

Boat Race Lesson

A week ago I saw the televised version of the UK Boat Race where the Oxford and Cambridge University teams row from Putney Bridge to Mortlake on the River Thames, going upstream with the incoming tide. We were not at home at the time of the race and so had to record the programme to view later. This meant we had to avoid seeing the news or accidentally coming across the result online,

so it was "news blackout" for us until the evening, when we sat down with our dinner trays on our laps, to watch the women's race, followed by the men's race. Not quite as good as seeing them on the live programme, but we were able to fast forward* through an hour and a half of background information and interviews, and get to the real action.

* Omission phrase "fas(t) fo(r)ward"

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Boat Race Lesson

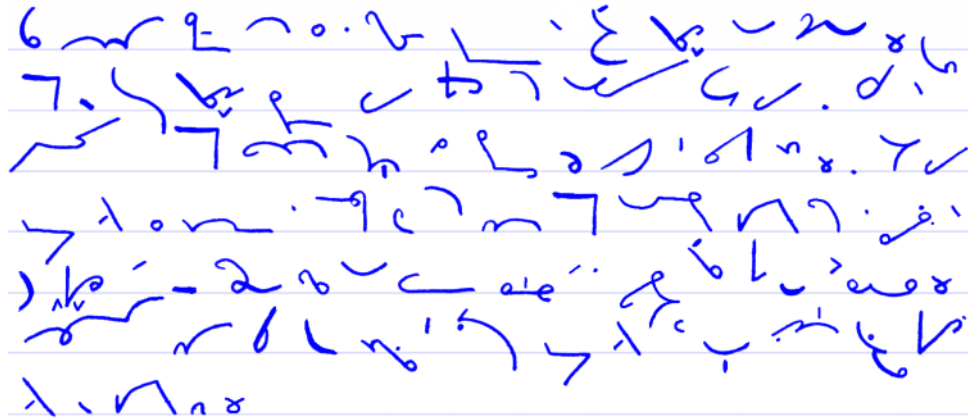
In the women's* race the Oxford team started very badly, when one of the oars became trapped low in the water as the other seven oars sped the boat ahead. The rowing had to stop for a moment so that the oar could be pulled from the water and equilibrium regained. This delay of a few seconds put them well behind the Cambridge team, and for the entire eighteen and a half* minutes of the race they remained several lengths behind and were never able to catch up. Cambridge, who were the favourites to win, just kept

motoring on and Oxford found no chance to reduce or close the gap. Cambridge won by 11 lengths, and Oxford finished in dismay and some tears of frustration at their serious error at the start.

* "women's" Note that "woman" is written above the line, following the last vowel, to distinguish between these two

* "eighteen and a half" See www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand.org.uk/vocabulary-numbers.htm#fractions

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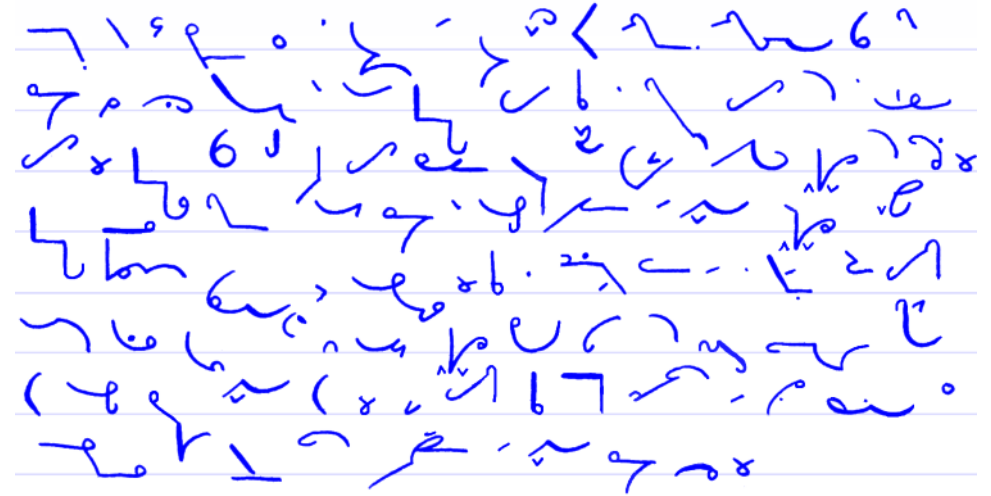
Boat Race Lesson

This immediately struck me as a perfect picture of falling behind in shorthand writing*. If you get too far behind the speaker, whether at the beginning or anywhere along the way, the chances of recovery get more and more* remote, as the spoken words rush on ahead of you. The only way to catch up is to make an extra effort, or you may get unexpected

help from a series of easy outlines and good phrasing opportunities in quick succession, and a useful pause at the end of the sentence. Most likely* you will just have to press on harder to catch up, with no random favours turning up to help you.

* Omission phrases "short(hand) writing" "more (and) more" "mos(t) likely"

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Boat Race Lesson

Keeping up with the speaker is a full time* and "full mind" job, and practising and perfecting this particular skill is the main benefit of any dictation, whether it is a prepared one or an unseen one. Dictations themselves do not teach one single bit of shorthand theory, revision, outline or phrase. Dictation gives practice in the skill of instant recall and writing of outlines, whilst at the same time listening to the next few words*. It is a wake-up call and a bucket of cold water in your face if you thought you knew the outlines sufficiently* well or you have been carefully* drawing them instead of speedily writing them. But the water does get warmer and less

stinging as expectations become more realistic and writing skill improves.

- * "full time" Halving for the T of "time"
- * Omission phrase "ne(k)s(t) few wo(r)ds"
- * "sufficiently" The contraction includes the "-ly" version as well, but it is always in order to add an L stroke to such contractions, if greater clarity is required
- * "carefully" The optional contraction leaves off the L, but sometimes it is clearer to be able to show the last vowel, in this case by using upward L instead of downward

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Boat Race Lesson

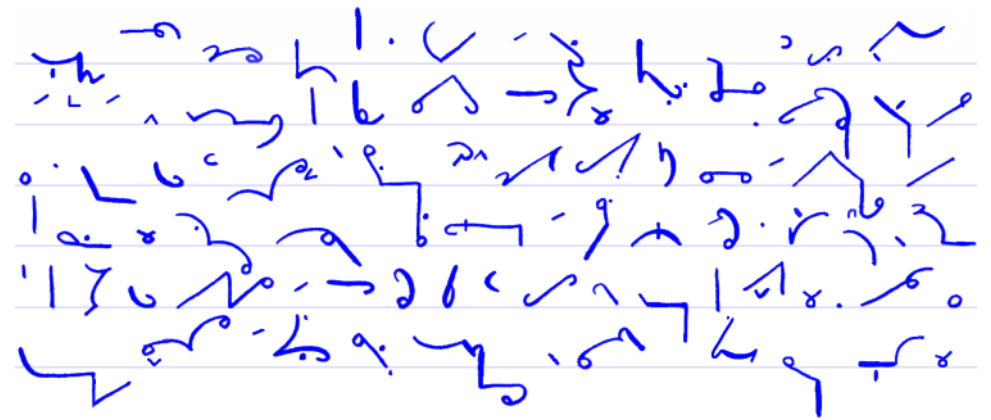
Fortunately, acquiring the necessary laser beam concentration is entirely free, there is no price, drawback or shortage. You just make a firm decision that that is what you will do and aim for, from now on, but it will need to be reaffirmed regularly until it becomes a habit. Your friendly, warm and patient personality is put on hold, you ignore distractions, both internal and external, and you sink your teeth firmly into the task. After the speed attempt is

over, with the notes safely recorded on the page and ready* to be transcribed, you are free to re-join friendly relaxed humanity once again*.

* "ready" Advisable to insert the last vowel, as it could be misread as "read" in this context and so upset the correct reading of the following words

* Omission phrase "wu(n)s again"

Lined writing area for notes.

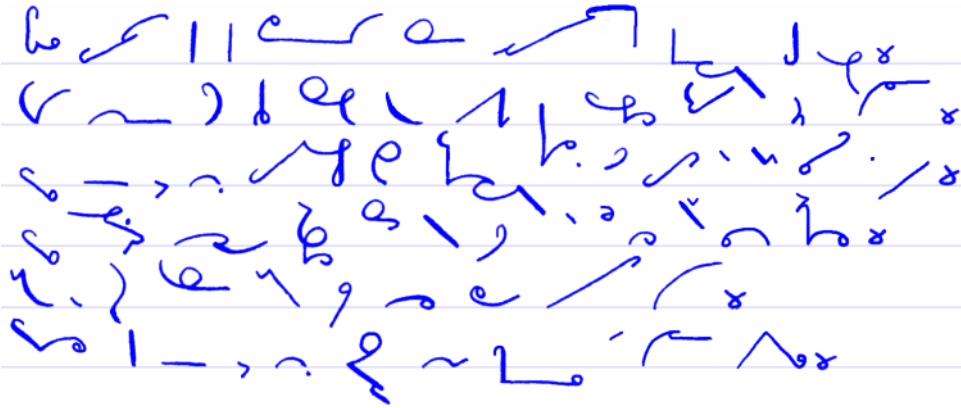


Boat Race Lesson

No doubt the Oxford women's team had a thorough and painful debrief, to discuss what went wrong and why, and how to make sure it does not happen again. The University Boat Race is a big event with millions of spectators around the world watching on their screens, and reputations are at stake. Errors must be corrected and

strategy improved, and there is a whole year to work on it until the event returns and again there is just that one opportunity to get it right. The result is victory, smiles and champagne spraying in all directions to celebrate achieving the speed goal. (719 words)

Lined writing area for notes.



Instructor Phrases Section 2

At all events we will do it as quickly as we can, and we regret it can only be done next month*.

They will make their decision as soon as they have read the details in our statement that we issued last week.

Please come to the meeting Wednesday next, as we think that it may only be a short one of about half an hour.

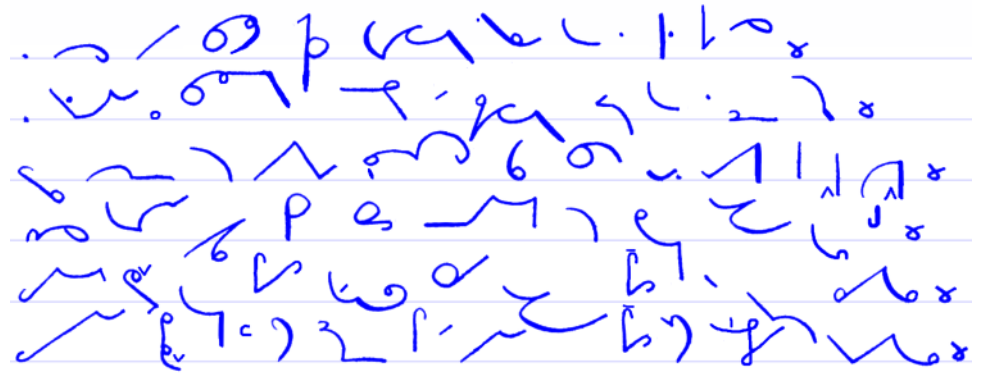
Please explain the meaning of this statement, as we cannot be sure of what is meant by some of the terms.

I have to say that for his sake I hope he improves sooner rather than later.

By all means do come to the meeting, as we shall be able to meet the directors and local representatives*.

* Omission phrase "ne(k)s(t mon)th"

* "representatives" If the speaker says "reps" then insert the vowel, to ensure correct reading



Instructor Phrases Section 2

The men are as well as usual and it is said they will only be absent for a day at the most.

The patient is as well as can be expected and he will only be here for a week or two.

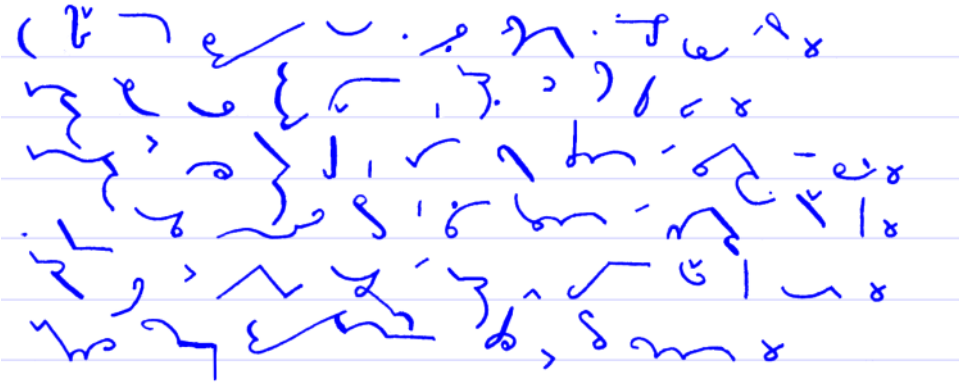
Please make your report smaller than this, as we may need to read it out loud.

You must follow the rules as we do, as we cannot guarantee your safety any longer if you do not.

We now supply the food at all our own* functions, as we are no longer tolerant of poor service.

We are not satisfied with their work at all and are not tolerant of their unsatisfactory performance. (461 words)

* "at all our own" is similar to the outline for "tolerant". You may prefer to write "at" and "all our own" separately.



Instructor Phrases Section 3

These sentences practise the phrases in Section 3 page 200 of the Instructor, Halving.

They drive the car as if it were in a race and there will be an accident if it is not stopped.

I am able to think of several things that they would like but I cannot say* what they are just yet.

I am unable to think of the means by which it was* done, but I will remember at some time and hopefully quite soon.

The book in which it is mentioned has been on sale for some time and you will be able to buy it.

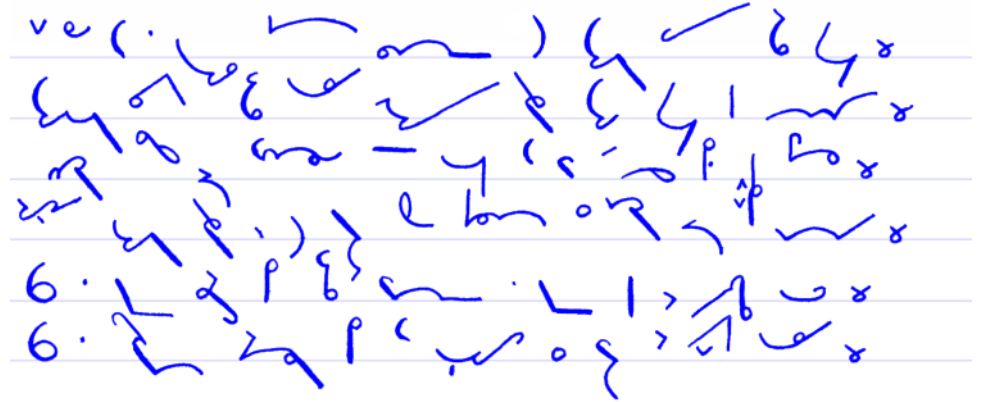
I cannot be sure of the report in which it has appeared and I cannot see* how we can find it now.

I hope you will not forget that we are able to make adjustments* to the plans from time to time.

* "I cannot say" Helpful to insert the vowel, and omit the vowel in "I cannot see", to prevent misreading

* "by which it was done" Do not allow the halved Chay to be too short and looking like a Tick The

* "adjustments" Omits the lightly-sounded first T



Instructor Phrases Section 3

I sent them a few words on the matter* some time ago so they would be aware of this change.

They would not be happy with this answer and if it were possible they would change it immediately.

You will not be surprised to hear that you must not* go into that building and must stay outside at all times.

I wondered if it would be possible to see both the staff at the same time, as I may not be* here tomorrow.

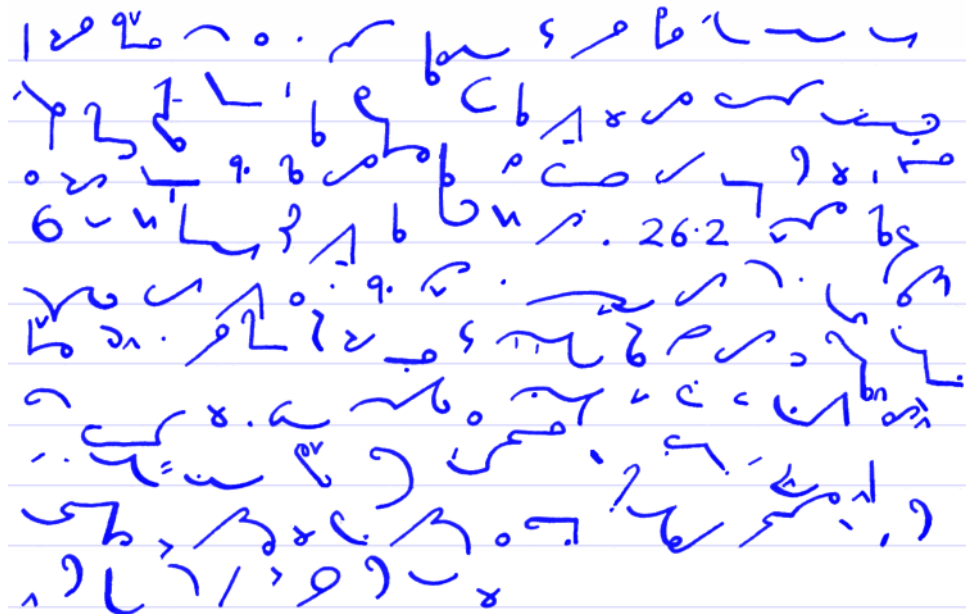
This is a book of which it has been said that it is able to make a big difference to the reader's opinion*.

This is a problem of which it must be said that no-one is able to think of the right answer.

* Omission phrases "on (the) matter" "you mus(t) not"

* "I may not" and "I am not" are the same outline, insert the vowel in "may" if necessary

* "opinion" This short form is on the line, to ensure it is not misread as "information" which is above the line



Marathon Effort

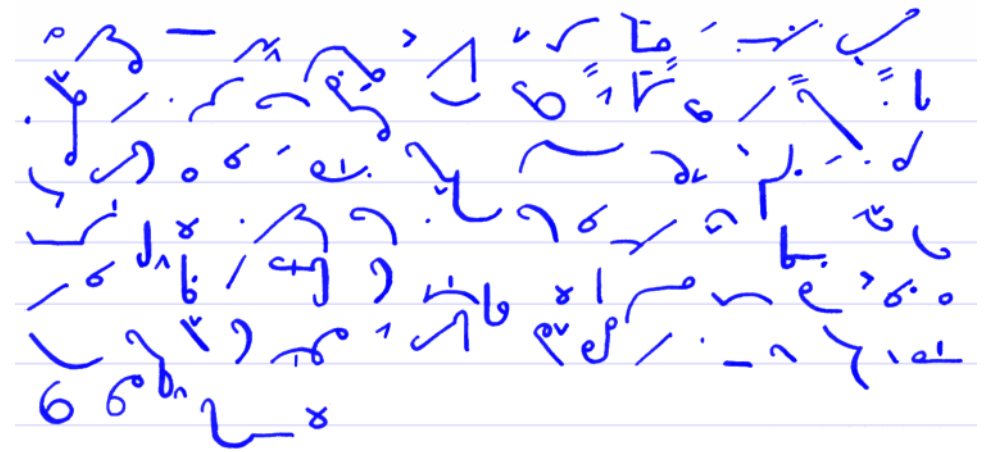
It always strikes me as a little disconcerting that the race starts off going in the opposite direction, and doubles back on itself several times along its route*. One's normal inclination is to want to go straight towards one's destination, as the quickest way to get there. But of course this is not about taking the shortest route, it is about running the 26.2 miles and it is completely irrelevant* whether the route is a straight line, a meandering one, or a few hundred times around a racetrack, although I would guess that the monotony of this last one would produce fatigue more quickly. The London Marathon is mainly on the flat, with varied surroundings and a never-ending supply of fresh onlookers*, all cheering, clapping and shouting out encouragement

to the runners. Every runner is greeted in this way, regardless of who they are, how they are doing or which of the races they are in.

* "route" Helpful to put the vowels in this and in "road" as they are similar in outline and meaning

* "irrelevant" See www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand.org.uk/theory-15-R-forms.htm#prefix-irr for examples of words beginning "irr-"

* "onlookers" L after N is normally downwards, but has to be upwards here in order to be able to join the Kr stroke



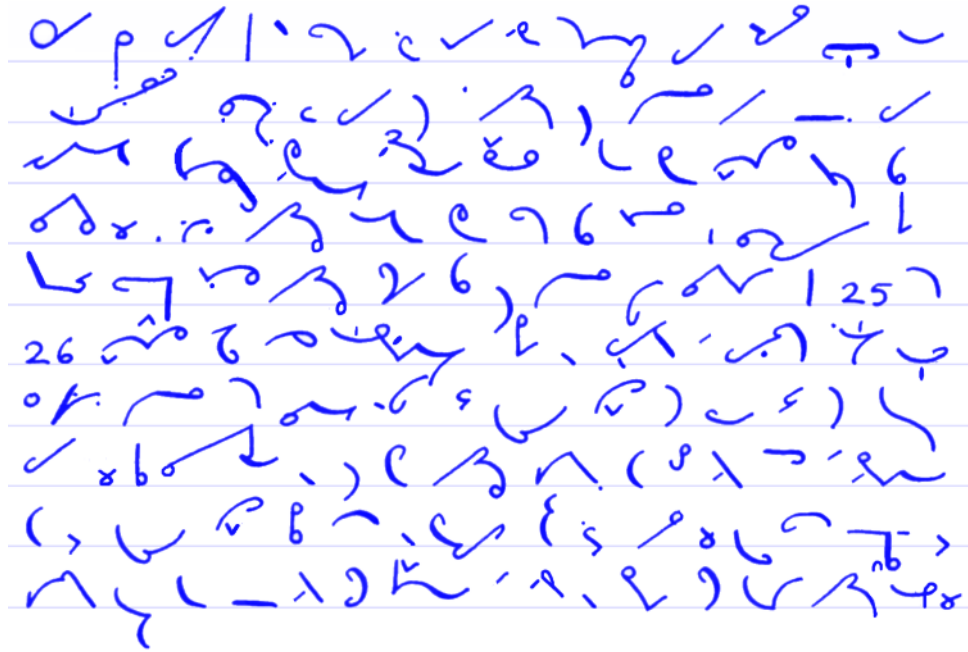
Marathon Effort

As the runners go round the loops* of the route on the Isle of Dogs and Canary Wharf, the bystanders are a little more sparse in places, and the tall buildings are probably an advantage if the weather is hot and sunny, providing longer areas of shade* and a chance to cool down. A runner from a very hot country might disagree and find even our hot days much colder than their home conditions. It looks to me as if all the heat is being produced by their muscles, and the water supply stations are a good

opportunity for them to soak themselves as well as drink.

* "loops" Keep well through the line, as "laps" would also make sense in this racing context

* "shade" Insert the vowel, and the second vowel in "shadow" to ensure clarity, as these would both make sense in most contexts



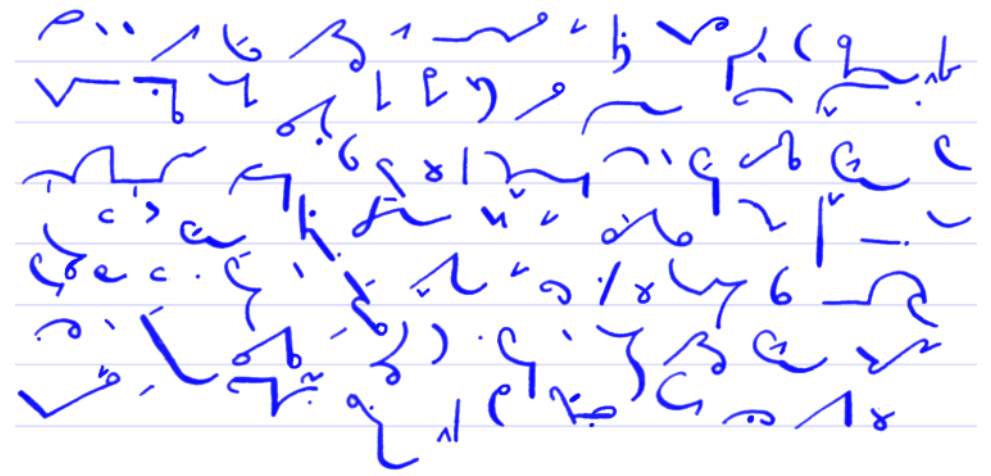
Marathon Effort

As we are sitting watching it all from the comfort of our soft armchairs, we always groan in unreserved sympathy when we see a runner whose legs are giving way, and we know that they must have been* suffering the warning signs for several miles before this happens. The elite runners never suffer from this, of course, but somewhere at the back of the crowd of mass runners there are those whose legs will happily do 25 or 26 miles, and then most unsportingly start to wobble and waver*, commonly known as jelly legs or hitting the wall, with the finish line so near, and yet so far away. It is heartening to see

other runners helping them stand up again and supporting them to the finish line, as it is important to everyone that they complete the race. Even more kudos to the helper if they have given up their own timing and stopped to support their fellow runner instead.

* Omission phrase "mus(t have) been"

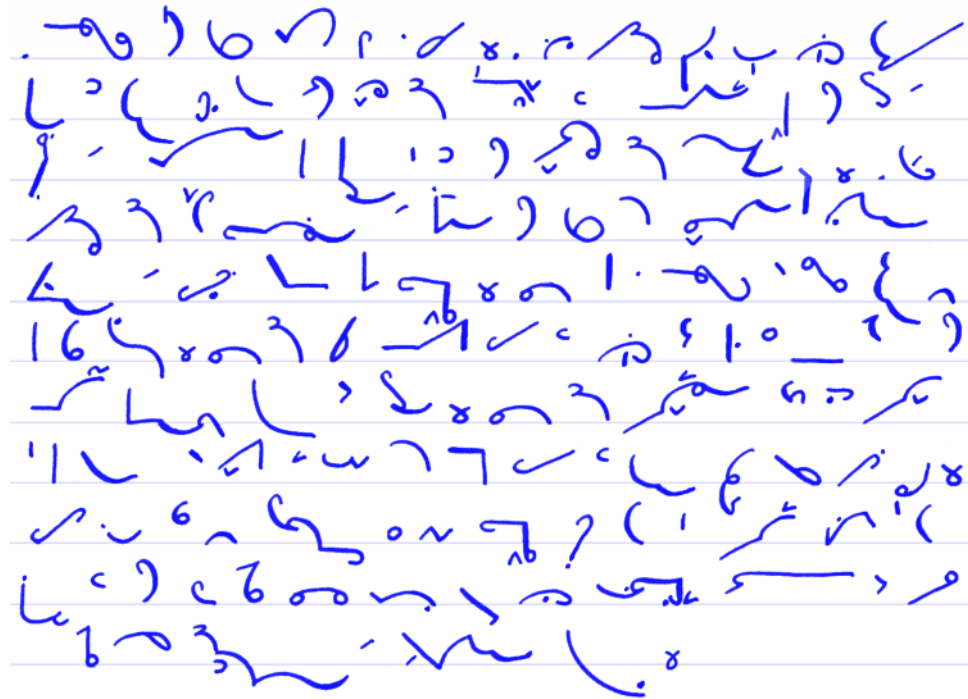
* "waver" This means to hesitate or falter. The verb "to waive" means to put aside or defer, and a "waiver" is the spoken or written statement of this intent. The pronunciation and outlines are identical.



Marathon Effort

Last of all are the fun runners and the cameras on the tethered balloons showed them streaming out of the park gates onto the heath at the start of their race, looking more like a multi-coloured liquid than people. It reminded me of flood waters flowing over fields, with all the floating debris jostling about on the surface, or the

tide coming in over the sand, with a froth of bubbles riding on the front edge. Fortunately this colourful mass of bobbing heads and shirts was a flood of enthusiastic runners, flowing between the barriers and gradually spreading out as they progressed along the main road.



Marathon Effort

The expressions on their faces also told a story. The elite runners showed no emotion, they were doing what they have trained for and their minds were occupied with carrying out their plan and strategy, and altering it depending on what their rivals were managing to do. The fun runners were either grimacing and contorting their faces, or smiling, laughing, joking and waving back at the crowds. Some had an expression of surprise that they have made it this far, some were just carried away with emotion that the day has come and that they are actually taking part, after all the planning. Some were realising that you can't rely on it being "all right on the night" or get away with having less than the best

running shoes. One comment that is made over and over again* is how the crowds cheering them on really helped them continue with their effort, and this seems to me to be the main ingredient and character of the race, and its most heart-warming and uplifting feature. (1060 words)

* "All right on the night" A theatrical phrase, a hope that any problems will resolve themselves on the night of the performance - a sentiment to be avoided by shorthand writers at all costs.

* Omission phrase "over (and) over again". The second "over" is reversed in order to gain a good join

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