is winning in their own way. They have taken the plunge and applied for a place, and have put in the necessary effort in training and creativity with their costumes, to ensure their victory, whether it is running in a set time or raising money and publicising their chosen charity. When the

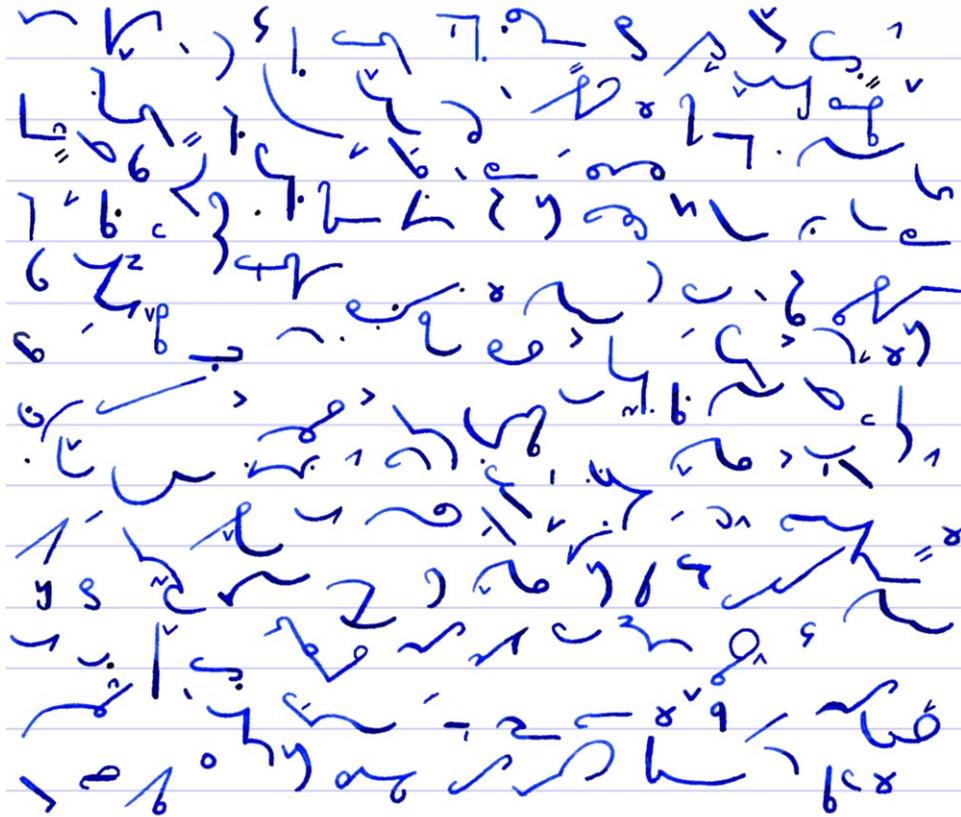
crowds are cheering, they are congratulating the runners for entering the race, regardless of their performance. There never seems to be any sense of rivalry with other runners, only a competition against their own timings and goals. I admire their stickability and resolve, and hope that those taking part and those watching can apply some of that attitude to other more practical issues of life, other than personal fitness for the runners or entertainment for the audience, in order to\* solve problems or get through difficulties victoriously. (220 words)

\* Omission phrase "on Sunday ev(en)ing" "in ord(er to)"

\* "amazed, amused" Always insert the







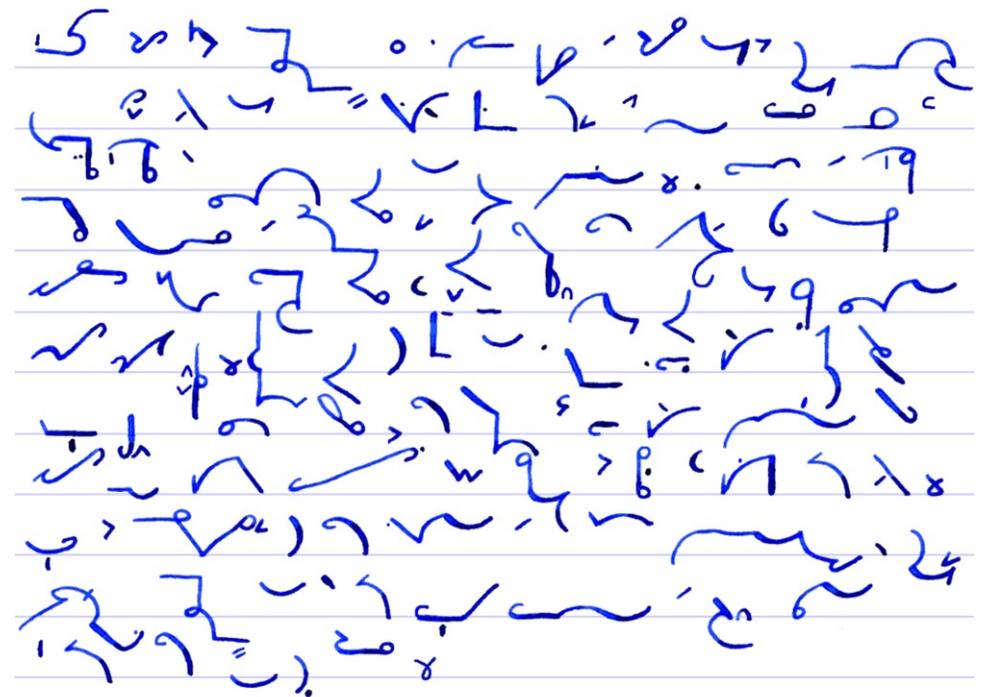
**Cutty Sark**

I am delighted to see that the tea clipper Cutty Sark has been reopened by the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh today, after five years of restoration. During the 1960's I passed this ship every day on the bus to school and sometimes got a longer view of it on the days when there was a traffic jam, although I was more concerned\* about being late for school than enjoying the cultural scenery. Living so near to all these historic buildings and sites gave me a strong sense of the continuity and development\* of the area. I was faintly aware of the miseries of the poor villagers in days long past when it was a tiny fishing hamlet, and the more comfortable but

eventful lives of the nobility, and the rich and powerful, residing in the mansions up on the hill and around Greenwich Park. I did not spend too long imagining their lives, I was just glad that we were living in the neat, tidy, clean and prosperous modern world, in our warm houses with the luxury of indoor plumbing and good medical care. I considered\* our modern conveniences to be the greatest riches, as I was certainly not one to relish adventure or discomfort.

\* Omission phrases "more (con)cerned" "I (con)sidered"

\* "development" Optional contraction



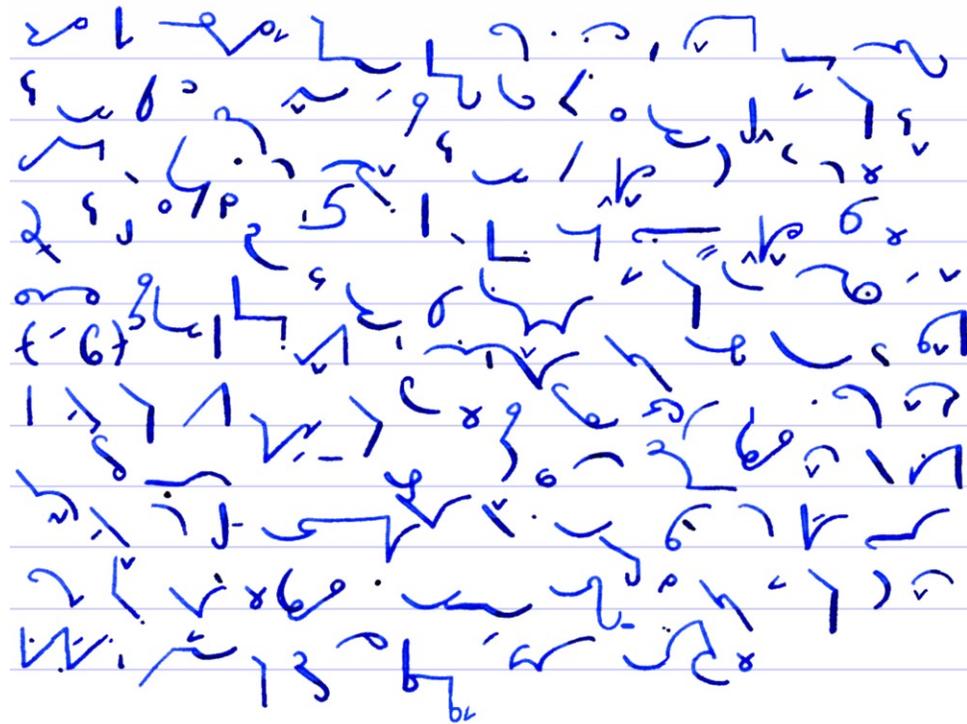
**Cutty Sark**

Occasionally I went on board the Cutty Sark as a local "tourist" and always enjoyed seeing the colourful figureheads lined up in the below deck area and the many glass cases with models of similar ships in full rigging. The cramped and musty cabins, bunks and workshops on the ship produced more revulsion than interest, and once again\* I felt grateful that I could\* leave the ship for the sweeter-smelling modern world outside. At that time the ship was docked in a big concrete hole, and it was possible to go down some steps to the very bottom,

with the great hull looming above and one could not help wondering about the strength of the stays that held her up. None of the experience was very appealing and I am looking forward to seeing the refurbished Cutty Sark in all her glory, gleaming and beautiful, sailing on her very own sea of glass. (360 words)

\* Omission phrase "and wu(n)s again"

\* "I could" Not phrased, so that it does not get misread as "I can"; similarly "you, we, he could"

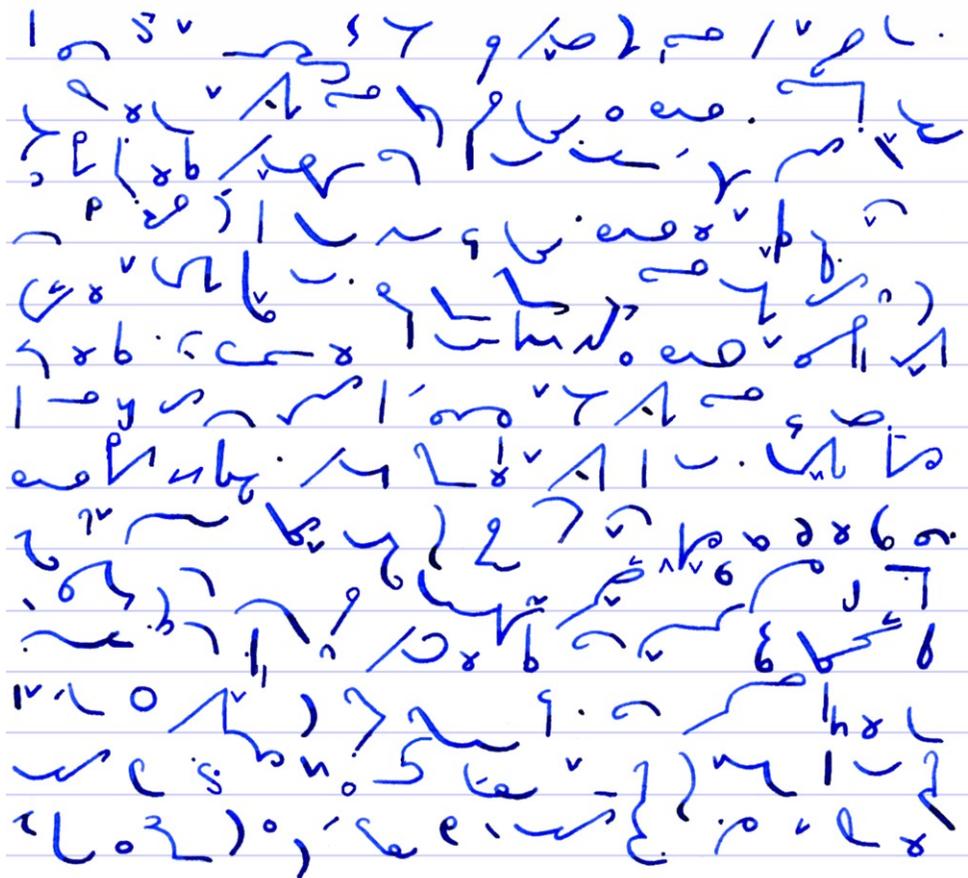


**A Little Cross**

I once had the experience of taking dictation from a man who liked to give the impression that he knew just what you were\* writing and he often jabbed his finger down on the pad when he wanted to change a word, implying that he knew which outline was that word. I suspected\* that he did not, as he would have occasionally had to dig into Gregg outlines as well. Sometimes he would continue dictating with the finger still firmly on the pad for emphasis, and I (and others) had to write on immobile paper, instead of being able to slide it up the pad, ready to turn the page over. He was pleasant and friendly, but this was a very mild power balance game, and quite understandable, when his important work might be held up

or done incorrectly by an incompetent, slow or dull girl from the typing pool\*. This was a niggling intrusion, as the paper on the pad was my territory, but reacting to it would have been most discourteous and ultimately unhelpful.

- \* Omission phrases "you (w)ere" "would (have) been"
- \* "suspected" Both present and past tenses would make sense here, so use the optional short dash through the last stroke, to signify past tense in a short form or contraction that has no other method to show the difference
- \* "typing pool" A large room where all the typists worked, separate from other offices



**A Little Cross**

At some point I came to the conclusion\* that the only sign he recognised was the cross which I used for a full stop. If I wrote the cross before he had finished his sentence the correcting finger would start tapping. It is recognisable from any angle, and easily learned by him, as he always saw it being written when he finished a sentence. I decided to test my theory. I followed the advice in a speed book and began to join the cross into the one you see here. It is a lot quicker. In fact\*, at the end of his sentences I hesitated to write it because I did not want him to learn it, and sometimes I only wrote the cross when the next sentence started, definitely not a recommended practice! I wrote it in a variety of contortions and even tried

lagging behind now and then\*, so that he could not match my outlines to his words. This seemed to solve the issue, or maybe he eventually realised that his letters did not get mangled or edited\* beyond recognition. It is more likely that this behaviour just died off, as his retirement was approaching, bringing with it a more relaxed attitude. If anyone ever complained about his occasional fussing, I could truthfully say that I never had any trouble and that doing his work was as easy and pleasant as that of anyone else on the staff. (417 words)

- \*Omission phrase "came (to the con)clusion" "in (f)act" "now (and) then"
- \* "edited" Helpful to insert vowel, as "audited" is similar in meaning