

Obedient Servant

Most of the work for the websites and blogs is done sitting in front of the computer screen. This is all very well in dull, wet or cold weather but during May and into June we have had the very hot and sunny* weather that normally comes in late July and August. We have had extremely hot days, close and humid days that sap the energy, followed by thunderstorms. The sun has shone for days at a time*, encouraging us to get out of the house and go roaming, or at least* sit outside. Unfortunately* it is not possible* to do computer work in the garden, so I make an

effort to do some of the background work sitting in the greenhouse which now has a soft sofa in it.

* "sunny" "snowy" Always insert the vowels/diphone

* "unfortunately" Optional contraction

* Omission phrases "at (a) time" "it is not poss(ible)"

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



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One day I was sitting in there reading an old book on business letters*. It is an American book from 1937 so the examples under discussion were entirely different and much less formal than what would have been* written in the UK at the time. Parts of it were more amusing* than informative, as it had pairs of paragraphs side by side*, what to write and what not to write. The "not" side was truly* awful and I could not believe that such ghastly* letters could ever have been considered, written or sent* but apparently they were, although the author of the book would have chosen the worst of their kind for the examples. Many of them were sales letters and the arrogant tone of their exhortations to buy the products today, right now, without delay, was further embellished with the insistence that the customer's best interests were being considered above all else. All this did nothing to hide a frantic* desperation to get the sale and hopefully the repeat business.

* Omission Phrases "biz(ness) letters" "side (by) side"

* "amusing" "amazing" Always insert the vowel

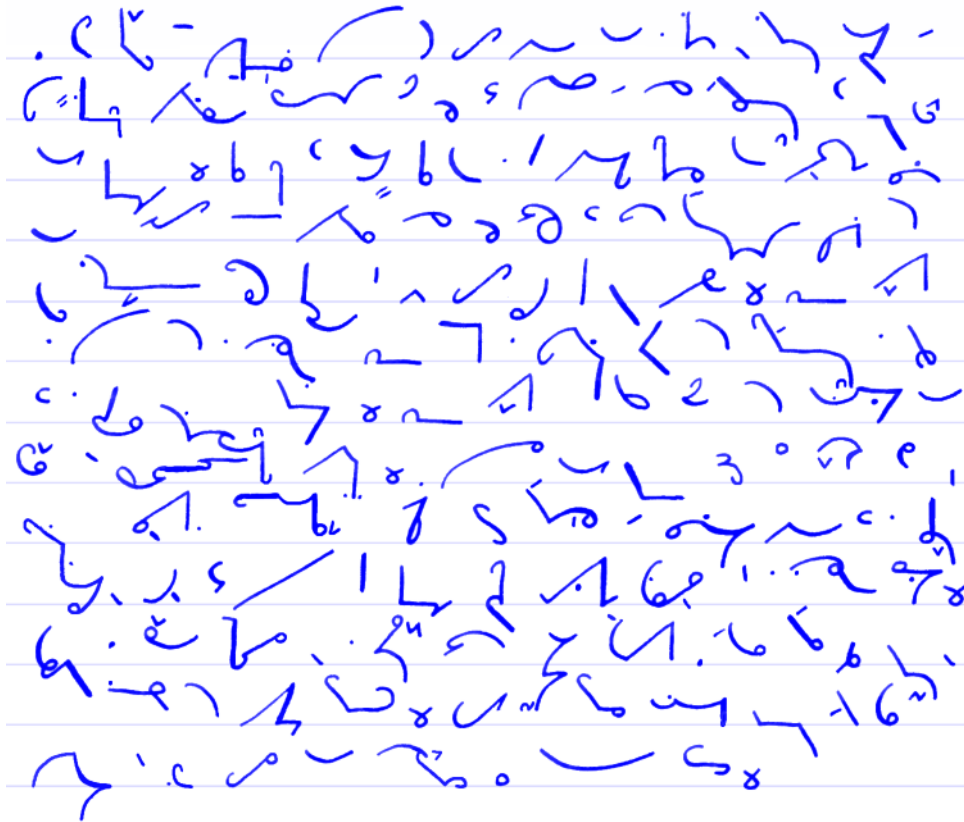
* Omission Phrase "would (have) been" This is quicker and clearer than writing "have" with N Hook for "been" because of the sharper angle

* "truly" "utterly" Always insert the first vowel

* "sent" Above the line, to provide extra distinction from "send"

* "ghastly" "ghostly" Always insert the first vowel

* "frantic" Note that "phrenetic" is written with a halved N



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The other type of quite ludicrous letter was one written in an attempt to appear knowledgeable* and well-educated, replacing normal short words with the longest* and most obscure that could be found in the dictionary. It is true that English does have a large range of terms for roughly the same thing*, and one can replace most words and phrases with more formal, stilted or even archaic versions, depending on how one wishes it to be received. You can write a letter or a missive, you can get a well-paid job or procure a position with a generous remunerative package. You can write fast shorthand or engage in flights of stenographic rapidity. The letters in the book were not as mild as that but pretentious, haughty, grandiose and just plain pompous, and seemingly written with a desire to show that the

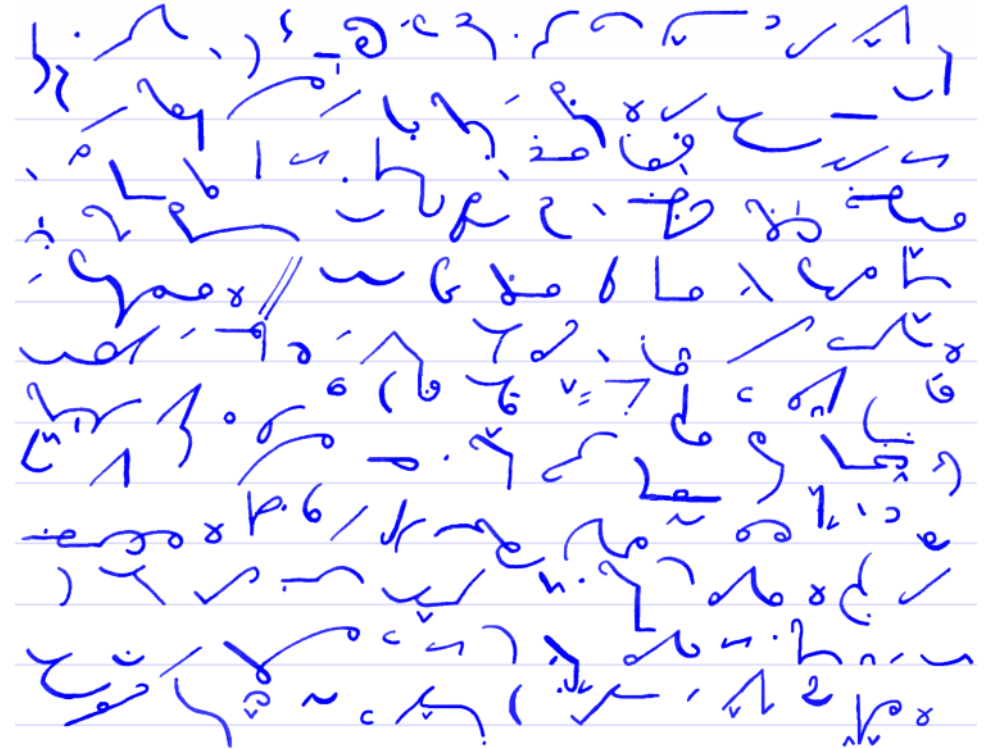
writer had taken the trouble to raid the thesaurus on a massive scale. This would be a sign of deference to a higher and more intellectual authority, the office boss who has the power to accept or reject the application. Whether the applicants intended to keep up this level of effort once in employment is another question*.

* "knowledgeable" Always insert the triphone in "enjoyable" to differentiate. If necessary, insert the first vowel in "knowledgeable", even though contractions do not take vowels

* "longest" Alternative outline that omits the hard G sound

* "same thing" Do not phrase these, as that would look like "something"

* "question" Optional contraction



Obedient Servant

It was a relief to see that the good versions offered were a little more like what we write today, although our present-day letters are even briefer and sparer. We no longer give in to, as the book puts it, "the temptation to wax facetious" and we "omit from the subject-matter any suggestion whatever of exaggeration, presumption*, aggressiveness and overzealousness". Anything other than the basics just takes up everyone's time unnecessarily, and extra words and repetitions only serve to confuse rather than clarify. Promotional urgency is still with us, though, in those eye-catching advertisements with huge thick fonts, giant red letters against a bright yellow zigzag splash background and three exclamation marks. At least* those are generally* impersonal leaflets and not someone's idea of what to send us in

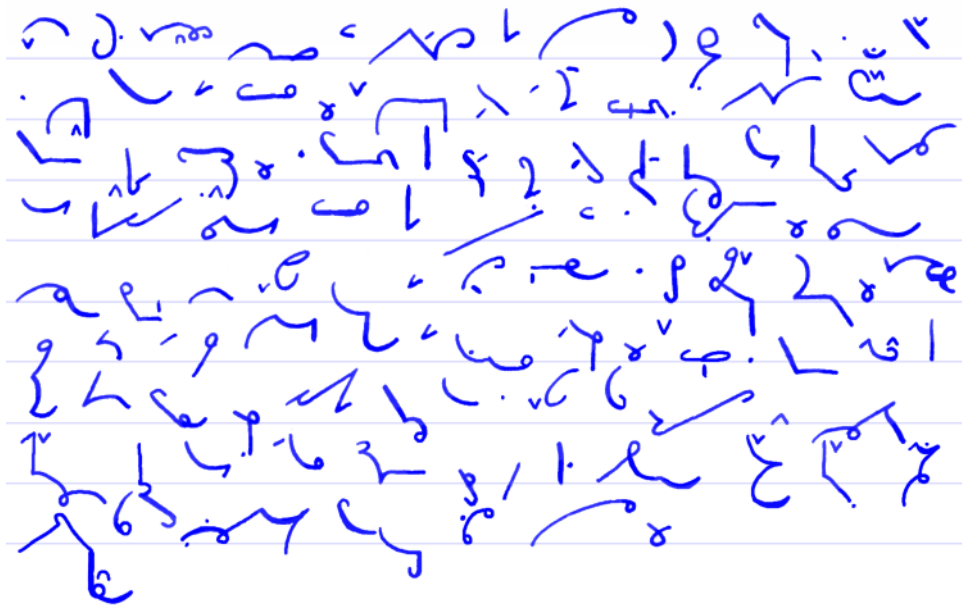
reply* to our own calm enquiry about a product or service. Thankfully we no longer end our business letters with "your obedient servant", a term you should now reserve for your mind and hand when requiring them to recall and write the shorthand outlines.

* "presumption" Uses the M stroke, omitting the lightly sounded second P

* "generally" The basic outline includes the "-ly" version, but here a distinction needs to be made, so add the L stroke

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

* Omission phrase "in (re)ply"



Obedient Servant

My session of amusement* mixed with repulsion at the letters was swiftly brought to an end by a loud bang on the glass. I looked up and saw the culprit rapidly flying back out of the greenhouse. A blackbird had blundered through the open double doors, over the top of the parasol in the doorway, hitting the glass at the rear with a thwack. Something must have spooked him whilst feeding on the lawn, causing a sudden high-speed escape. I am glad to say that* he was not hurt and he landed on the fence opposite. I closed the book and found it much more* pleasant to sit and watch the birds for a while, than to wonder how miserable and tiresome it would have been* for the office worker to spend each day receiving, filing, typing and endlessly*

reproducing those embarrassingly overconfident sales letters. (817 words)

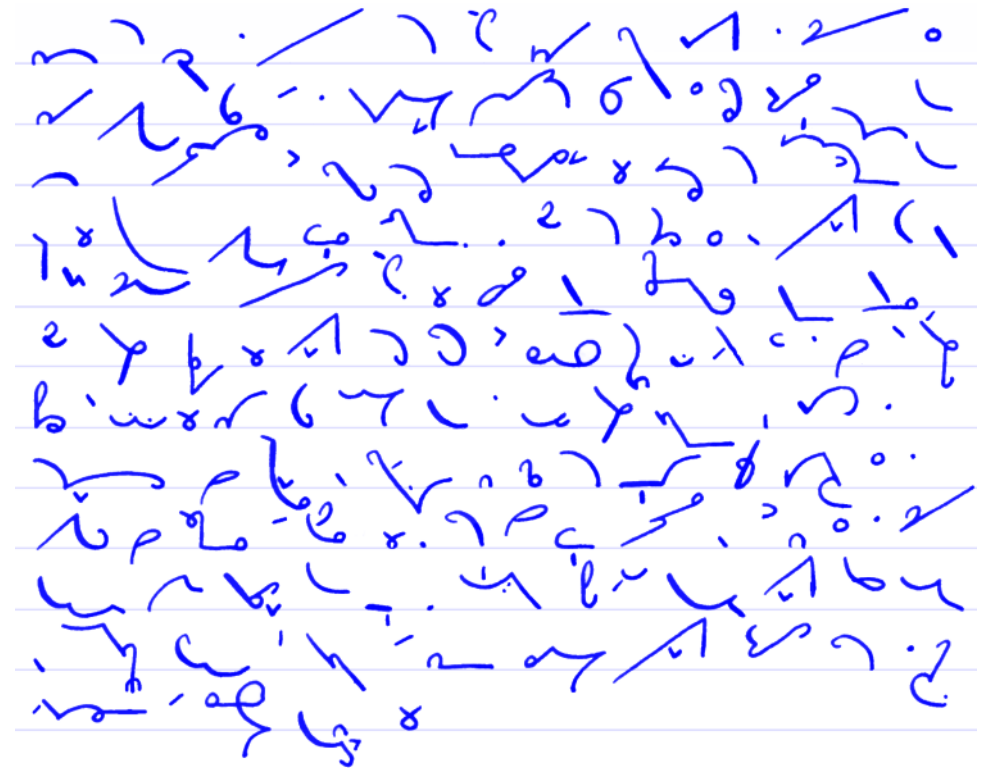
* "amusement, amazement" Always insert the second vowel in these and their derivatives

* Omission phrase "I am glad (to) s(ay) that" "much m(ore)"

* Omission Phrase "it would (have) been" This is quicker and clearer than writing "have" with N Hook for "been" because of the sharper angle

* "endlessly" Note that "needless" and "needlessly" have full strokes N and D, in order to differentiate

If you are working from the New Era Instructor book, you will come across several archaic terms and phrases once used in business letters a century ago, such as "esteemed favour" "beg to remain" "we are obliged for your letter" "in reply to yours of 11th inst" and more are listed in the "Business Phrases" chapter. This has all been carried forward from earlier versions of the Instructor, which was first written in the 19th century. It is a waste of your time and effort to learn this obsolete terminology or the shorthand phrases for them and you should cherry pick the few that are still useful.



Writing Quotes

You may or may not be a writer or author, but you are probably already a shorthand writer* as you are reading this, and a perennial learner as well, as there is always room for improvement regardless of the number of* years of experience. Here is your homework for today. After reading the quotes and practising the shorthand, your assignment* is to rewrite them to be about shorthand writing* rather than authoring. Stories become transcriptions*, book becomes shorthand passage, etc. Write your own version of the sentences so that you end up with a list of positive statements of intent. You will then not only have a new passage to practise but also a reminder list of advice to propel you towards your goal, just as helpful as a revision list of strokes and short forms. The very last quote refers to what you as a shorthand writer* have now left behind for good, the unhappy state of not being able to write fast enough to capture* everything

on paper, and you can certainly rewrite that one from a cheerfully* optimistic* and successful viewpoint.

* Omission phrases "short(hand) writer" "short(hand) writing"

* "number of" Always insert the vowel in "brief" as it looks the same and the meaning is similar

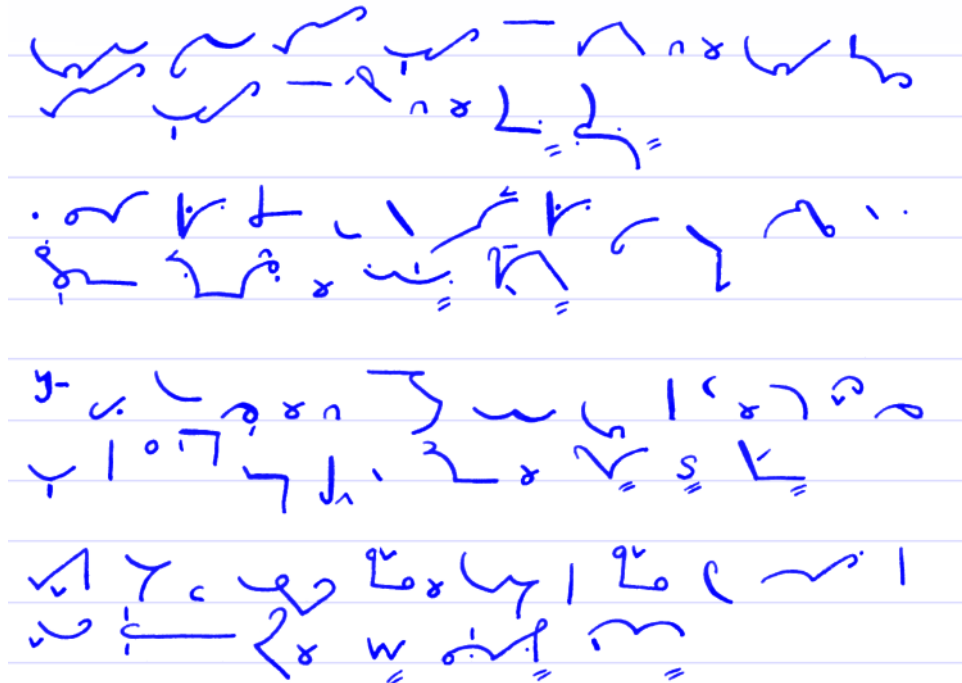
* "assignment" Contraction that omits the N sound

* "transcriptions" Omits the second R, to distinguish it from "description"

* "capture" Note that doubling is used for the word "captor"

* "cheerfully" Insert the final vowel as "cheerful optimistic" would also make sense

* "optimistic" Omits the second T sound

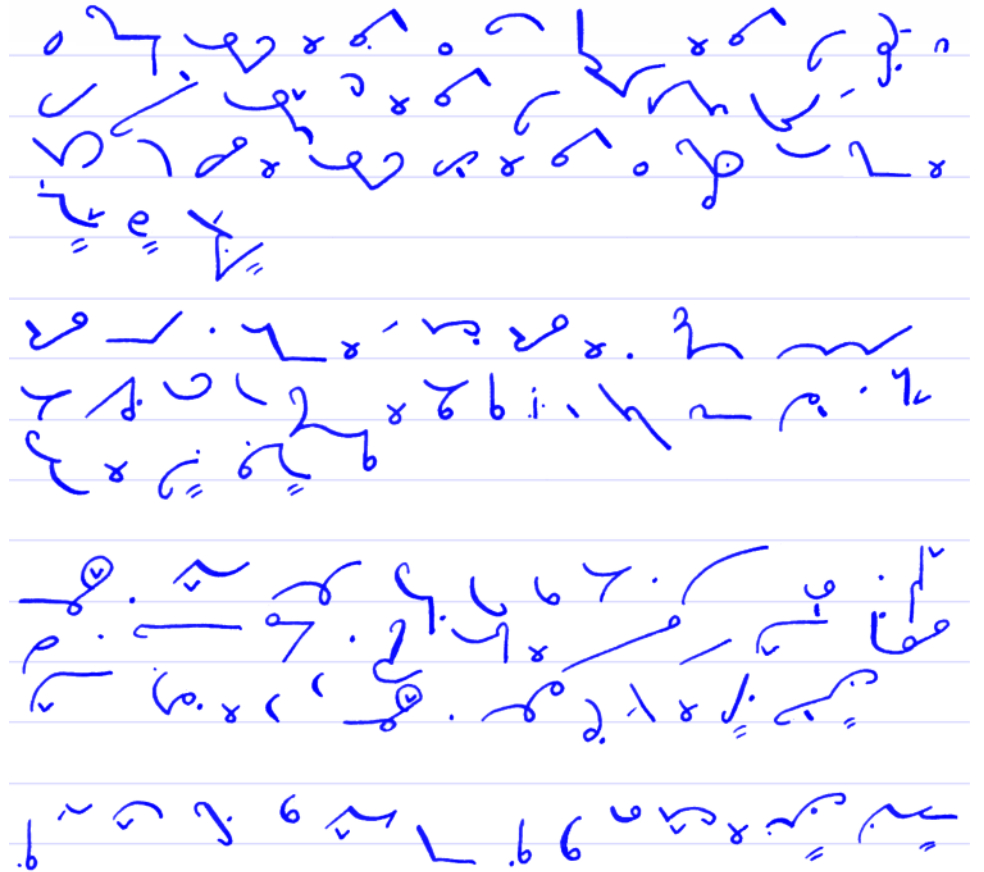


Writing Quotes

If you are not* willing to learn, no one can help you. If you are determined to learn, no one can stop you. Zig Ziglar

A small daily task, if it be really daily, will beat the labours of a spasmodic Hercules. Anthony Trollope

I don't wait for moods. You accomplish nothing if you do that. Your mind must know it has got to get down to work. Pearl S Buck



Writing Quotes

First forget* inspiration. Habit* is more dependable. Habit will sustain you whether you're inspired or not. Habit will help you finish and polish your stories. Inspiration won't. Habit is persistence in practice. Octavia E Butler

Always carry a notebook*. And I mean always. The short-term memory only retains information for three minutes; unless it is committed to paper you can lose an idea forever*. Will Self

Exercise the writing muscle every day, even if it is only a letter, notes, a title list, a character sketch, a journal entry. Writers

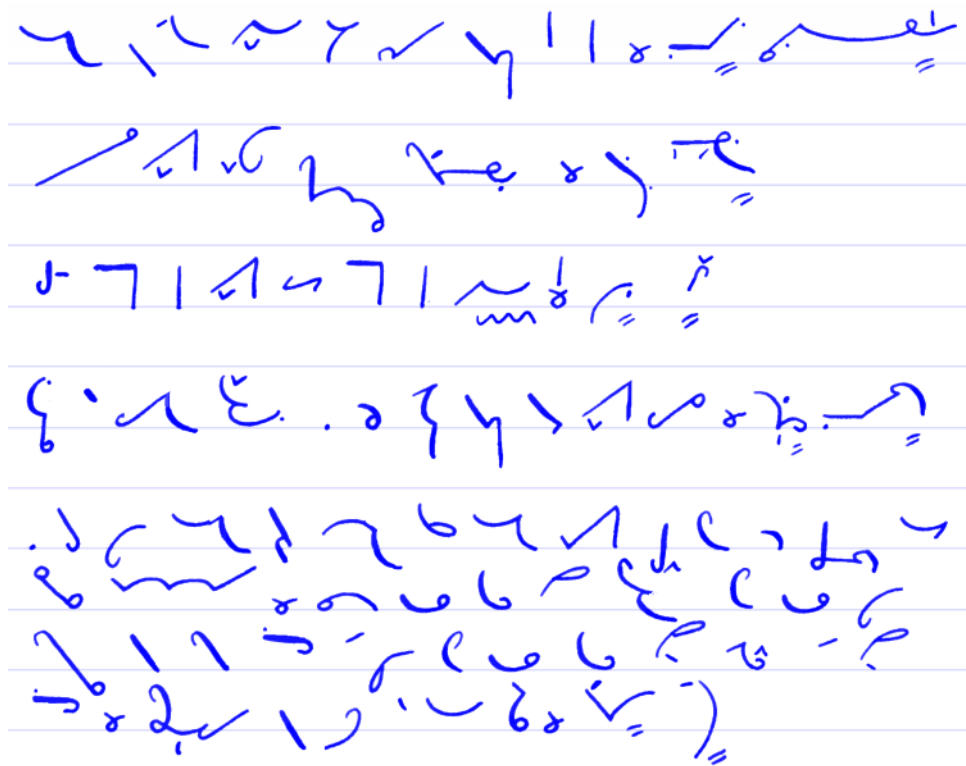
are like dancers, like athletes. Without that exercise, the muscles seize up. Jane Yolen

It's not my brain that's writing the book, it's these hands of mine. Madeleine L'Engle

* "forget" Full strokes, not halved, so it does not look like "forgive" or "forgo"

* "Habit" Always insert the first vowel in this and "hobby" as they are similar in outline and meaning

* "forever" Not using the short form, therefore the F has an R Hook



Writing Quotes

Never put off writing until you are better at it. Gary Henderson

Writers write while dreamers procrastinate*. Besa Kosova

Don't get it right - get it WRITTEN! Lee Child*

That's all we have, finally, the words, and they had better be the right ones. Raymond Carver

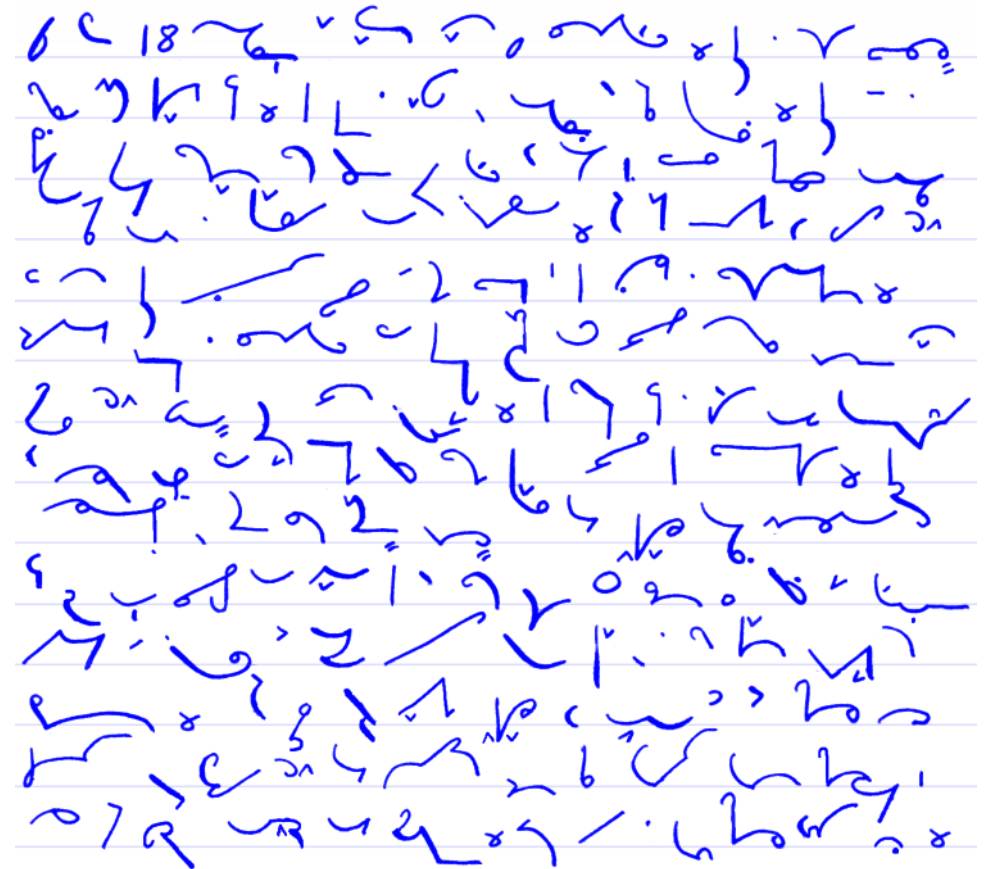
The pen will never be able to move fast enough to write down every word

discovered in the space of memory. Some things have been lost forever*, other things will perhaps be remembered again, and still other things have been lost and found and lost again. There is no way to be sure of any of this. Paul Auster (679 words)

* "procrastinate" Omits the first T

* "Child" Short forms are not used for names, except for Child, Gold and Short which must be vocalised

* "forever" Not using the short form, therefore the F has an R Hook



Smartphones

Just over 18 months ago, I acquired my first smartphone*. It was an early Christmas present and I was delighted with it. It took a while to investigate* all of its features. It was quite a startling change from my very basic cheap phone that only did calls and texts, nothing else, and which is now a dinosaur in comparison. Although I had carried the old one around with me, it was rarely* used and so the credit on it lasted a very long time. I wanted to get a smartphone in order to* take advantage of travel information and use the maps, to make my journeys around London easier and more convenient. It brought with it a whole new vocabulary that must be* understood in order to* get the best from the device and use it correctly. It would have been* most interesting* to ask Sir Isaac Pitman for the outlines for these and

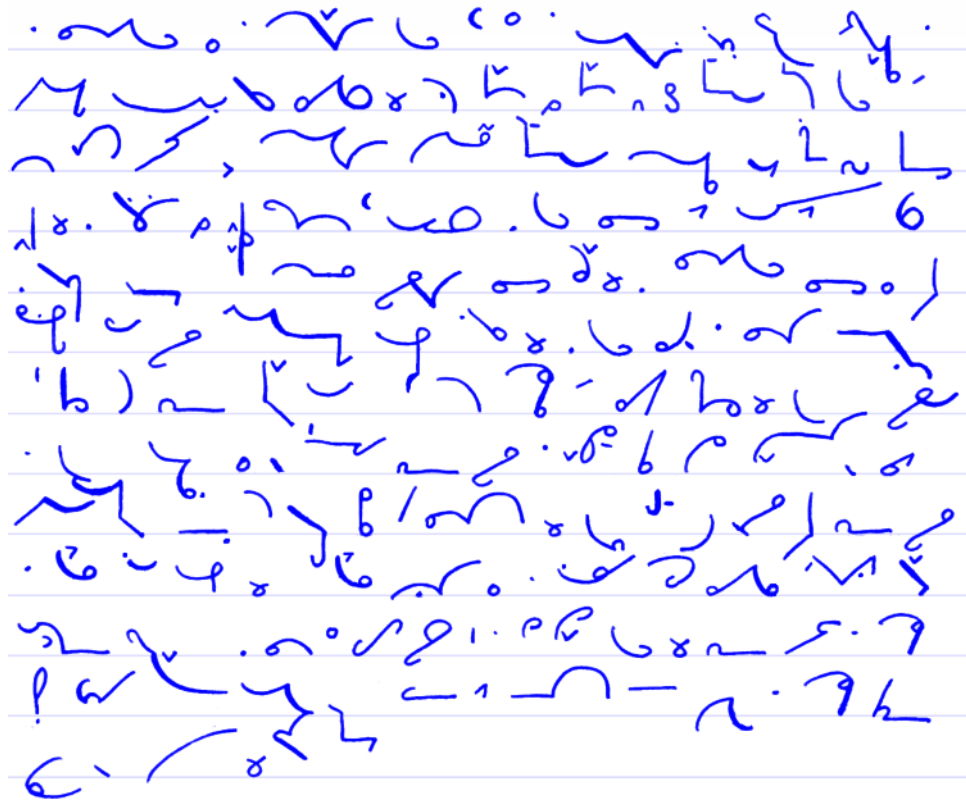
I am certain that he would have no hesitation in writing it all very easily, as his system is based on the phonetic range and combinations of the English language, rather than being tied to a particular time period or subject matter. Although he would be able to write the outlines without knowing what all the terms mean, it is likely to be the other way around for the learner, to whom it is thoroughly familiar terminology but most of which will not be encountered in the shorthand book. Here are a few terms that you will meet.

* "smartphone" It is the halved Ray that is in position, so it does not matter where the F stroke ends up

* "investigate" Omits the first T

* "rarely" Insert the vowel, so it does not look like "really"

* Omission phrases "in ord(er to)" "mus(t) be" "it would (have) been" "mos(t) interesting"



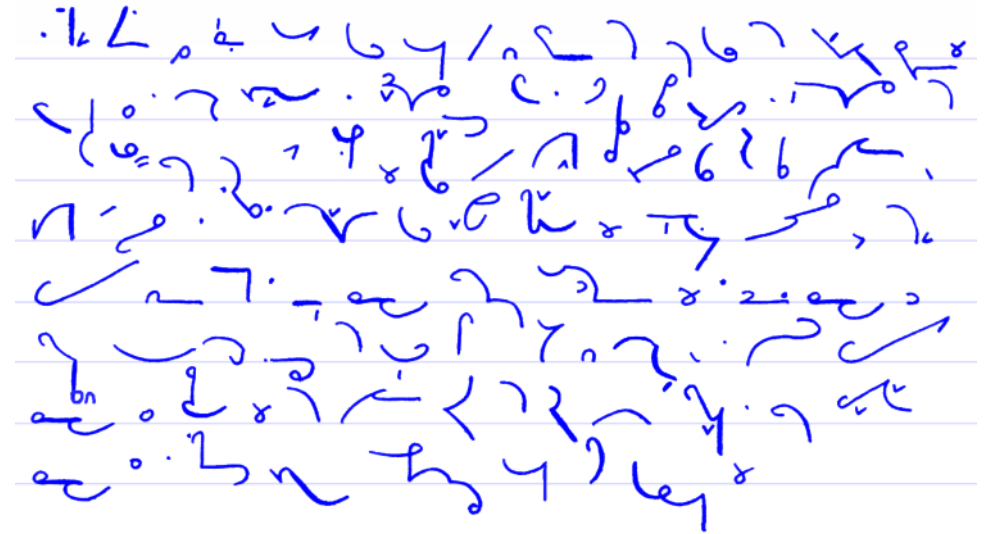
Smartphones

A smartphone is a mobile phone that has an inbuilt computing platform and provides a range of internet-based services. Air time is the time you spend talking on your phone and may also refer to the allowance of talking minutes under the contract you have taken out. A bezel is the outside frame that encloses the phone screen, and the narrower this is the better, to give the maximum usable screen size. The smartphone screen is touch sensitive, in order to* use and navigate the installed apps. The phone shows a small keyboard on demand, so you can type in your messages and search terms. If using a fingertip for these* is too awkward, you

can use a stylus which is less likely to hit the wrong key or button, as it is much smaller. If you don't wish to use touch, you can use a voice command instead. Voicemail is an answer machine service operated by the network provider, the same as one uses on a landline phone. You can record a message stating that you are unavailable to take the call, and the caller can leave a message, which you can listen to later.

* Omission phrase "in ord(er to)"

* "for these" Insert the vowel, as "for this" could also make sense



Smartphones

An audio jack is the socket in the phone into which you plug your earphones or portable speaker. Bluetooth is a method of creating a wireless connection over a short distance, such as between a cordless or hands-free earpiece and the handset. Drivers are allowed to use this, although it is illegal to hold and use a mobile phone whilst driving. Coverage* refers to the area where you can get a good signal from your network. A weak signal would produce intermittent connections or none at all, until you move to a location where the

signal is stronger*. Your local shop or establishment may provide a free Wifi signal as an attraction to bring customers into their vicinity.

* "coverage" Using a left version of VR in order to join with the J stroke. "cover" on its own uses the right version.

* "stronger" Alternative outline that omits the hard G sound

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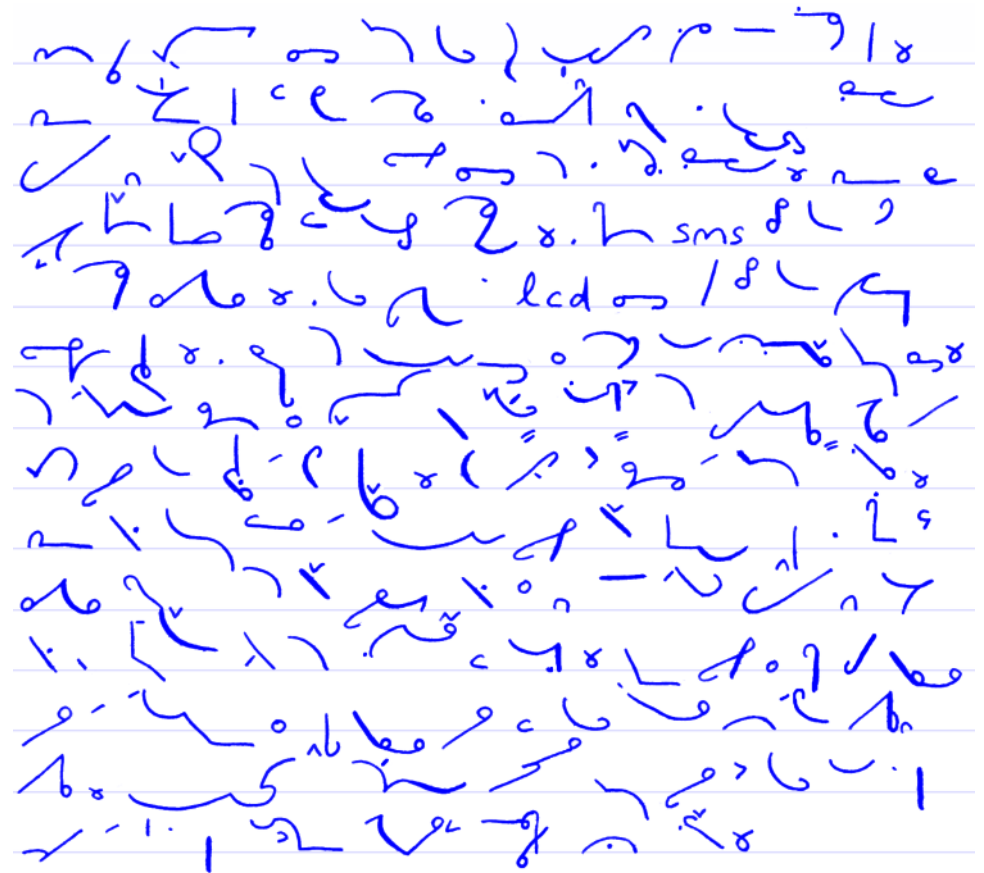


Smartphones

Battery life refers to the number of hours that the phone battery can be expected to last between charges, and battery power remaining is generally shown as a percentage. Standby time is how long your phone battery will last, starting from a full charge, when it is switched on but idle or in sleep mode, and using the phone will hasten the reduction of this time. You need a charger to recharge your phone. Some are in the form of a cradle or desktop unit, where you seat* the handset on the contacts and so you can continue to view the upright screen. You may have a wall charger, or one that sits just above a

household electrical outlet. On my phone I have to plug a short cable into the base of the phone and connect the other end to a USB plug which goes into an extension socket on the corner of my desk. I use the same cable to connect the phone to my computer to download photos.

* "seat" insert the vowel and clearly thick, as "sit" would also make sense. "Seat" here has the meaning of settling the item firmly into its allotted slot on a base, rather than just putting it down. "seat, set and sit" should always have their vowel inserted, as the meanings are so close.



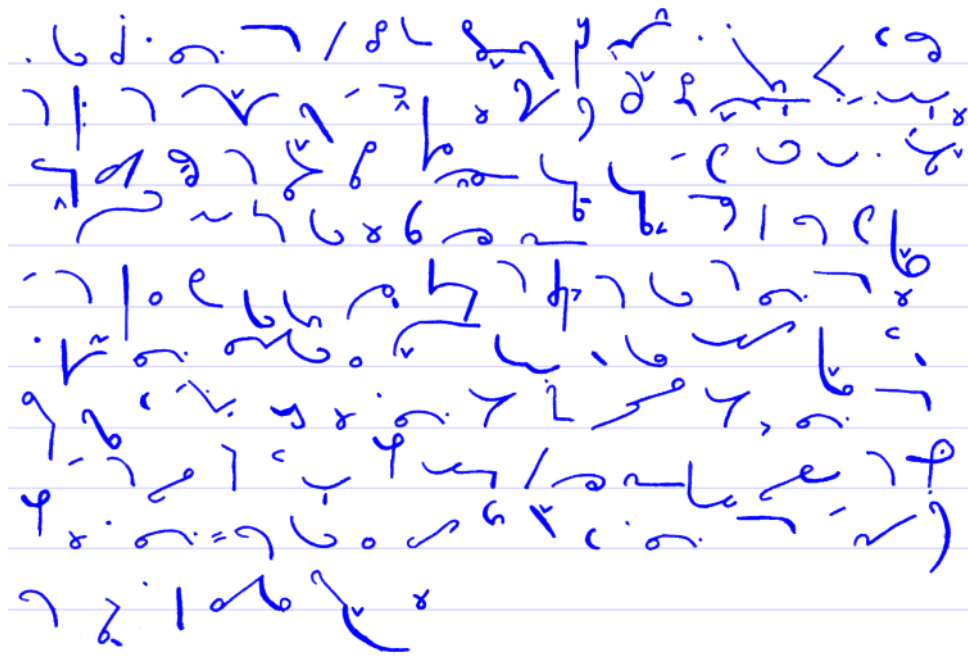
Smartphones

You may choose to lock the screen of your phone so that no-one else can access it. You can unlock it with several methods, a security number, a fingerprint scanner where you swipe your finger across the screen, or an iris scanner. You can send real time text messages, called instant messaging. The term SMS stands for Short Message Service. The phone will have an LCD screen, which stands for liquid crystal display. The speed of your internet connection is measured in megabytes* per second. Your operating system is likely to be iPhone, Android or Windows, and these are also used for tablets* and other devices. They run all the systems and all your apps. You can pay for your calls and internet usage by taking out a contract with the

service provider or by using the pay as you go option, where you only pay to top up your allowance when needed. Peak usage is during general business hours and off-peak is out of business hours, when phone companies may offer reduced rates. International roaming refers to your use of the phone in a different country and on a different network, and various extra charges may apply.

* "megabytes" Always insert the diphthong, to distinguish it from "megabits". A byte is 8 bits.

* "tablets" Always insert the second vowel, to help distinguish it from "tables" or "tableaux"

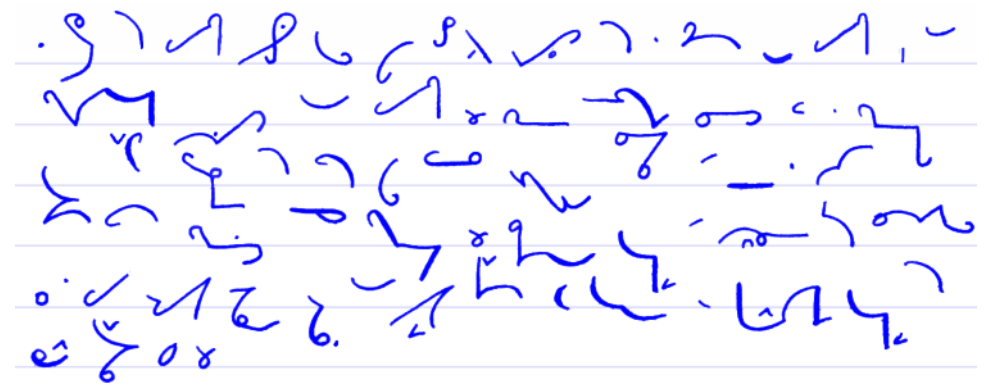


Smartphones

The phone contains a SIM card, which stands for Subscriber Identity Module, a computer chip that stores your data, your mobile number and account details. There are three sizes: standard, micro and nano. Cloud storage stores your files, such as music, photos, videos* and other information, in an online location, and not on your phone. This means you can access it from other devices and your data is safe even if you lose, damage or destroy your phone or SIM card. A dual-SIM smartphone

is like having two phones in one device, with two separate numbers that operate independently. A SIM only contract refers only to the SIM card and your use of it, with no handset included, which means you can continue using your existing handset. A SIM-free phone is one that you buy without a SIM card and you are therefore free to choose a different service provider.

* "photos, videos" Insert the last vowel and diphone, as they are similar in outline and meaning



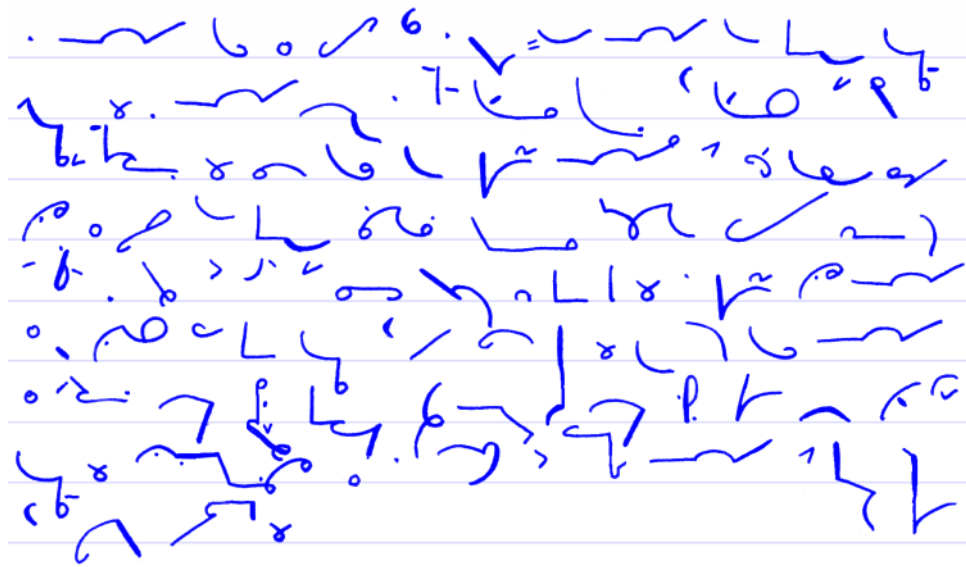
Smartphones

A splash or water resistant phone will stand up to rain or a short time* under water, but not prolonged immersion in water. You can cover the screen with a protective film, either plastic or very thin glass, to prevent scratches and give a little more protection against breakage. Streaming video and music on your smartphone is a way to watch and listen to* these in real time,

without having to download the video or sound files first.

* Omission phrase "short (t)ime"

* "to these" Always vocalise "those" and "these" when they are out of position in a phrase



Smartphones

A camera phone is one that has a built-in camera for taking photos and videos*. The camera may have an auto-focus* feature that focuses* on the subject automatically. Some phones have dual cameras, and the front facing secondary lens is used for taking selfies, pictures of yourself where you can see and adjust the position of the shot on the screen before you take it. A dual lens camera has two lenses* in order to* take photos that are more detailed. If your phone camera has optical image stabilisation technology, this will keep the image steady, which will improve low-light photos. Megapixels is a measure of the

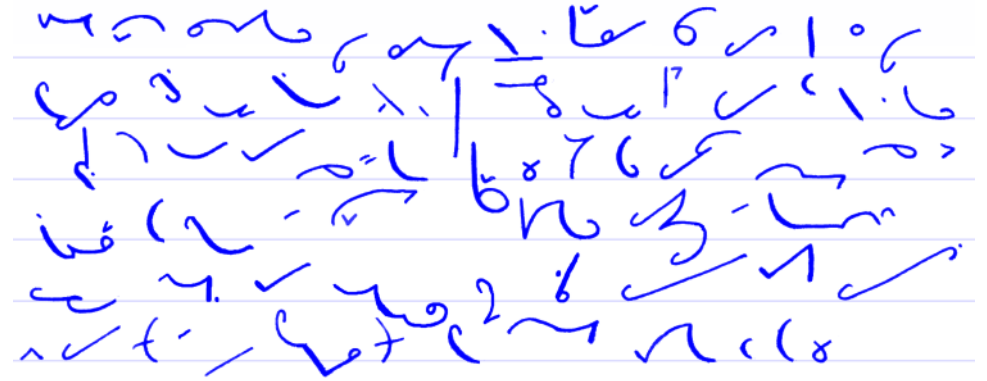
quality of the camera and the depth of detail that will be recorded.

* "photos ... videos" Insert the last vowel and diphone, as they are similar in outline and meaning

* "focus, fix" Always insert the first vowel, as they are similar in outline and meaning

* "lenses" Change to stroke N for the plural, as the Ses circle cannot be written inside an N Hook

* Omission phrase "in ord(er to)"

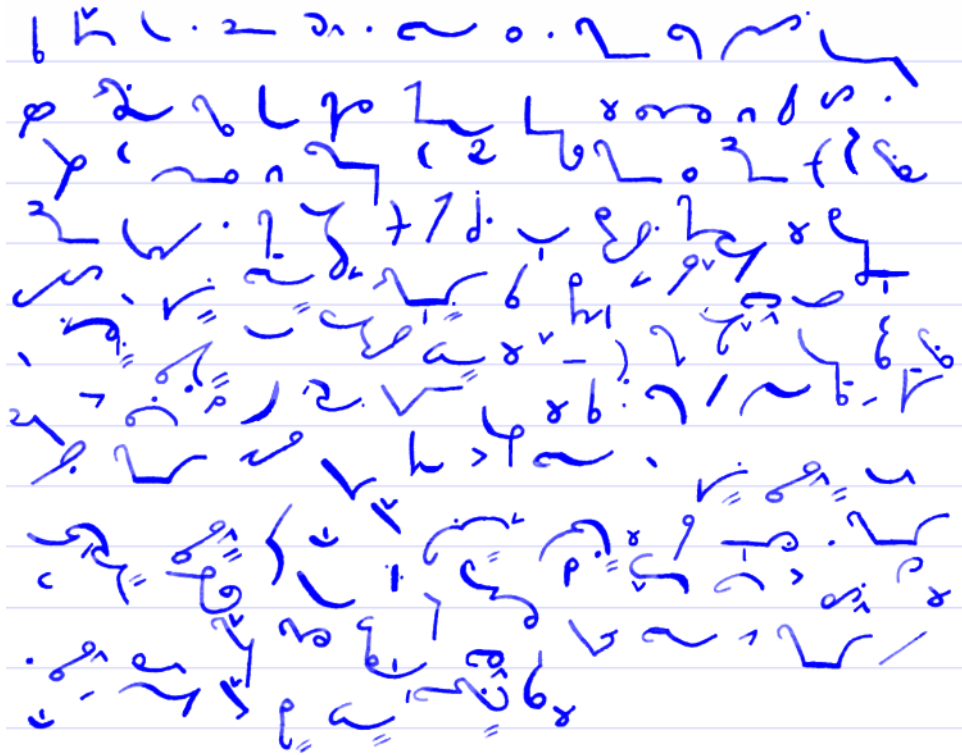


Smartphones

I know that my smartphone will certainly become a dinosaur as well one day, as will everyone's brand new bang up-to-date expensive new toy, whether that be a phone, tablet or any of our must-have devices. Until then we will make the most of the convenience they bring, and, like the television, washing machine* and vacuum

cleaner, and indeed all our inventions through the ages, we are already wondering how we (and our forebears) ever managed to live without them. (1364 words)

* Omission phrase "wash(ing) machine"



Hill Garden And Pergola

It is time for a walk around a garden, as a break from learning vocab lists and phrasing principles, doing drills and taking dictations. Sometimes you just want a passage that makes you forget that shorthand practice is work (although pleasant* work, if you are a true* enthusiast) and which contains no specialist* terminology. Several days ago we went to Hill Garden and Pergola which is situated on the high ground next to Hampstead* Heath in north west London. I could see from the online photos that this place would not be quite the same as the usual ordinary park visit. It is a very large, long and tall raised pergola, and was built at the end of the garden of Hill House, now Inverforth House, which was owned by William Lever. He commissioned* the pergola, with extensions being added to it over the years as he acquired more of the surrounding land. The house is now private

apartments with its own grounds, but this part of the garden and the pergola are owned and managed by the City of London Corporation.

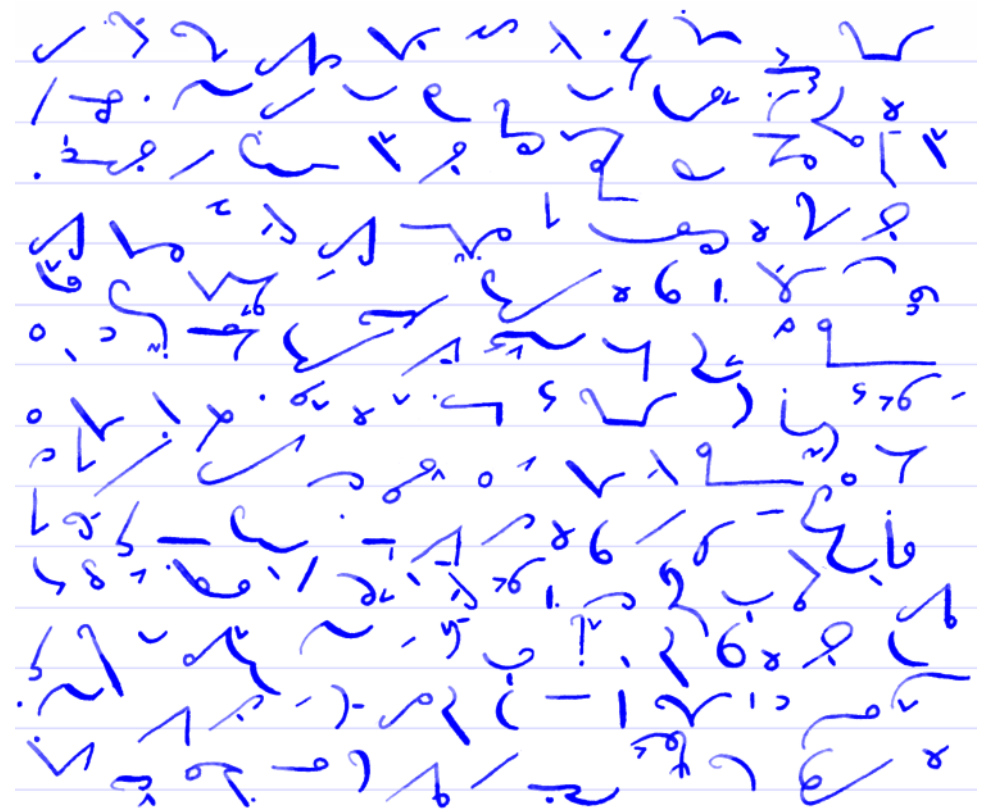
* "pleasant" and "pleasing" Helpful to insert the first vowel, as these are similar

* "true" and "utter" Insert the first vowel, as they could be read for each other

* "specialist" "specialised" Always insert the last vowel/diphthong, to differentiate them

* "Hampstead" Using the Imp stroke, as the outlines for names do not omit a lightly sounded P as other normal words do

* "commissioned" Several outlines do not use the Con Dot, see main theory website for full list



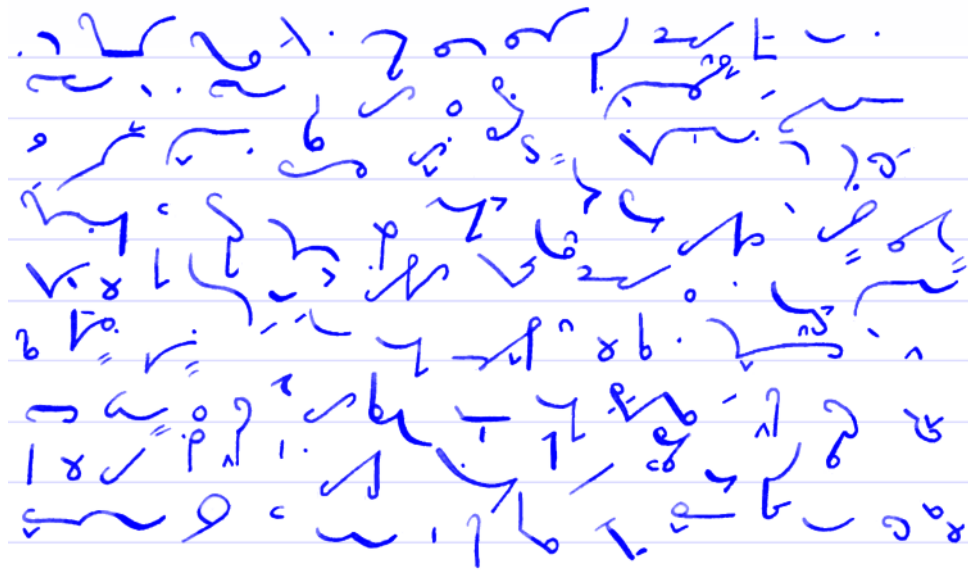
Hill Garden And Pergola

We approached from the woodland below, and went up a gentle ramp to the beginning of the* pergola, which extends a long way in several directions, in various L shapes. The walkways are flanked by rows of majestic stone columns, topped by wooden beams, and with open wooden cupolas at the intersections. There are roses, vines, flowering perennials and greenery everywhere. This did puzzle me somewhat as to what exactly they were rooted and growing into, seeing as the structure is built up to such a height. I concluded that the pergola was continuous with the soil and land at the rear, where the main house is, and the built-up structure is only at the front, which would give everything a good root run. These are

still quite challenging conditions for the plants, and the absence of large areas of open soil did mean that there were* no patches of weeds, which would probably not survive long, and I saw none trying to establish themselves. Roses have a long root run and so once established they can do very well* on what looks like parched ground, simply because their roots are gaining moisture from elsewhere.

* "to the beginning of the" Keep the elements of this phrase close together, so the stroke does not look like an outline on the line below

* Omission phrases "that there (w)ere" "very (w)ell"



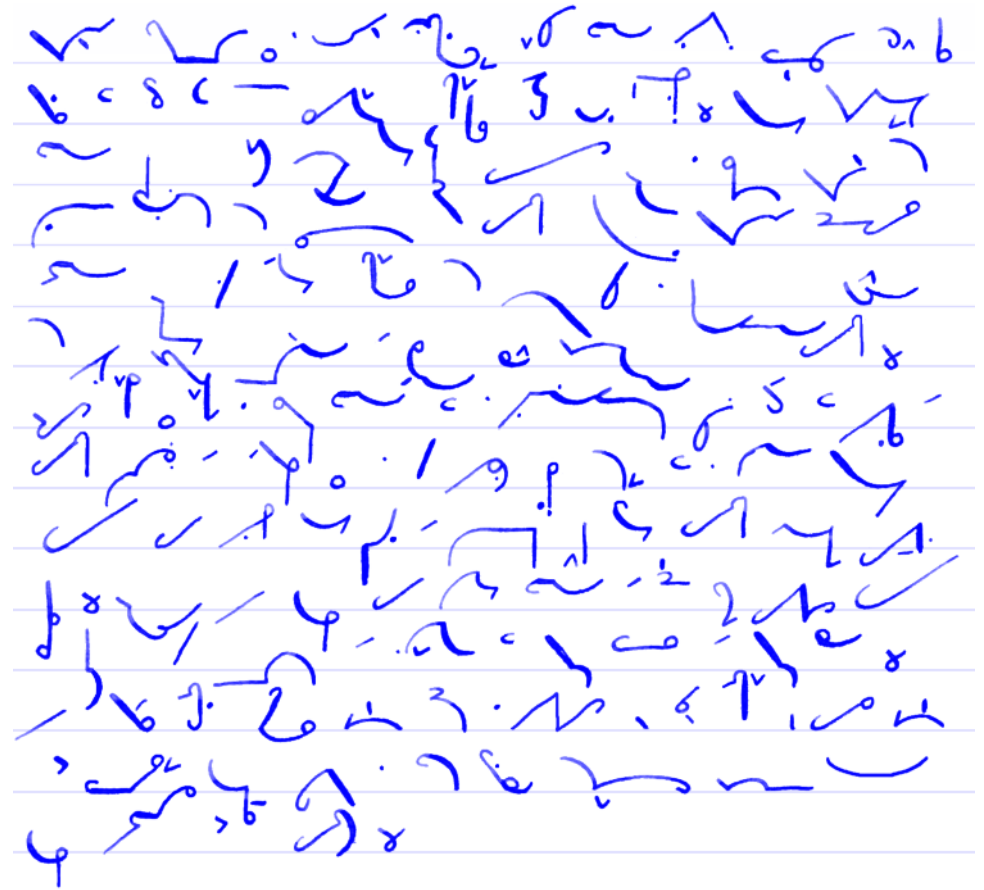
Hill Garden And Pergola

The word pergola brings up an image of some small shady walkway tucked in a corner of a garden, but this one is spacious, luxurious and unique, and is really like an enormous winding plant-filled balcony or seafront promenade, with plenty of room to sit and enjoy the views over the woodland of West Heath below. At the far end of the western part of the walkway is a viewpoint looking towards Dollis Hill and off into the countryside beyond. It is a reminder of how

green London is throughout, and that one does not have to go into the suburbs and outer* fringes to find it. We sat on a wooden bench and had our sandwiches under the shade of the climbing roses, with nothing but treetops and blue sky in front of us.

* "outer" Helpful to insert the diphthong, as it is similar to "utter", likewise "outermost/uttermost"

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Hill Garden And Pergola

Below the pergola is a narrow Mediterranean style garden wrapping closely around its base, with plants that can survive the dry conditions and that do not need cossetting. Being the perennial garden tinkerer, I was imagining that it would be wonderful to have a stream, pool or lake, or some other water feature, below the walkways and garden, to take the edge off the dryness, or maybe just a tinkling fountain or rill to provide the cooling and soothing sound of moving water. To one side is a separate garden with a rectangular still pond with reeds and water lilies, and opposite is a large recessed seating* area with a long bench, where we rested in the

shade and looked out over the water and into the wooded distance. To finish our visit we left the garden and walked through the woodland where it was much cooler and alive with bird calls and bird song. Our bus and train journeys home were a return to hot and dry, but once home all the glorious photos will be a very pleasant* reminder to make another visit, regardless of the weather. (701 words)

* "pleasant" and "pleasing" Helpful to insert the first vowel, as these are similar

* "seating" "sitting" Always insert the vowel in these, in order to distinguish