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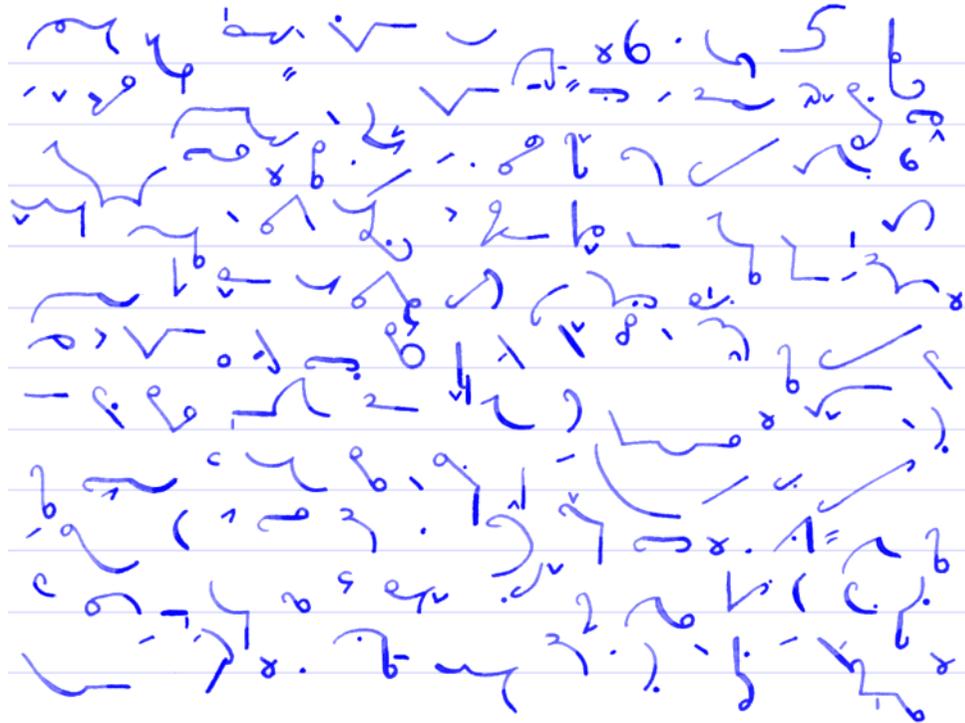
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PDF Date: 9 November 2022



**Stockwood Park Revisited**

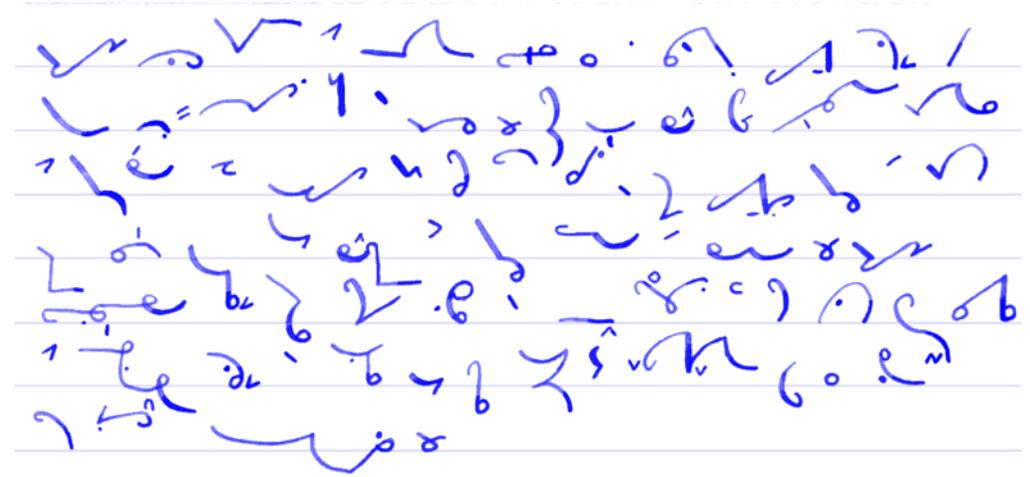
Last month I visited Stockwood Park in Luton. This is a favourite\* occasional destination, and I always look forward to seeing the park again and walking around the spacious grounds and formal gardens. As it is an hour and half's drive from where I live, that is 90 minutes of happy anticipation of the horticultural\* delights to come and photos to take, but also looking at the sky in the hopes that the weather will remain sunny\* and warm. Most of the park is open green spaces, divided up by stands of mature trees, where people can play sports, golf, walk and have their picnics. I like to see trees growing with enough space to spread out and, after our

wet winter and spring, they and the grass were a fresh bright green. The red-leaved trees offered some good photo opportunities with the sunlight shining through the leaves, turning them every shade of pink and orange. The meadows underneath were a sea of daisies and buttercups.

\* "favourite" Compare with "favoured" where the Vr is reversed

\* "horticultural" Optional contraction

\* "sunny" Always insert vowels for sun, sunny, snow, snowy

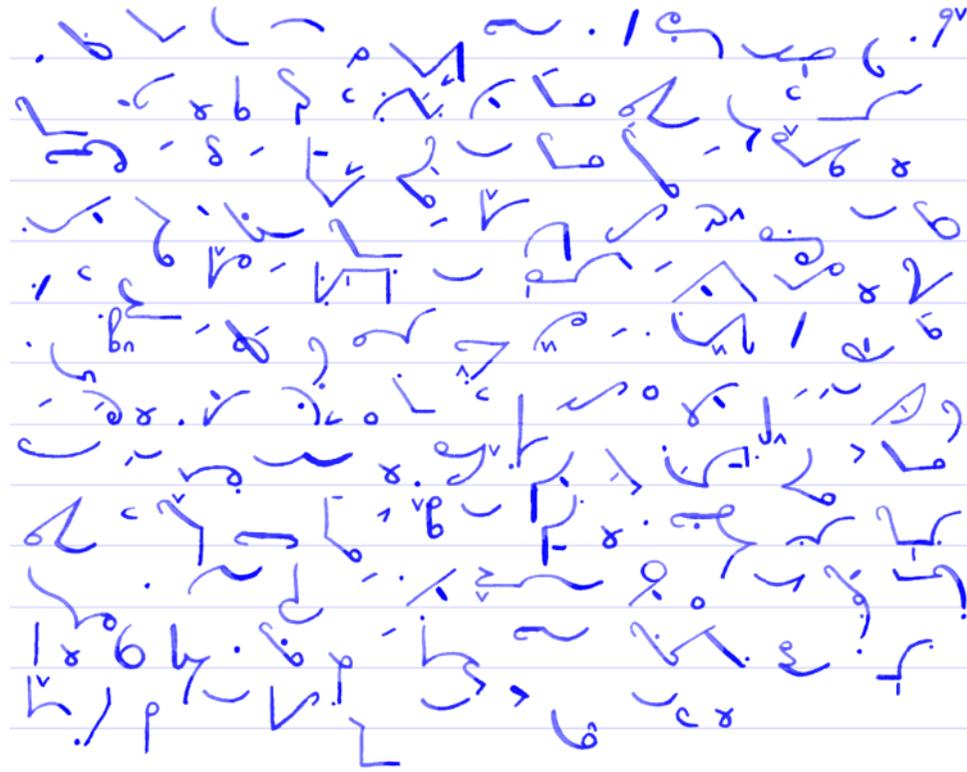


**Stockwood Park Revisited**

Between the main park and the golf course is a sloping wooded area which, being mid-morning, I had all to myself. There was no sound other than the rustling of leaves and the birdsong, and with no-one about there is more chance to see the woodland birds and also to take some videos for the soundtrack of the birds calling and singing. Between the criss-crossing paths there are

swathes of cow parsley with their lacy flower heads, and the extensive areas of nettles under the trees ensure that the wildlife within is safe from human\* interference.

\* "human" Above the line, to distinguish it from "humane"

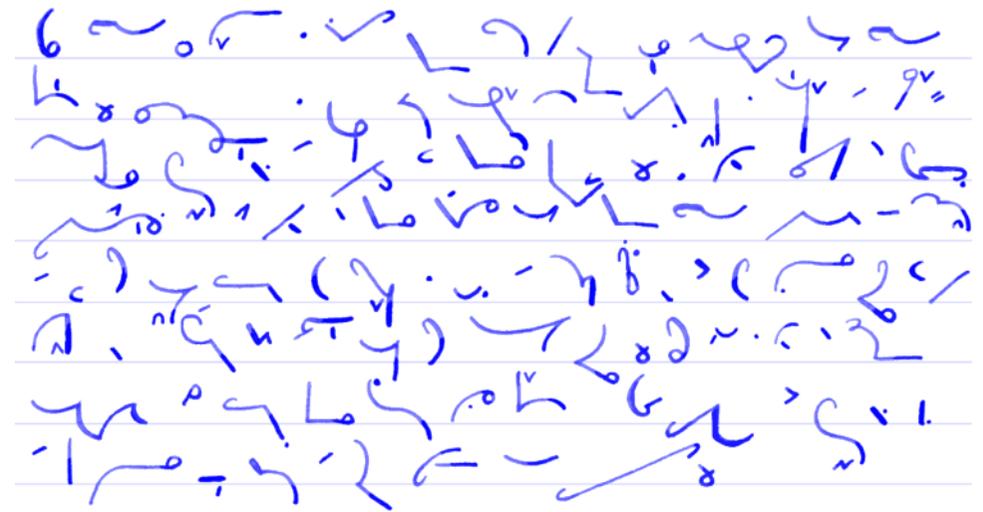


**Stockwood Park Revisited**

The best part for me is the Period Garden, a large square enclosed within a high brick wall. It is planted with elaborate\* low box hedging, filled with coloured gravels and plants, and topiary shrubs in blocks, blobs and spirals. Narrow paths of paving, brick and tile lead one around the sections, in places edged with vertical tiles and terracotta in scalloped and rope patterns. There are a few statues and busts, three small crouching lions, and a variety of large stone pots and urns. The whole area is packed with detail, and one has to slow down and not rush through, in order not to

miss anything. The sunshine showed up the convoluted shapes of the box hedging, with bright green tops and the sides in shadow. A graceful metal pergola forms a long tunnel, and a row of climbing roses is in the process of covering it. This is definitely a place to sit and contemplate the garden, preferably spending a goodly time on each seat in turn to take in all the views in comfort.

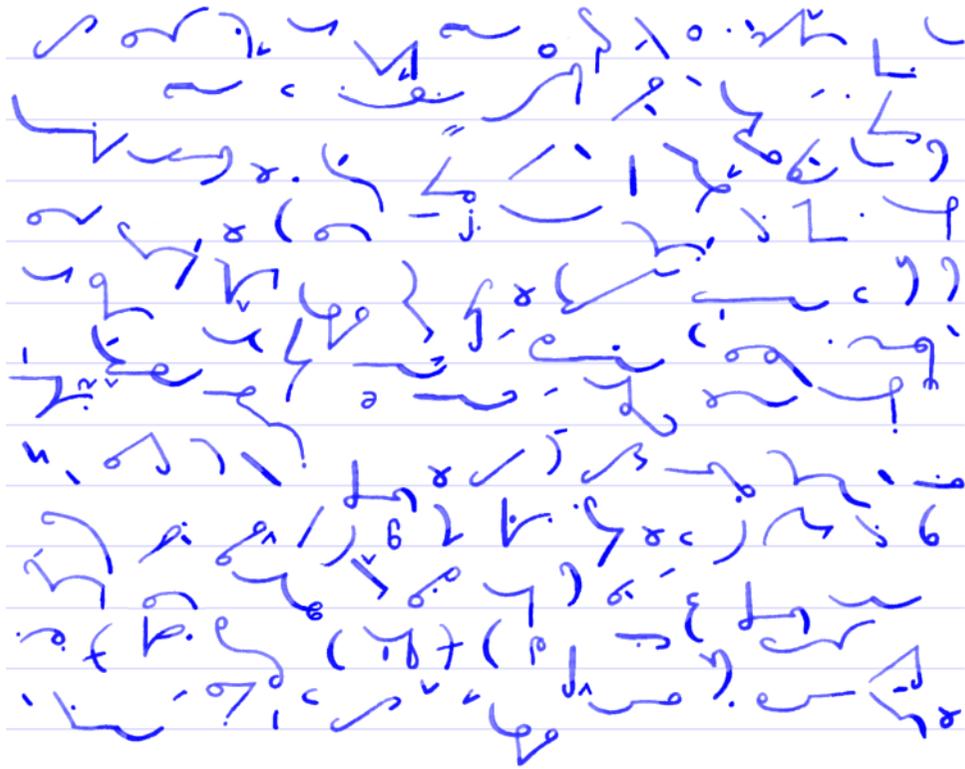
\* "elaborate" Compare with "laboured" which has halved Br



**Stockwood Park Revisited**

This garden is like a pattern book from which to take notes and inspiration for the garden at home. Some years ago, a visit here inspired me to rip out an untidy and high-maintenance flower bed and replant with box topiary. The low hedge of evergreen euonymus and the row of box balls in the back garden are now quite mature, and when they are newly clipped

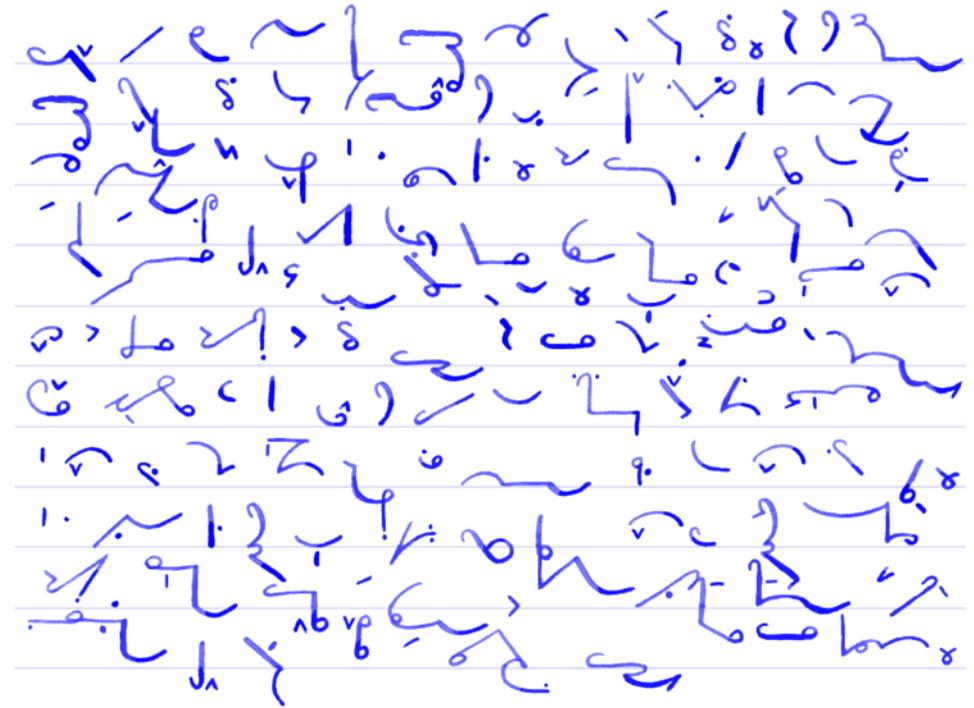
they provide a neat and ordered contrast to all the other lax shrubs that are allowed to flop about and grow into their natural shapes. There is not a lot of work involved, as the clipping takes far less time than the weeding of the flower bed did, and it looks good all year, and especially welcome in winter.



**Stockwood Park Revisited**

The small area in the Period Garden is planted up as a Wartime Dig For Victory garden, with Andersen shelter, rows of vegetables and a chicken enclosure. The four chickens are all different, obviously chosen for their smart plumage. They seem quite content in their roomy pen, and take an interest in the stream of delighted visitors, especially the children. They were not clucking when I was there, but vocalising in that gentle cooing and squeaking that seems to be a mixture of casually exploring what is going on, and

anticipation of something interesting about to happen or be discovered. We saw one of the keepers remove two eggs from their roosting house, which she told us was the daily average. When she left the pen, this prompted some investigations by the hens into their hut, and when they discovered nothing amiss (at least as far as they noticed) they settled down again to their normal routine of pecking and scratching, but with one eye on the visitors in case a snack appeared.



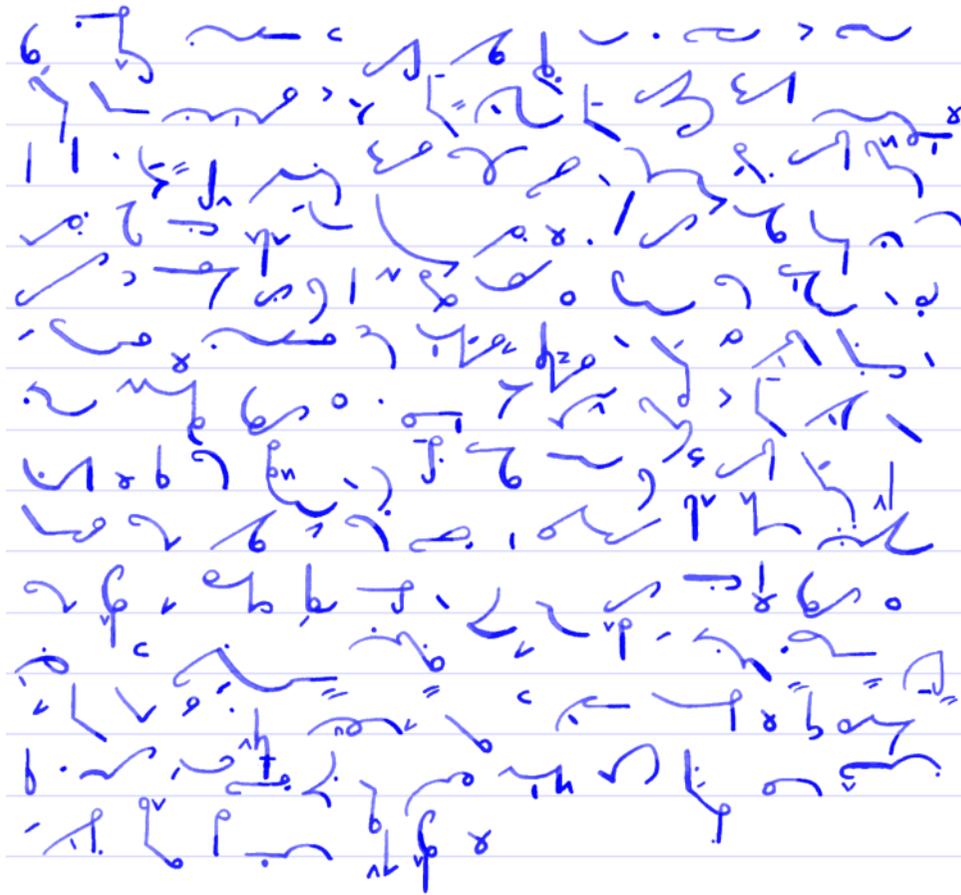
**Stockwood Park Revisited**

Nearby are several long traditional greenhouses, mostly full of potted plants. Although they are working greenhouses providing plants for the gardens, their neat and tidy appearance had me imagining myself lounging about inside on a summer day. I would clear a large space for sofa and table, and settle down to read favourite books, listen to talks on the Ipod\* or maybe relax with the knitting basket to hand. No thought would cross my mind of the tasks of watering all the plants, cleaning all that glass or the annoyance of removing the flies and wasps that had found their way in attracted by the jam and

crumbs on my plate, or the column of visiting ants making straight for my apple juice. On a rainy day there would be no chilly breezes disturbing my comfort, and there would be the entertainment of watching the scudding clouds and listening to the raindrops drumming on the roof, cascading down both sides and hopefully cleaning the glass at the same time\*.

\* "Ipod" and "Ipad" Insert second vowel to distinguish

\* "at the same time" Halving for the T of "time"



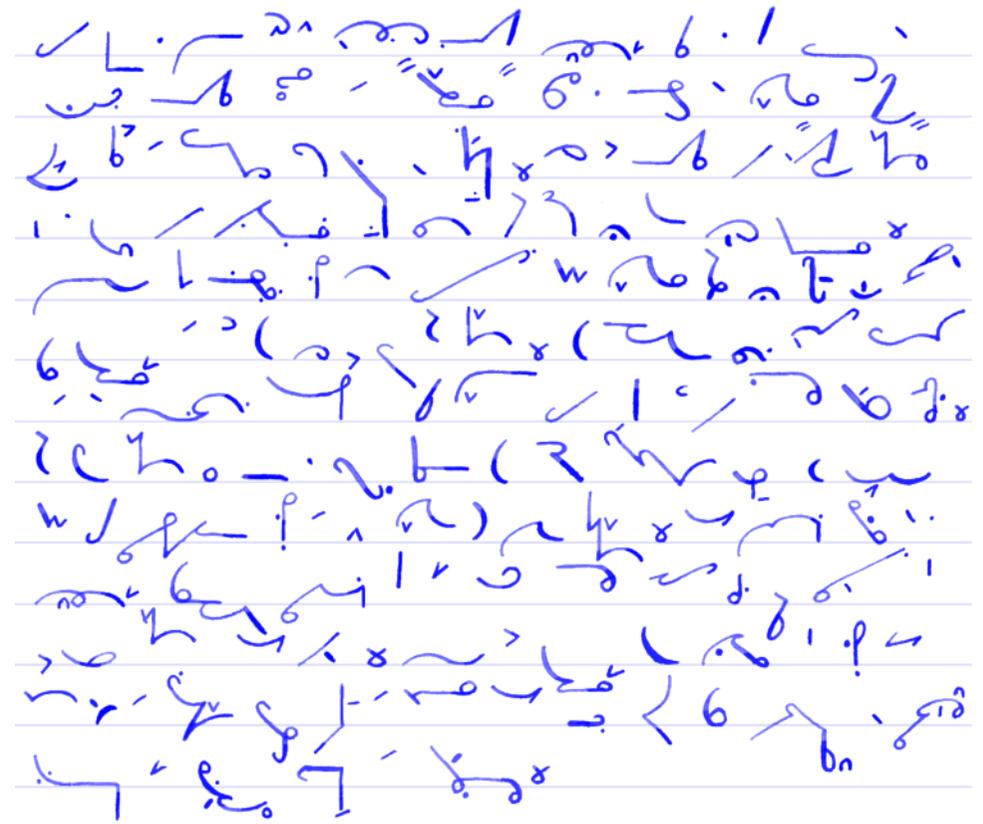
**Stockwood Park Revisited**

This cast-iron mangle with wooden rollers displayed in a corner of the garden brought back memories of the old top-loading tub washing machine\* that we had many years ago. It had a fold-down wringer that was firstly used to remove the soapy water prior to rinsing, and then again to dry off after the rinse. The large one in this photo made me wonder what exactly went through it, and I suppose the answer is "everything" from clothing to sheets and blankets. Mangles were notorious destroyers of buttons, as the rubber began to harden, and I notice that this one has a screw handle to allow the pressure of the top roller to be varied. It is very satisfying to see sodden clothes going through, with

the water pouring out backwards from the rollers, and the very creased but halfway dry item emerging from the other side, but the sentiment does not extend to wishing to have one again! This one is embossed with "Ewbank Empress" on the side and "Herbert Starke Luton" on the top part, and is an outdoor museum piece with local interest. It would certainly test a modern non-crease shirt to its limits and no doubt also deposit some grimy\* and rusty stripes as it came out the other side.

\* Omission phrase "wash(ing) machine"

\* "grimy" Insert the last vowel as "grime" would also make sense here



**Stockwood Park Revisited**

We took a look around the Mossman Carriage Museum, which is a large collection of ancient carriages, carts and bicycles, as well as an exhibition of Life's Journey, showing toys and equipment from babyhood to adulthood. Most of the carriages are original items, but a few are replicas, some of which were made for motion pictures. Looking at the exhibits set me wondering about the lives of those who made, drove, owned and used these vehicles and what they meant to the people of that time. They can only\* have seemed modern, normal and of minimal interest, just like we do with our cars, buses and trains. Although every item is given a brief\* description, they cannot be properly understood without knowing about the

general historical setting and how life was lived at the time. In the limited space of a museum, this can only\* be hinted at on the information cards, and one tends to just hurry on to the next item in the row. Many of the vehicles have labels on stating "I am old and fragile please do not touch" and of course in the gift shop this is reproduced to humorous effect on the souvenir greetings and postcards.

\* "brief" Always insert the vowel so that it is not misread as "number of"

\* "only" Written like this only in phrases where convenient, as a lone outline it has full strokes







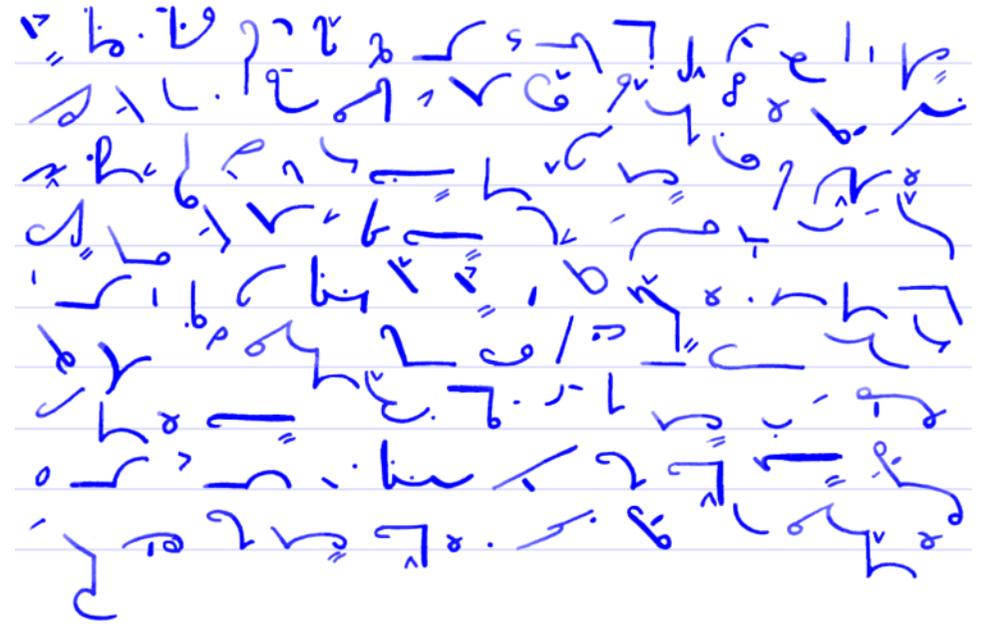
**Football**

As the game continues, Pitman picks up the ball on the right and his pass to Pepys is intercepted by Byrom who causes the unfortunate\* Pepys to land awkwardly on his knees. He is taken off on a stretcher and is replaced by Sloan. The referee has no choice but to give Byrom a yellow card final warning and awards a free kick to the

opposing team. Shelton hits a beautifully-struck goal-bound ball, which is unfortunately\* expertly palmed away by Gregg.

\* "unfortunate" "unfortunately" Optional contractions

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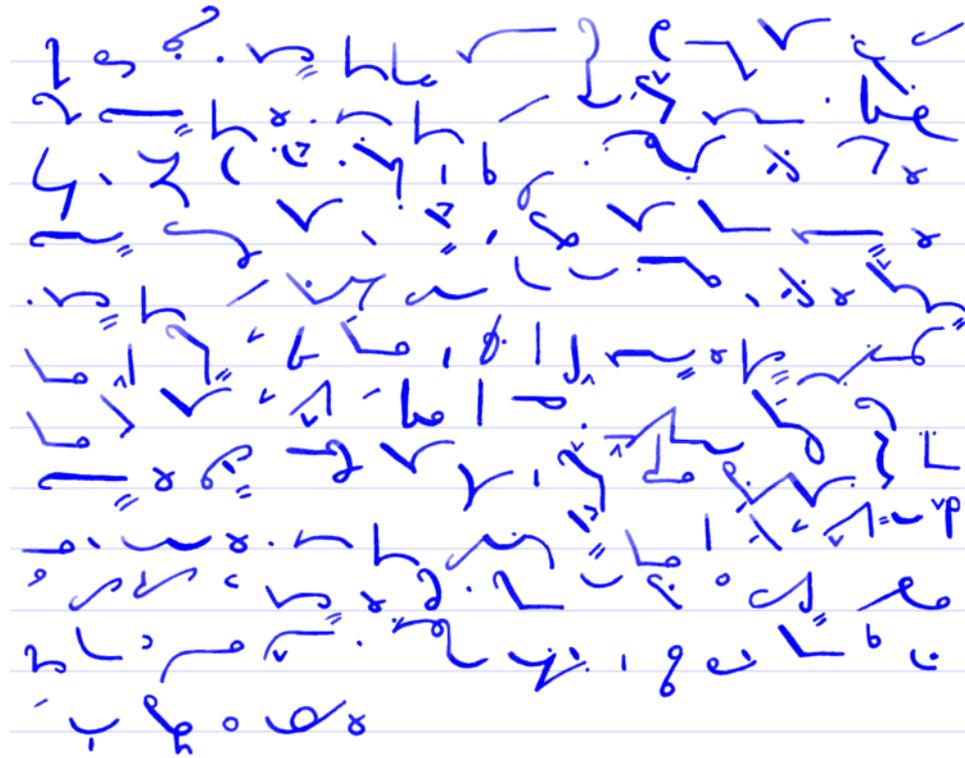


**Football**

Boyd attempts an audacious 30 yard drive towards the goal, with the keeper getting down low to save it, but Teeline rushes up for a strong header and the ball flies high into the stands. Boos ring round the stadium at this lost opportunity for the Gregg team, while the Pitman fans cheer loudly. Shelton picks up the ball on the edge of the Gregg area and looks to cut in and fire on goal, but it's well defended by

Boyd, who passes to Bright. The home team keep possession easily as the half-time break nears, which can't come quick enough for the away team. Gregg finally gets a shot at the Pitman net and scores the first goal of the game, to a deafening roar from the crowd of Gregg supporters, and pitiful moans from the Pitman crowd. The referee blows for half-time.

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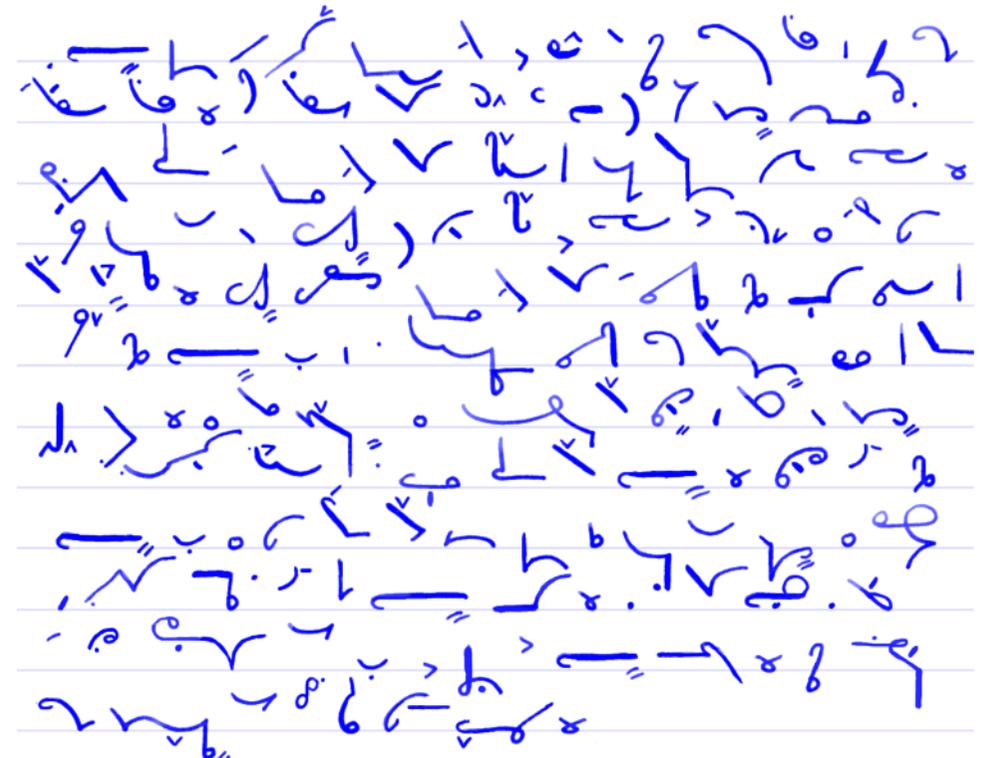


**Football**

During the second half, the Pitman team continue to look threatening as they keep the ball comfortably away from the Gregg team. The home team are obliged to make a defensive change to ensure they avoid a battering, but it is still a massively open match. Gurney clears the ball to Boyd who plays the ball back to Gregg. The Pitman team are patiently waiting for any gaps to open. Byrom picks out Bright on the edge of the box, who chests it down to Gurney. Teeline miraculously picks up the ball on the right and defends it against the

counter-attacking\* burst from Gregg. Sloan gathers the ball easily but Bright tackles superbly although the attack comes to nothing. The home team winger Boyd picks it up on the right-hand side and is one-on-one with Pitman. There is a break in play as Shelton receives treatment for what looks like a hamstring injury, but he is soon back on his feet and no substitute is necessary.

\* "counter" on its own is K + N hook and doubled, but the form shown here is used where it makes a better join

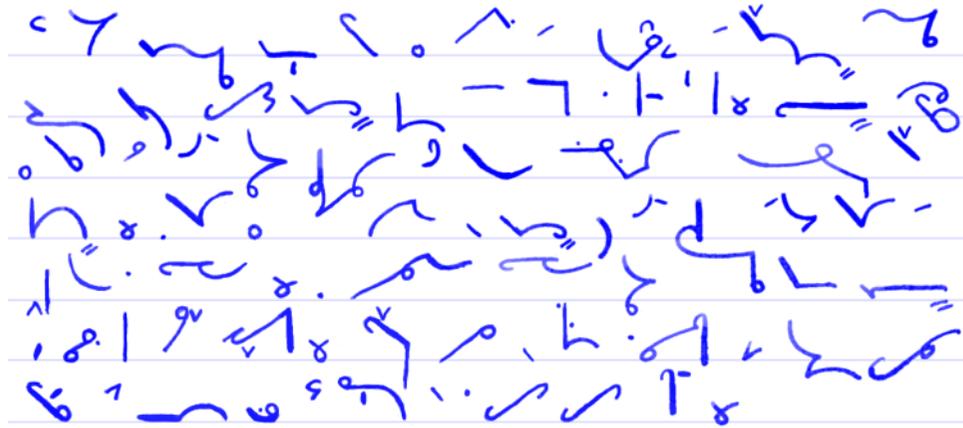


**Football**

The Gregg team are really picking up, to the sound of cheers\* from their fans, but jeers\* from the opposing fans. They are passing the ball around with great ease until Pitman makes a superb tackle and picks up the ball, driving it into the bottom left corner. He feeds in to Shelton whose low drive to the corner of the area is stopped well by Boyd. Shelton once again picks up the ball, and heads towards the goal, hitting it high towards the Gregg net but a fantastic header from Byrom sends it back down the pitch. His pass to Bright is intercepted by Sloan who passes to Pitman,

narrowly avoiding a close tackle by Gregg. Sloan's shot towards the Gregg net is well blocked by the home team but his feed in to Teeline is successful, who rapidly gets a shot at the Gregg goal. The ball grazes the post and lands squarely in the net, to the dismay of the Gregg keeper. Cheers explode from the Pitmanites in the stands on this welcome equalizer.

\* "cheers, jeers" Ensure to use the short form for "cheers" otherwise it would look almost the same as "jeers"



**Football**

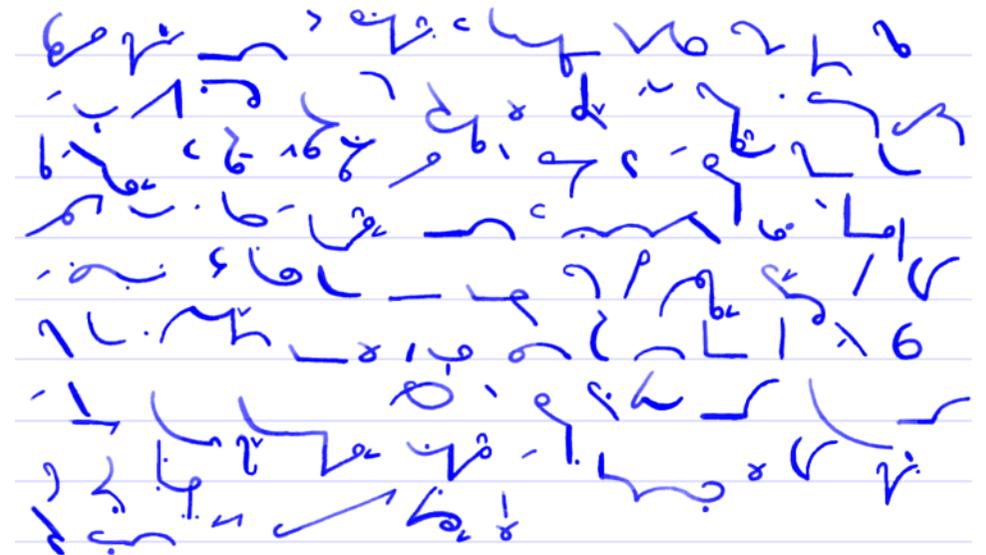
With only two minutes to go, play is rapid and furious, and Byrom manages to clear before one of the Pitman team can get a toe on it. Gregg misplaces his pass and his shot falls disastrously\* short, being expertly intercepted by Taylor. The ball is left to Pitman whose shot deflects off the ball and out for a corner. The resulting corner falls back to Gregg who hits it high

and wide. Bright runs to attempt a header but the full-time\* whistle blows, and the game ends with the score of a one one draw.

\* "disastrously" Note that "disaster" uses doubling

\* "full-time" Halving for the T of "time"

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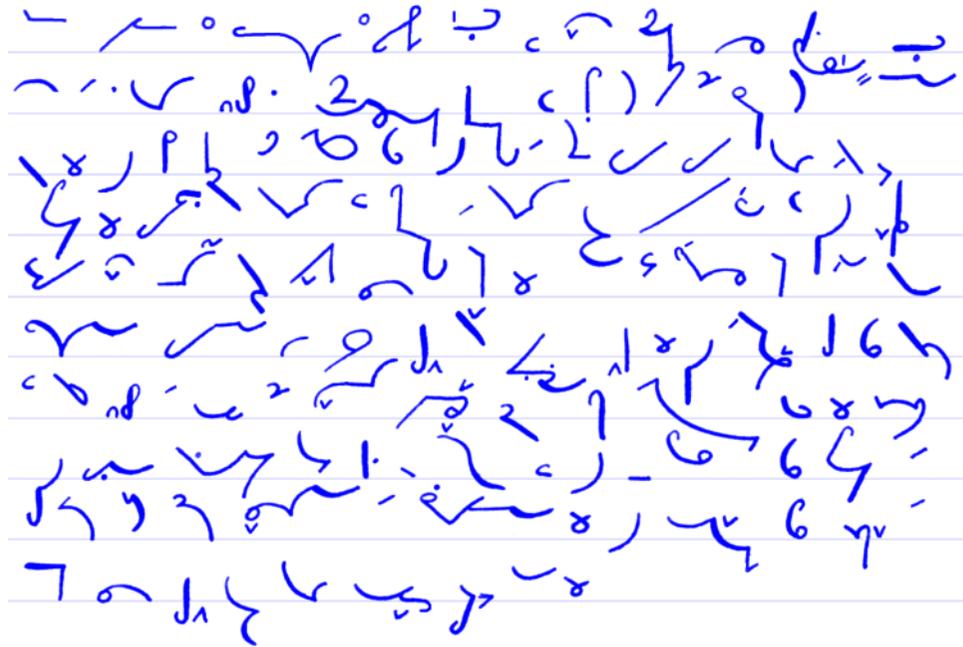


**Football**

This was truly the game of the century, with fantastic performances from the team members and no red cards, fouls or penalties. Despite not producing a clear winner, it is obvious that all those endless hours of skill building and speed practice have resulted in a fast and furious game, with memorable feats of dexterity and stamina that the fans have come to expect from such illustrious players, which they

will remember for a long time to come. Who knows, some of them may take it up themselves and become the future victorious masters of speedy play, achieving goal after goal through sheer tenacity, drive, endurance and determination. They will truly be able to claim "We Are The Champions!" (1143 words)

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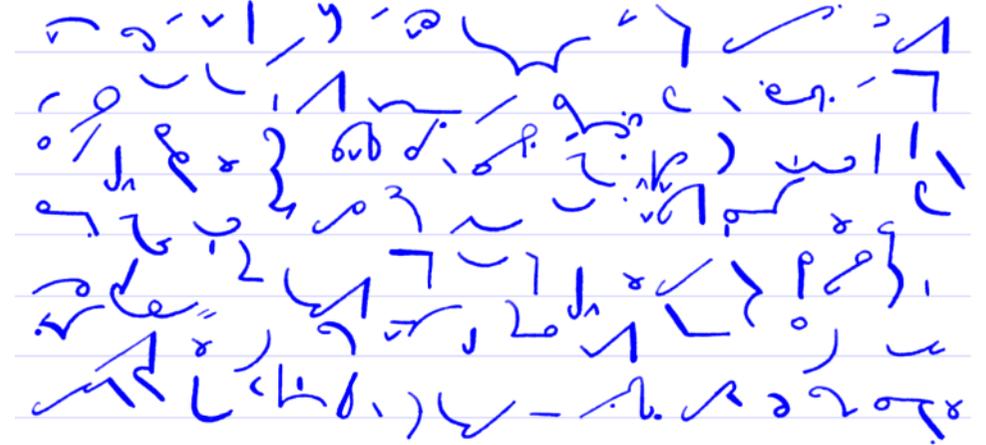
**Too Fast**

I can recall as clearly as yesterday the occasion when my shorthand teacher, Miss Jefferson, gave me and a fellow student a 200 words a minute\* dictation, without telling us what the speed was going to be. She said it would be short and faster than usual, and asked whether we felt up to the challenge. We agreed\*, partly with trepidation and partly feeling rather honoured that she had decided that we might actually be able to write some of it. With the promise of it not being very long, we could not let ourselves down by chickening out. She had obviously done this

before with past students and knew what the likely reactions would be during and after the event. I am sure she had been waiting patiently for the day to arrive when she could offer us this challenge and her eyes were smiling and sparkling. She invited the others to try and get some down if they felt inclined to join in.

\* Omission phrase "words (a) minute"

\* "we agreed" Inserting the vowel stops it being read as "with regard"



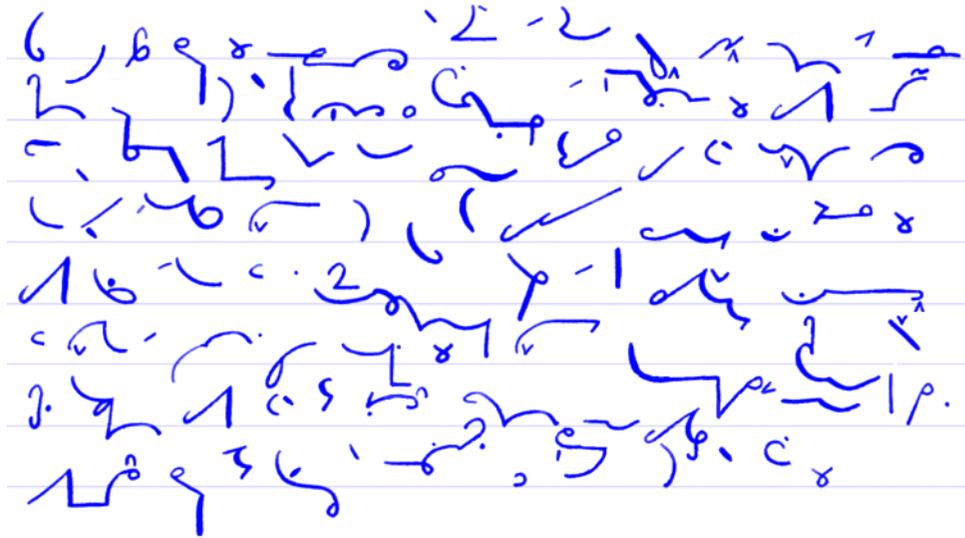
**Too Fast**

My friend and I had our eyes and minds firmly on the pad, wondering what we had let ourselves in for, but ready to make our superhuman\* effort to concentrate and get as much down as possible. There was not the slightest chance to hesitate, and if an outline was unknown, it had to be skipped, and even known ones were written in a wild scrawl. When it was over, Miss Jefferson asked if we had got any of it down. We both said, yes but hardly readable. She

very kindly did not ask us to read back, as she knew we would be doing that at home, just to see if we could retrieve one or two\* words from the scribble.

\* "superhuman" Dot Hay replaces the tick in "human" here. Insert the U diphthong, so it is not misread as "superman"

\* Omission phrase "one (or) two"



**Too Fast**

Then she told us the speed. Exclamations of shock and astonishment\* bounced round the room and the exact term to describe us all at that moment is flabbergasted and gobsmacked. We had actually agreed to and taken part in something that was, we thought, entirely impossible for raw novices like us, even though we were nearing the end of the course. We had faced off with a 200 words per minute\* passage and had survived the encounter with life and limb still intact. Like the Victorians travelling by train for the first time\*, we had thought that the human\*frame could not withstand going at such a ridiculous speed and that

the force of acceleration would squash us all flat.

- \* "astonishment" Optional contraction
- \* "words per minute" Compare with "words a minute" in the first paragraph
- \* Omission phrase "for (the) first time"
- \* "human" Above the line, to distinguish it from "humane"

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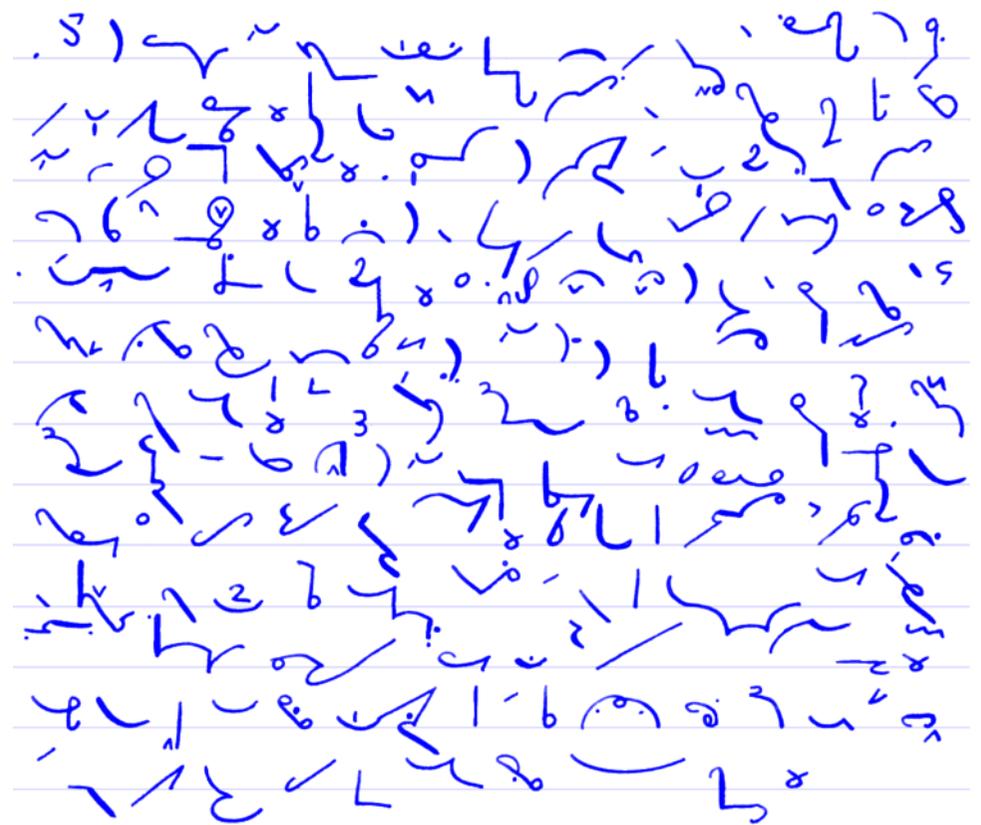
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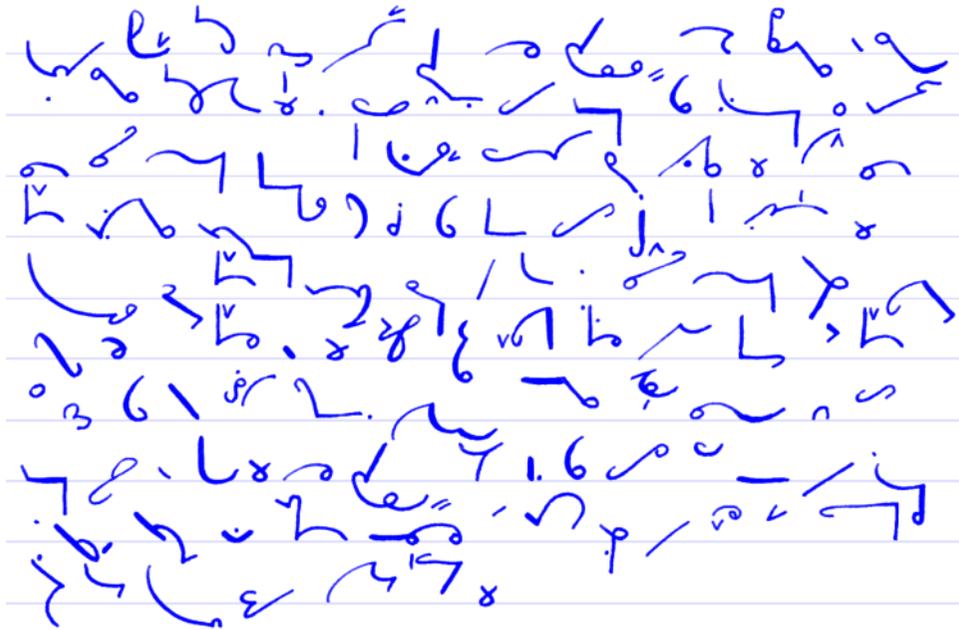


**Too Fast**

The point was clearly not to practise unseen dictation, improve our powers of concentration or stretch our note reading skills. It was not even about learning to persevere through the tough places and not let ourselves get behind. The scrawl was illegible and no shorthand could be learned from this particular exercise. Its aim was to change our view of ourselves, which I am sure has always been an ongoing task for shorthand teachers. As a student my mind was full of speed numbers, all with the appropriate\* labels personal to me - easy, not so easy, difficult, impossible and one labelled "probably never"! Why would you bother working towards a "never" speed? The prior warning that it would be quite fast allowed us not to get discouraged in the first sentence, because it was not being

presented as one that we ought to be able to manage. Just doing it, regardless of the result, seemed to deprive the number 200 of its intimidating appearance and put it firmly in the "possible" category, admittedly somewhere near the end of that rather long queue. Instead of being out in space, unreachable, it and its lesser friends were now on the ground and could be reached if only\* we took enough steps in their\* direction.

- \* "appropriate" Insert the diphone, and the dash vowel in "proper" which has a similar outline and meaning
- \* "if only" An alternative for the full "only" in some phrases
- \* "in their" Doubling for "their"

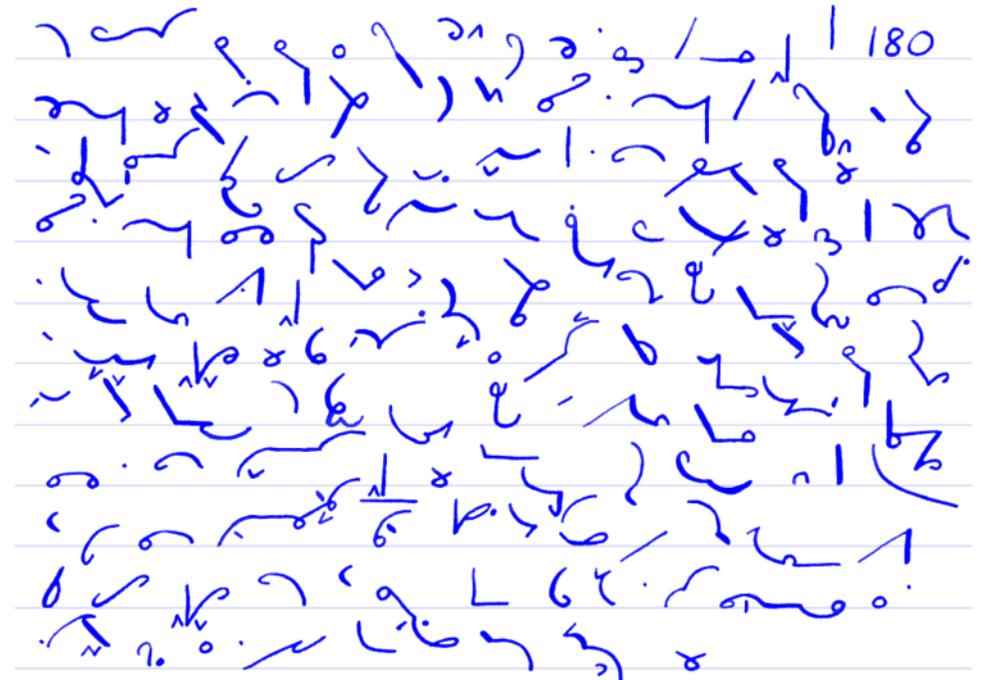


**Too Fast**

If you are studying on your own, you cannot really duplicate Miss Jefferson's method, as it is not possible\* to spring a surprise on yourself! The nearest way to get this effect is to record some half minute dictations at various normal speaking rates. Allow some time to elapse to forget their contents, then take one down at random. Afterwards would be the time to measure the speed, which for a half minute passage will be the number of words times two. I would suggest that these wild attempts are

not taken all the time, as you would then be constantly practising leaving gaps and that is not something you want to get used to doing. Miss Jefferson only did this once, in order to\* give our confidence a boost before the end-of-term exams and also to set our minds on the correct path for the future when we left the college.

\* Omission phrases "it is not poss(ible)" "in ord(er to)"



**Too Fast**

Your normal speaking speed is probably around three words a second, which comes out at 180 words a minute. I believe my passage was about half a minute, which produced two pages of desperate scrawl, which would have been one page of neat writing at a more reasonable speed. Half a minute seems plenty long enough considering the effort being required. You would do yourself a favour if you read out parts of the easier passages from the instruction book, so that you have some chance of knowing the outlines. This ordeal is really best undertaken by the speed

aspirant, not by the beginner or those who have not finished the instruction and review books, for whom discouragement seems a more likely outcome. I can confidently say that everything you do after that will seem luxuriously slow, at least\* for the next hour or two, and if you can read just one outline from that superfast take, then I think a little smugness is an allowable treat as a reward for all your hard work.

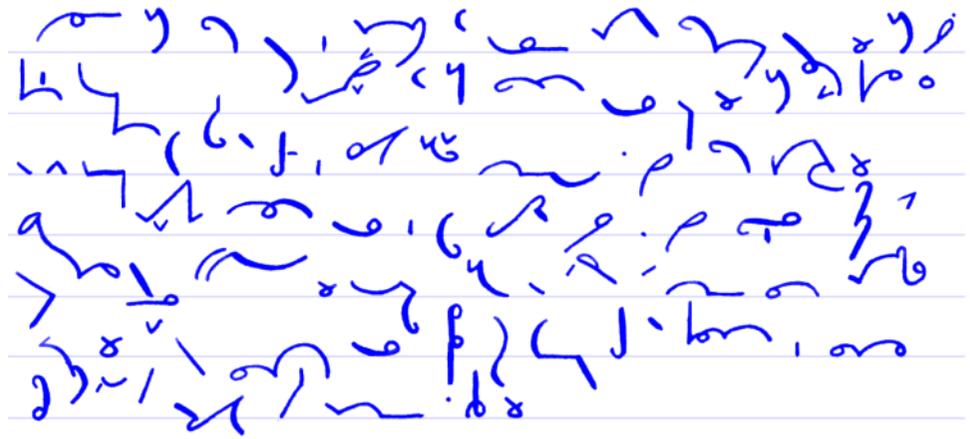
\* "at least" and "at last" Always insert the vowel



Too Fast - Speed Piece - write on the blank lines as preparation for taking again from dictation on normal notepad paper.

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.



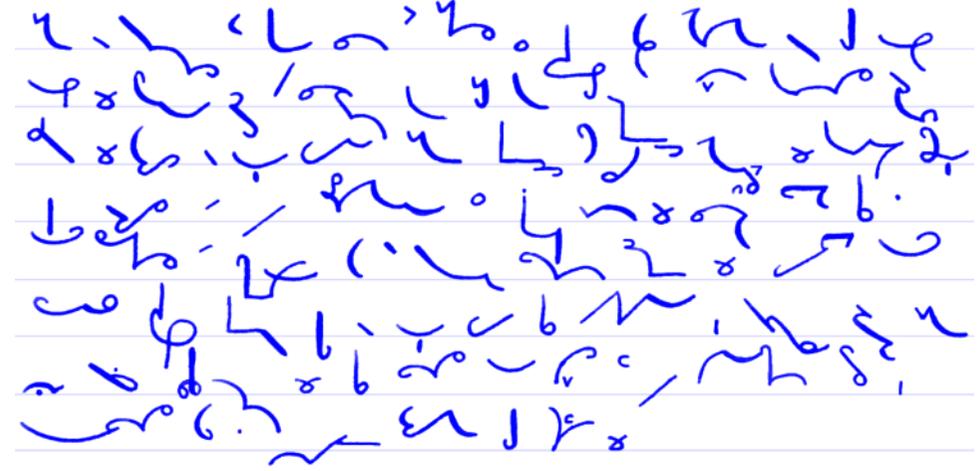


**Omission Phrases**

Last week I was very busy but I am sure that next week I will be very much busier. I was resting at home for a time but then I realised that I had more and more things to do. I was at a loss as to how to get them all done, but as a rule I find making a list very helpful. First and foremost I write the most important things, but within one or

two hours, the list grows larger and larger, and the page becomes longer and longer. Now and then I have to stop, and make some alterations here and there. I put similar things side by side, so that they can be done all at the same time but sometimes there is not much between them on which to make a decision.

Horizontal lines for writing practice.



**Omission Phrases**

I have to bear in mind that doing some of the items is out of the question\* this month, and they will have to be done next month instead. Everything would have been\* much simpler if I did not have to take into account my family's point of view on the subject. They want to know whether or not I have taken into account their wishes and viewpoints. Fortunately there is no difference of opinion between us and our standard of living has continued to improve. Some of them agree that it is a sign of the times, and directly or indirectly they all benefit from my work. With regard to the information in our hands, at first sight it can be difficult to know whether it is right or wrong, but up to the present\* I believe

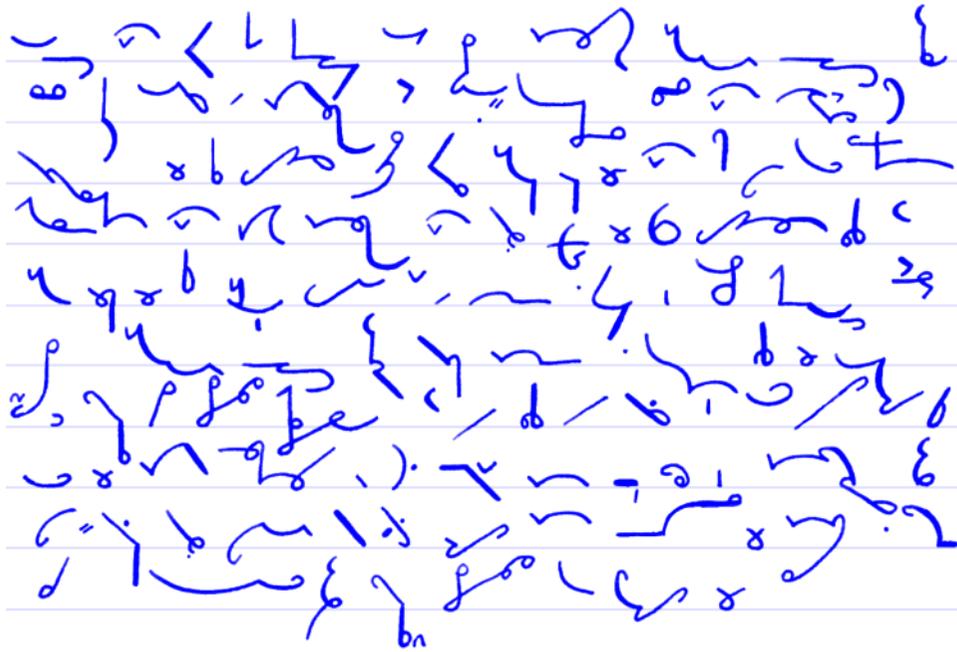
that I have made the best decisions year by year. It is neither more nor less\* than a miracle that we have done so well.

\* "question" also has an optional contraction as Kway + N hook

\* "up to the present" This omission phrase is given in many books. "Up to present" has come into use nowadays and so that should be written in full, to prevent any clash.

\* Omission phrase "neither more (nor) less" The word omitted "nor" is the correct version of this phrase. If the speaker says "or" instead, then full outlines must be used.

Horizontal lines for writing practice.



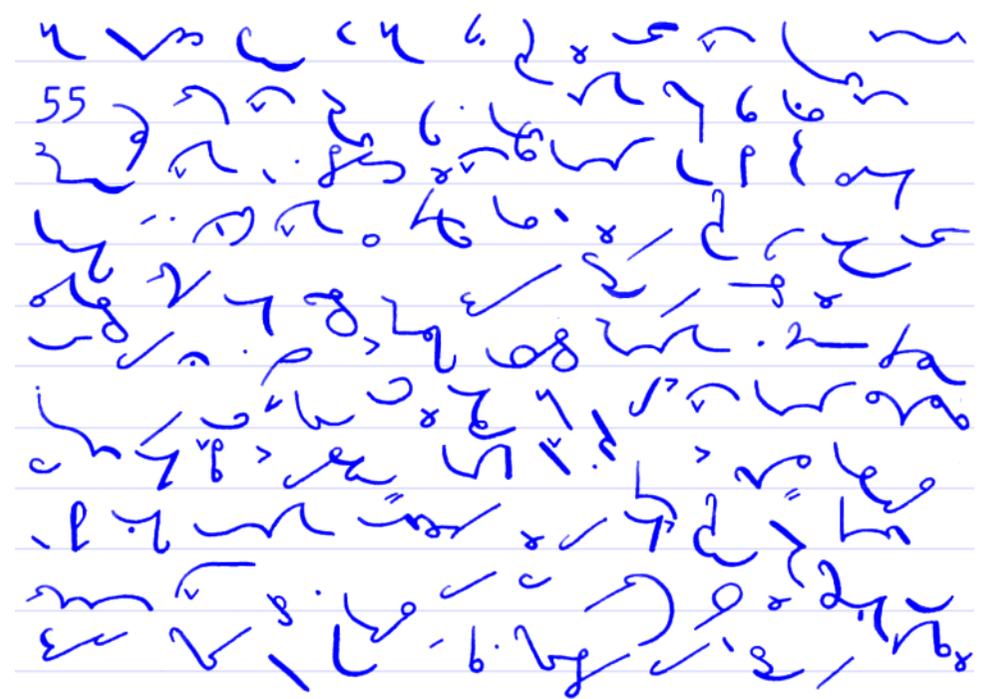
**Omission Phrases**

In connection with my job at the technical college in the City of London, I am sorry to say that I have now come to the conclusion that it is not as good as it was in the past, and I will be considering all the facts of the case as regards my employment there up to the present time. It is one of the most high-pressure\* jobs I have had to do. My doctor will often call attention to the matter and for the sake of my health I am considering my position within the company. This is one of the most important decisions that I have to consider. At first I did not know whether or not I should make a change, but in the circumstances, and taking into account all the facts of the situation, I have now come to the conclusion that it would be better to make a firm decision. No other way would

produce such satisfactory results and it stands to reason that our decisions are based on information rather than just opinion. I will be extremely sorry to say goodbye to my good friends but I am very pleased that this well-paid position will now be open to one of my colleagues. I am sure there is a very good chance, in their opinion, that this will\* produce satisfactory results for everyone.

\* "high-(pre)ssure" Keep the Ish stroke clearly full length, as "high-pressured" could also make sense, when these are being used adjectives

\* "this will" Downward L in order to join the phrase



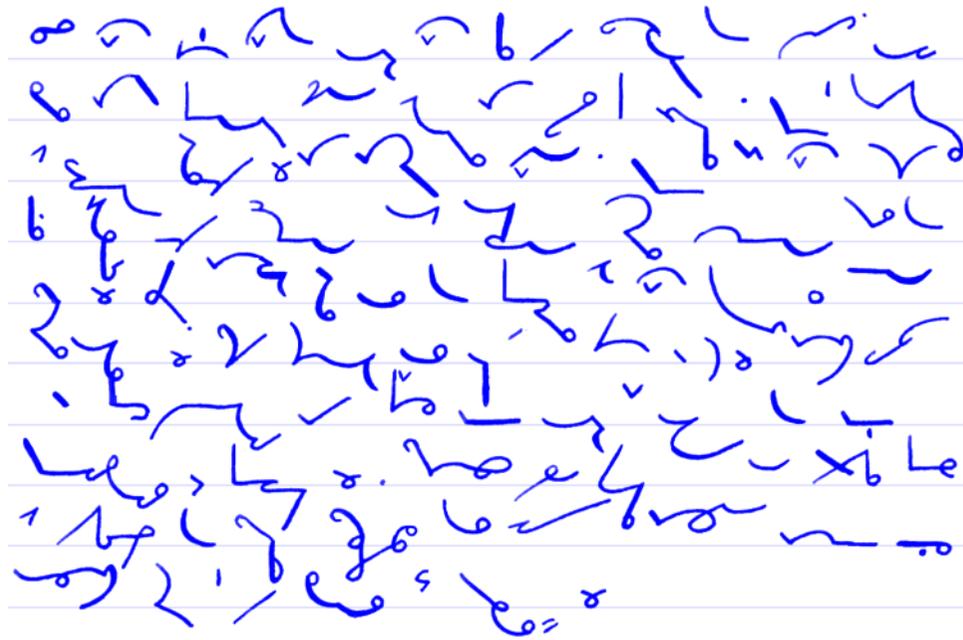
**Omission Phrases**

I have borne in mind everything that I have achieved so far. In regard to my future, I am now 55 years of age, and from my point of view within a few months I will have brought this phase of my working life to a satisfactory conclusion. My family have said that they certainly have no objection and a low pressure\* life is much more convenient for us all. Our travel will no longer incur heavy expenses, and there are no other great expenses to take into consideration when we are planning our expenditure. In fact, we made a list of the necessary expenses of family life a short time ago which seems to have confirmed our opinion on the financial information. In this manner, I hope to be able to join my family as early as possible in order to\* enjoy the sights of the West End of

London\*, followed by a tour of the British Isles for several weeks to study the native animal life in all parts of the country. We enjoy travelling both at home and abroad, and from time to time like to spend a few weeks away in order to\*refresh ourselves. There is no other thing that we would prefer to be doing and it is a perfectly satisfactory way of spending our holidays.

\* "low (pre)ssure" Insert the vowel, as in this context it could be misread as "leisure". Keep the Ish stroke clearly full length, as "low-pressured" could also make sense, when these are being used adjectives

\* Omission phrases "in ord(er to)" "Wes(t) End (of) London"



**Omission Phrases**

As regards my home life, now that my days are more favourable for learning new subjects, I will be taking up shorthand writing, and if possible I will use it to produce a book on foreign affairs and the political life of this country. I will also be writing a book about my early days on the other side of the country, working in the engineering machine shops making parts for British ships. Generally speaking, I am glad that all these things have taken place, and that my future is going in this direction.

There are so many other things to do and much more to see. I am sure we will all look forward to our times together, now that I no longer have to go backwards and forwards to the technical college. The Prime Minister's recent changes in bank rates, taxation and the rate of exchange have produced very satisfactory results for us, and we are almost certain to make gains in some measure, especially on our savings with the Post Office.

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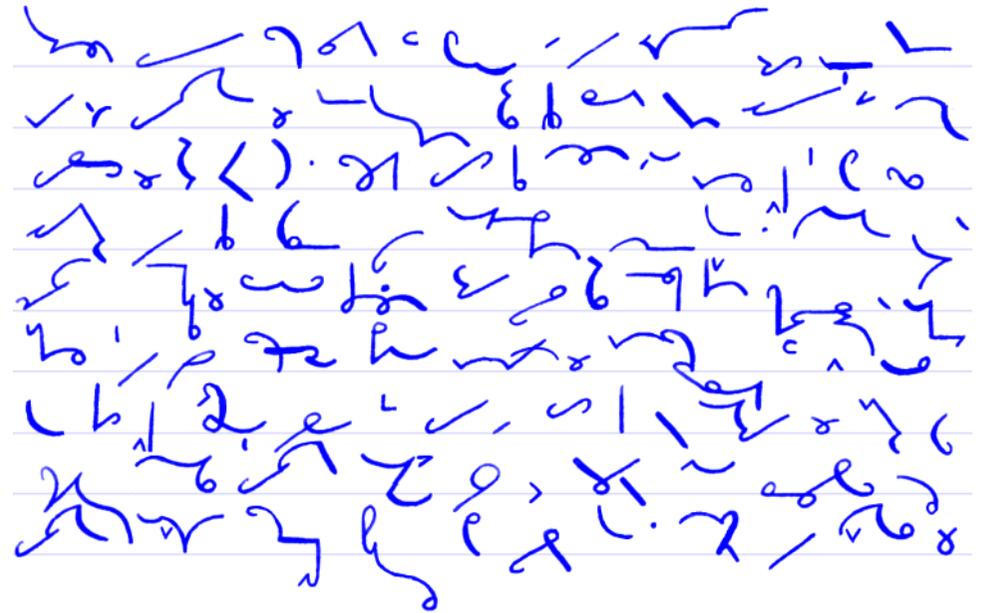
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**Omission Phrases**

For the most part we are very happy with everything and are hardly likely to want to go back to our old way of life. I can confirm that this decision has now been made and we are on the move once again. Although the job was a first-rate one, it is most important\* not to miss out on other opportunities and we hope that our decision this week will, in the course of time, make for a long life full of worthwhile activities. In our opinion it seems important\* that we use all this extra time during the course of the year to undertake the items on our list from beginning to end\*, starting tomorrow morning. I am very pleased indeed with how things have turned out and there is no

reason why we should want it to be any other way. I hope that within three or four months we will be enjoying ourselves to the best of our ability and in six or seven years we will have entirely forgotten the state of affairs as they used to be for a major part of our lives. (1359 words)

\* "it is most important" versus "it seems important" Always insert the vowel of "seems" and write "most important" separately from "it is"

\* "from beginning to end" If you add Tick The to "from", then the phrase would be "from the beginning to the end"

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