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PDF Date: 9 November 2022



Christmas Cards

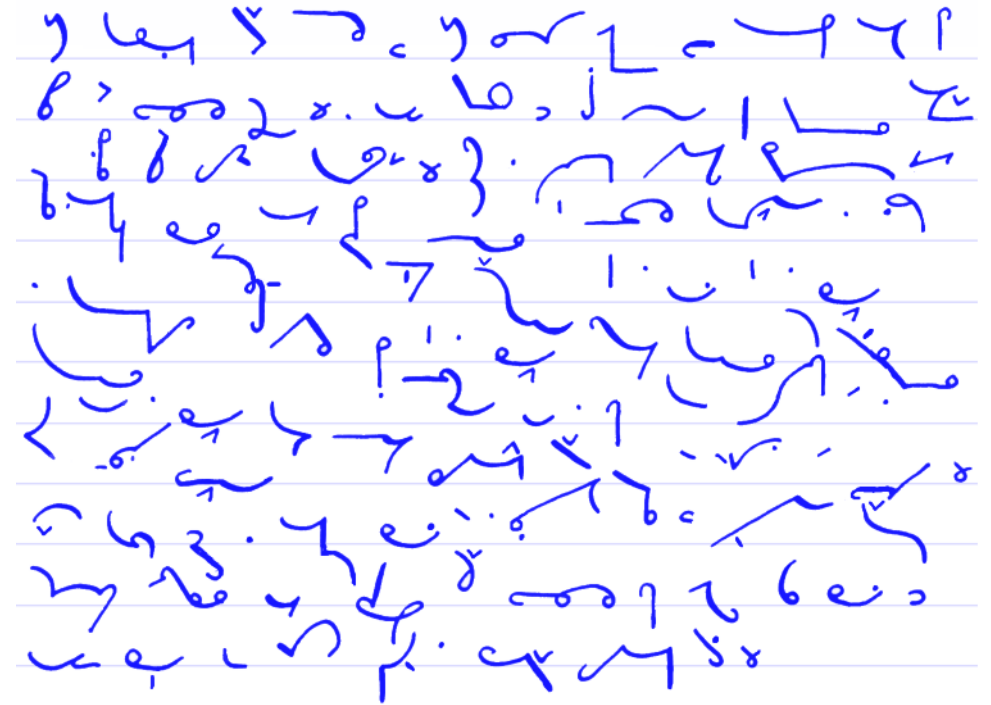
A few days ago I received my first two Christmas cards. It would once have been quite unusual to receive any cards at all at the very beginning of the month, but now it is the norm for them to arrive on or near the first of December. I am sorry to say that* in some charity shops they have been on sale since the end of August, which is utterly* preposterous, and I have had my work cut out trying to avoid eye-contact with them, especially whilst melting in the heat-wave that we had at that time! By the first of December I had all my postal cards ready and sent them on their way on the second. Of course, if everyone decided to

"beat the Christmas rush", the rush would just occur at a different time, or perhaps it would spread* it out further.

* Omission phrase "I am sorry (to) s(ay) that

* "utterly" and "truly" Insert the vowel to differentiate, as they are similar in outline and meaning

* "spread" and "separate" Insert the vowel to differentiate, as they are similar in outline and meaning



Christmas Cards

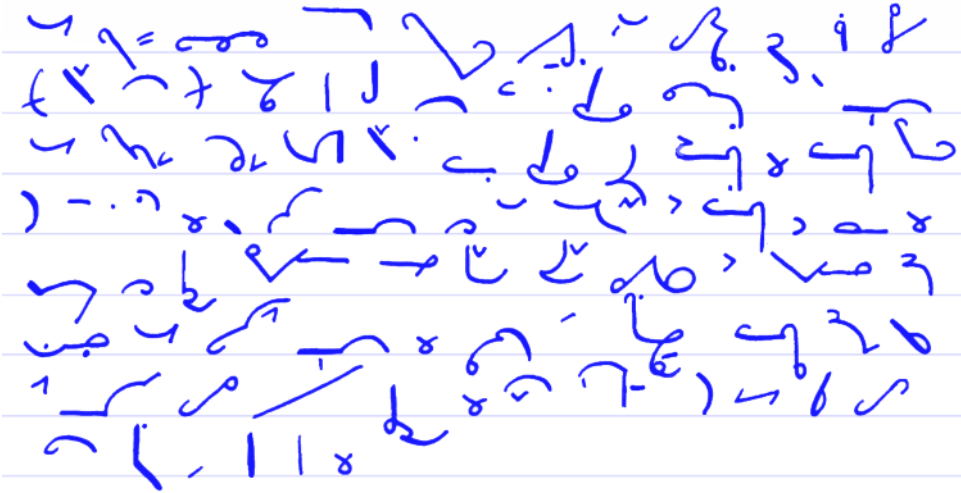
I was fascinated by the cards when I was small, and took great interest in them at all stages of the Christmas season. The new boxes would contain many different pictures, unlike today's sets of just one or two variations. There was a limited range of subject matter: Nativity scenes in the stable, kings on camels following a star, a Victorian horse-drawn coach arriving at an inn on a snowy afternoon, robins sitting on a snowy branch, fence or postbox, sheep in a snowy field gathering under a tree for shelter, and a solitary glowing candle surrounded by bits of holly and greenery.

My favourite* would have been* the indoor scene* of a hearth with roaring fire, armchair and presents under the generously sized Christmas tree, and even this scene* would have snow* if it also showed a nearby window pane.

* "favourite" Note that "favoured" uses the left VR stroke

* Omission phrase "would (have) been"

* "scene" "snow" Inserting the vowels helps smooth reading here



Christmas Cards

In the pre-Christmas card preparation routine, not one of these would have been* considered satisfactory (by me) unless it had been improved with a generous smear of gum in the appropriate* areas followed by an equally generous shower of glitter. Glitter application was quite an art. Too little gum meant not enough of the glitter would stick. Too much* meant it would not sparkle, because the tiny shiny surfaces of the particles were encased in the yellowy* gum. Silver and translucent glitters were the best, and the coloured ones rather disappointing. My motto was "Just one more dab should do it."

- * Omission phrase "would (have) been"
- * "appropriate" Always insert the diphone, and the first vowel in "proper", as these are similar in outline and meaning
- * "too much" Inserting the M enables the phrase to be written
- * "yellowy" Insert the diphone, as "yellow" would also make sense

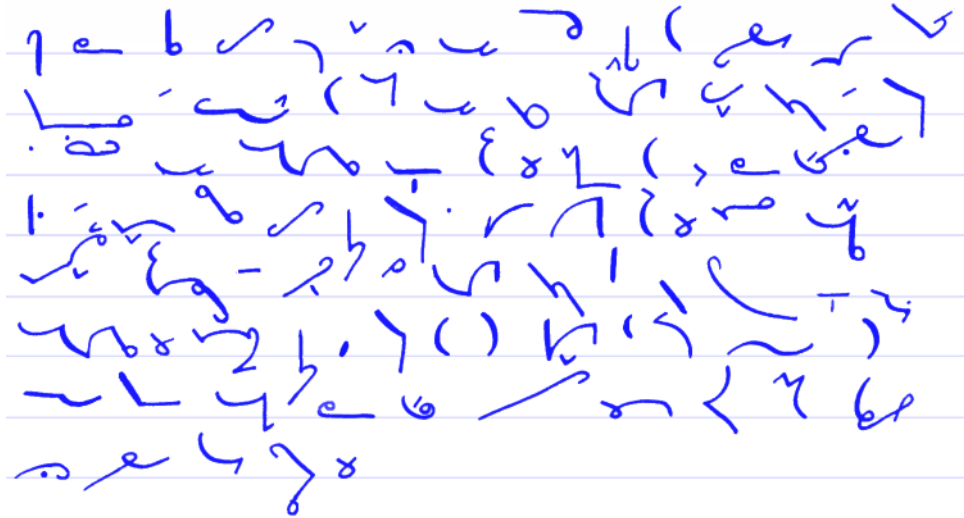


Christmas Cards

fter the Christmas holiday I collected them all together, including those that my Nan and Grandad* had, to play with and cut up. They could be made into ornaments by joining squares of pictures together into cubes, or joining pentagons into more rounded shapes. In later years, I would cut out the best bits of the pictures with

pinking shears and make them into gift tags for next year. Economy was satisfied, and the bag of tags was packed away with the decorations until next Christmas.

* "Grandad" The outline can also be written with the ND stroke for "Granddad"



Christmas Cards

During school days, one year I made new cards out of them, using the middle part of the pictures and gluing them onto new pieces of folded white paper, and bought a stack of new envelopes to go with them. I took them to the school fundraising day and, to my surprise, one teacher bought a whole load of them. Of course nowadays I realise that they must have been* quite

rough, as the folded paper had to be further cut to fit the envelopes. I am sure the teacher who bought them was delighted that her money was going back into the school funds, rather than to some shop, and I think this was the main reason for the purchase.

* Omission phrase "mus(t have) been"



Christmas Cards

The history of the Christmas card in the Victorian era is curiously connected with the circulation and advancement of the newly published* Pitman's Shorthand. The first Christmas card was commissioned by Sir Henry Cole in 1843, who worked for the Public Records Office (later to become the Post Office*) and who was looking for a way to encourage people to use the service more. The print run of his card was less than* a thousand and he sold them for a shilling each. Cole had also played a part, under Sir Rowland Hill, in the introduction

of the Uniform Penny Post in 1840, which meant that the general public were able to afford to use the postal service.

* "published" The contraction should be avoided and written in all full strokes when used as an adjective, to avoid clashing with "public"

* Omission phrase "Pos(t) Office"

* "less than" Downward L in order to form the phrase



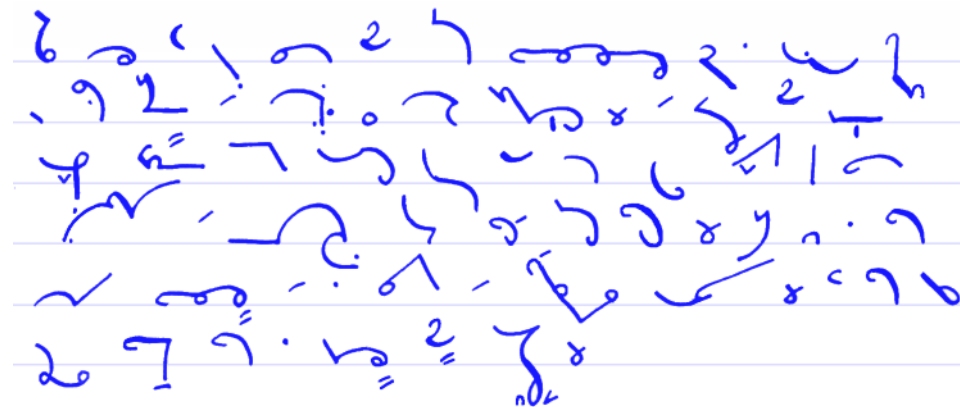
Christmas Cards

On the first day of the Penny Post, Pitman offered his Penny Plate, a single sheet eight by six and a half* inches, describing and illustrating in highly condensed form the second edition of his Phonography (previously called Stenographic Sound Hand). Along the bottom it stated, "Any person may receive lessons from the Author by post gratuitously. Each lesson must be* enclosed in a paid letter. The pupil can write about a dozen verses from the Bible, leaving spaces between the lines for the corrections." This was the world's

first correspondence course and, coupled with Pitman's tireless rounds of talks and self-advertisement, it ensured that his shorthand became widely known and taken up, ultimately becoming the world's major shorthand system.

* "half" See the main theory website, vocabulary/numbers page, for brief ways to write simple fractions in shorthand

* Omission phrase "mus(t) be"

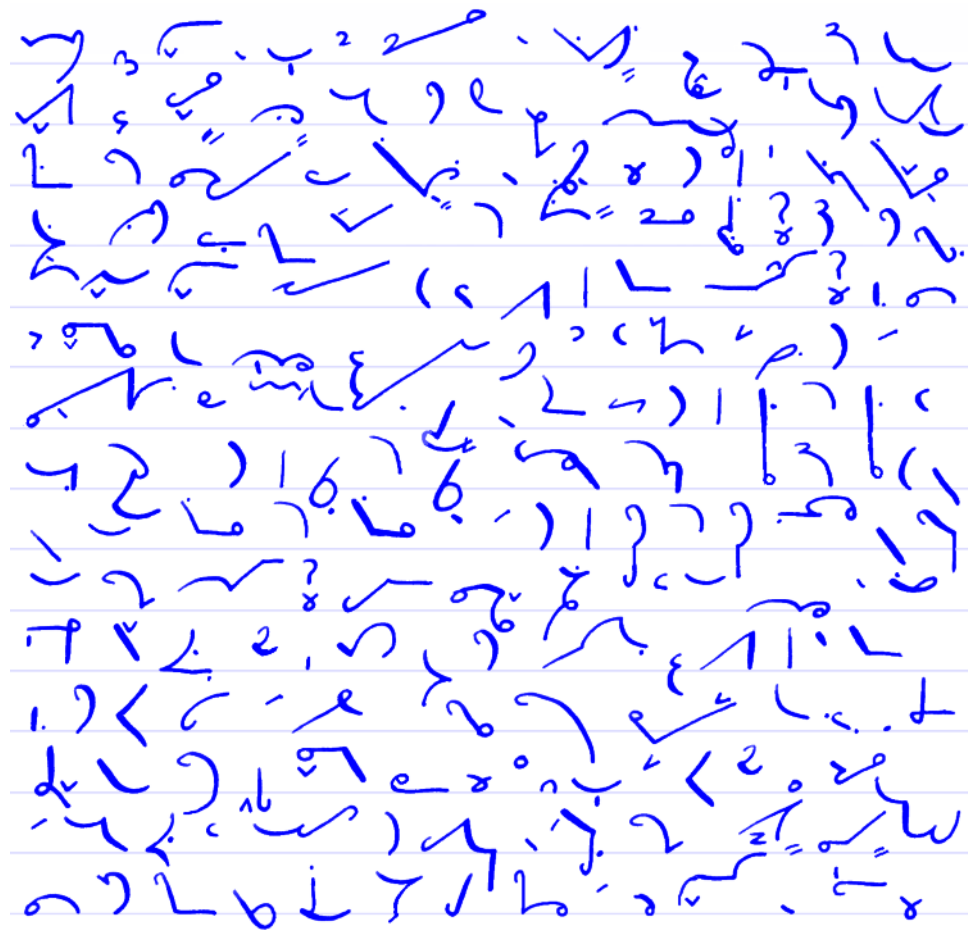


Christmas Cards

All this means that putting some shorthand on your Christmas cards would be a fitting tribute to Sir Isaac, and imitating his method of promotion*. And here is the shorthand to go inside, that you can copy in your own fair hand or even write it more elaborately and colourfully for the front of your own version. "I wish you a very Merry

Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year. With very best Season's Greetings from a Pitman's Shorthand enthusiast." (914 words)

* "promotion" "permission" Insert a vowel in each, to differentiate



Travel Arrangements

I am sure you would like to know what the shorthand writers* of Persia 2,000 years ago were having to write, when the Wise Men informed their staff to start making arrangements for their forthcoming trek from somewhere near Babylon to Jerusalem. Was it on paper, papyrus, vellum, leather, clay brick, pottery or wax tablets*? What was their brief writing like and were they able to read it back accurately? Did some of the scribes have "moments" when they were not sure what that item on the list was, and hurriedly sent off a junior to ask, was it dates or debts that needed arranging, was it cheeses or juices that must be* ordered, were they to be put in packs or bags, and was it thirteen or thirty camels to be brought in from the market? We can sympathise endlessly with any moments of angst

caused* by shaky shorthand, but also feel their relief when they read it all back, did their job well, and received praise from their superior for completing the task, despite being fresh out of scribe school. As you know, on the job shorthand is always confidential and never shared with anyone, so we have had to obtain from the Royal Secretary some of their practice pieces containing only the general terms and words likely to occur.

* Omission phrases "short(hand) writers" "that mus(t) be"

* "tablets" Advisable to insert one or both vowels, so it is not misread as "tables"

* "caused " Special outline, to distinguish from "cost"

Handwritten shorthand notes in blue ink on lined paper. The notes are dense and cover approximately 10 lines of the page. The shorthand symbols are complex and fluid, typical of Pitman's shorthand system. The text is written in a cursive style with many loops and flourishes.

Travel Arrangements

Memo to all staff. This is to let you know* that the arrangements for the three Chief Executive Officers to go on their long overland journey are now coming together and we will soon be putting into effect* Phase One of the plans. At the moment* we are assembling everything that they will need. This will* include changes of clothes for the various official* functions with dignitaries that they meet en route, so the Wardrobe Department needs to be getting the items ready and packed. Hospitality Department have now informed me that everything is ready for the trip, so that the entourage is self-supporting in food, drink and accommodation. The valuables they will be taking with them are in process of being inspected for quality and packed securely against any rough handling that might occur. The Security Department have now drawn up a list of those who will be accompanying the train, and also guarding the valuables, and those personnel are now

in stand-by mode, ready to be called in for duty at short notice. Transport Department are also ready with their plans for the conveyances, as well as the luggage, and additional forms of transport for the security detachment.

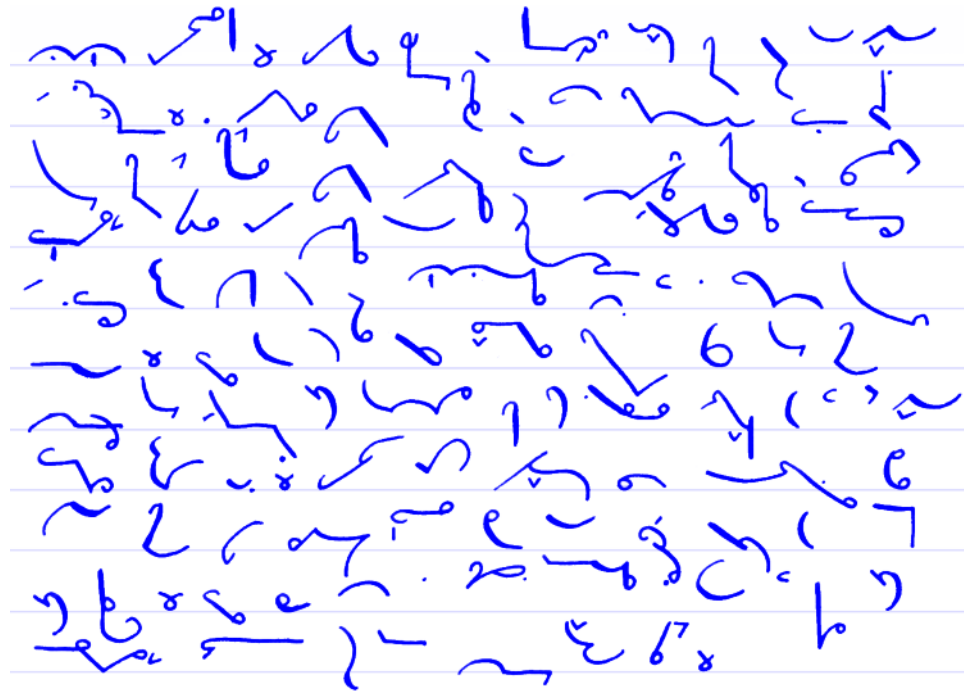
* "let you know" The "you" sign is joined on its side so that it can also join the N stroke, to make this phrase, normally it would be the right way up e.g. "will you"

* "into effect" using F/V hook for the F of "effect"

* Omission phrase "at (the) moment"

* "this will" Downward L to enable the phrase

* "official" "final" Insert the first vowel, as these are similar



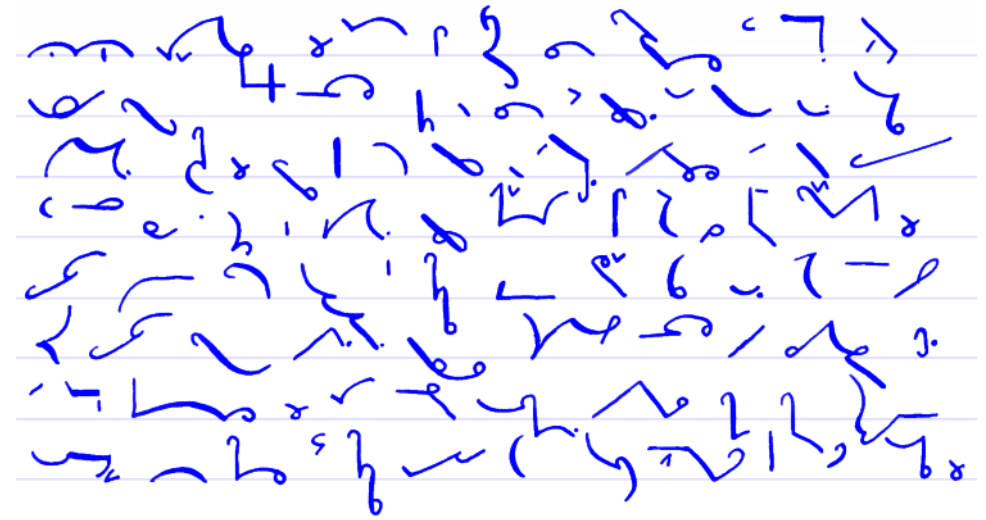
Travel Arrangements

Memo to Records Department: We have been instructed to document the entire trip, both in writing and artwork. The reports will be transferred to more permanent clay tablet after the trip, and the drawings will be reproduced in our murals and tapestries, to celebrate the glorious achievements of our leaders in their astronomical observations, calculations and conclusions, that have led up to this momentous meeting with a very important future King. Please have your best scribes prepare themselves for the journey, make arrangements for the upkeep of their families during their absence, and provide them with all the writing equipment that

they will need. We will also require some interpreters, as this long journey will certainly cross several language frontiers before they get to their destination*. Please send me a shortlist of candidates, along with details of their experience and character, so that I can make the final* choice.

* "destination" Written thus to distinguish it from "distinction" which uses a Stee Loop

* "final" Advisable to insert the diphthong, and the first vowel in "official", as these are similar



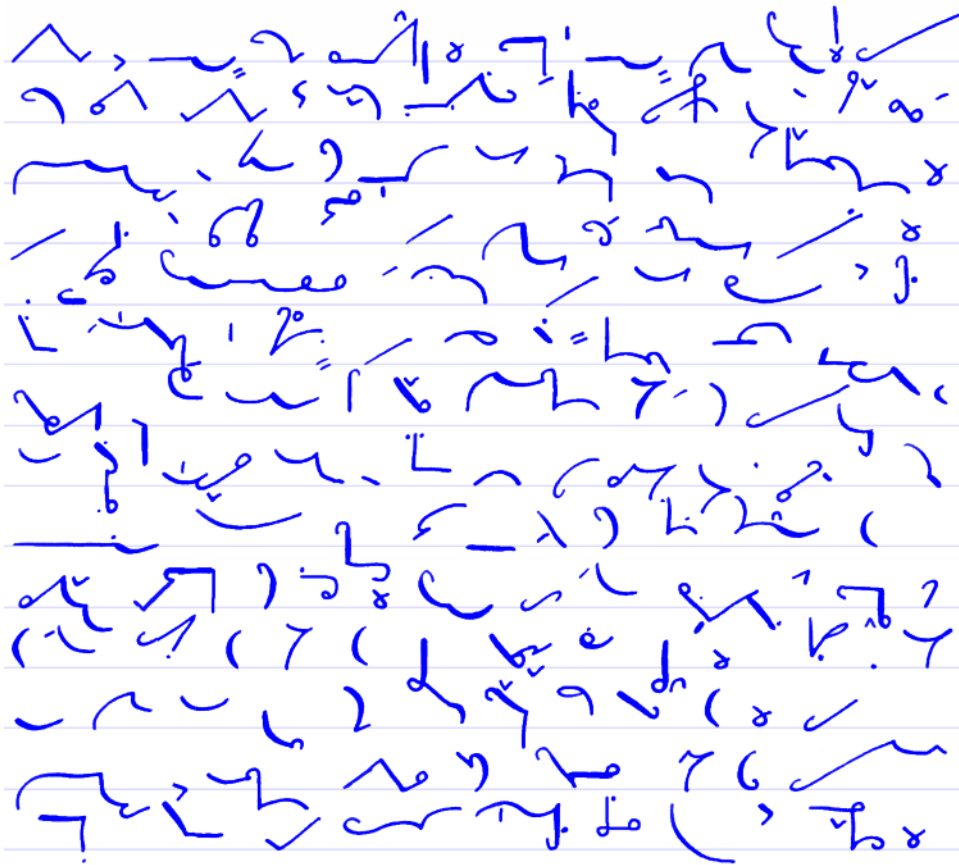
Travel Arrangements

Memo to Livestock Department. I am told that there have been* some problems with getting up the necessary number of camels due to some of the beasts not being fit for this lengthy travel. Please do your best to obtain replacements, and be aware that cost is not an issue, but healthy beasts and timely delivery of them is the top priority. We will look very favourably on traders who can supply this need, and they can rest

assured we will bring repeat business, so long as the camels are serviceable, trained and of good temperament. I will expect interim reports during the trip, so that we can negotiate improved terms with the traders to reward them for their cooperation at short notice.

* Omission phrase "that there (have) been"

Blank lined area for notes or practice.

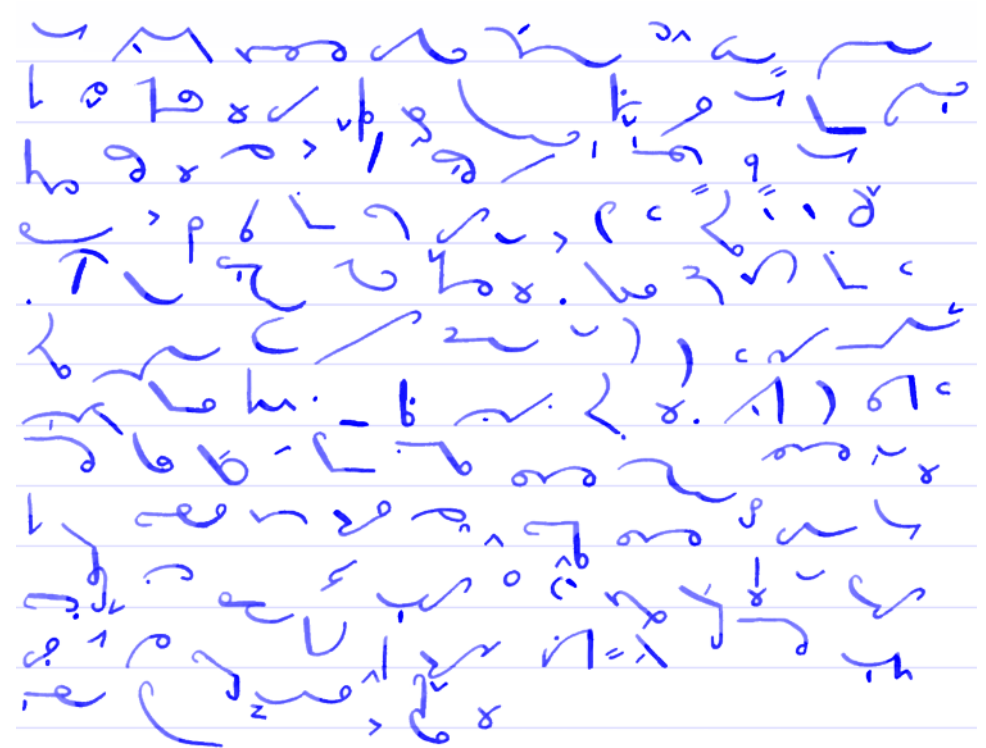


Travel Arrangements

Report to the King from the Security Department. Greetings, O King, live forever! We are very happy to report that the entire caravan departed yesterday morning, full of high spirits and looking forward* to achieving their goal in the estimated two-year timeframe. Our detachments of soldiers and guards are leading the front and protecting the rear. The gold, frankincense and myrrh are in the centre of the train, packed unobtrusively on Charlie, our most bad-tempered camel, who can only be persuaded to do anything at all by his long-term handler, and so we are confident that any bandits unwise enough to attack him will certainly feel a

hoof or two kicking in their direction, and will give up their attempt, assuming they survive to regret their actions. Everything went off superbly and the crowds cheered them off, watching them until they disappeared behind the sand dunes. At last the only thing left in view was the bright star above them. We look forward* to the interim reports of their progress, and until then we are now getting back to our normal mundane tasks after all the excitement. (881 words)

* Omission phrases "looking fo(r)ward" "look fo(r)ward"



Merry Shopping

In the run-up to Christmas, we have been roaming around London looking at the lights and decorations. We decided to spend the afternoon daylight hours in the big well-known department stores. Most of the large stores are on Oxford Street in the centre of the city, which is packed from one end to the other with shops of all sizes, the majority being clothing and fashion items. The pavements* were also packed with shoppers, milling along rather than walking, not so easy when you are carrying multiple bags at the end of a good day's "Merry Shopping". The road was solid with cars, vans, buses and black cabs, sometimes

moving and sometimes not. At the pedestrian crossings, I am always amused* how crowds sometimes stand waiting for the "green man" signal and yet no-one has thought to press the button! Not everyone waits, and the less prudent dash out between the held-up cars, no doubt causing further annoyance to the drivers.

* "pavements" Uses the -nt ending, as "-mnt" cannot join

* "amusing" "amazing" Always insert the vowel



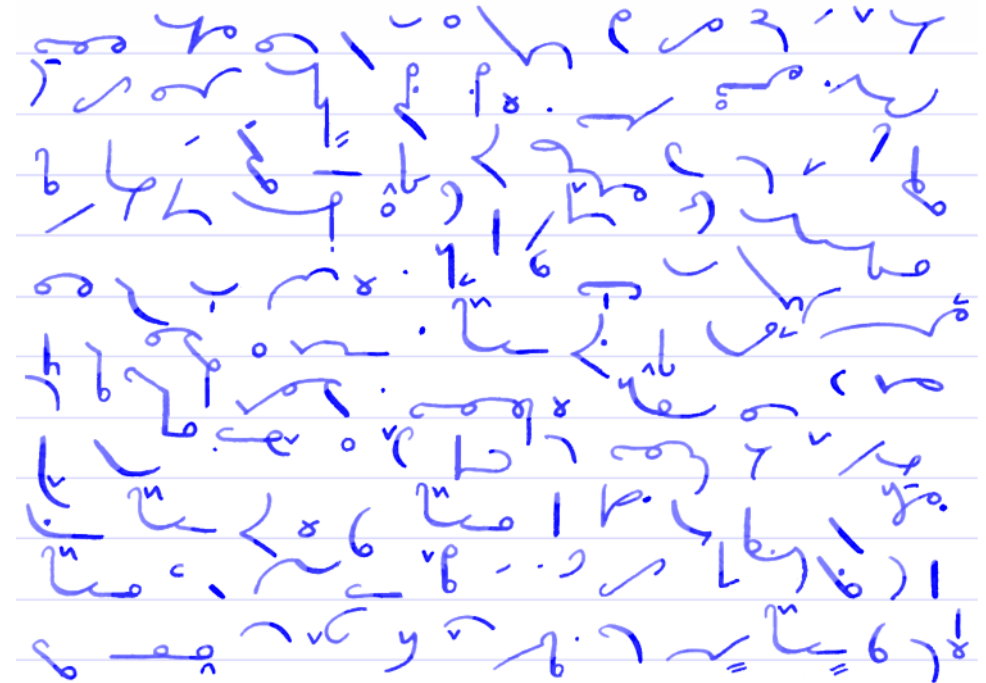
Merry Shopping

We restricted ourselves to the decorations and toy departments of the large stores, as these are the most festive areas of these huge establishments. I was fascinated by the range of novelty glass baubles, in every shape imaginable. As well as the usual snowmen, robins, penguins, reindeer and Santas, there were puddings and pies, famous buildings, champagne bottle, London bus and telephone box, clearly doubling as souvenirs of this city for the tourist shoppers. Most relevant of all was a generously-sized oval plate containing the Christmas turkey with all its trimmings.

With that hanging on the Christmas tree, one can not only* look forward* to, but also look back on, the highlight of the Christmas dinner spread, and so revel in it for the whole of the Christmas period. I did not see a matching one for the vegetarians, who will have to make do with the sprout baubles.

* Omission phrase "look fo(r)ward"

* "can not only" The "not" belongs with the next word, so is written separately from the "can"



Merry Shopping

Christmas angels seem to be not as popular as they once were, and I only saw one small Nativity stable set. The greenery, garlands, artificial trees, tinsel and baubles come out of the shop storerooms every year but the larger displays are much more* interesting, as they are different each time and their inventiveness seems to have no limit. An idea that has grown in popularity, due to its simplicity, is to make a triangle shape out of various materials or products, to resemble a Christmas tree. I

have seen some that almost defy being classified as either decoration or Christmassy, until I recognise the vague triangle shape. These triangles do at least have the decency to be isosceles triangles, with two long equal sides and a short one at the base, so do please excuse me while I wish my readers a very Merry Triangle this year!

* Omission phrase "much m(ore)"



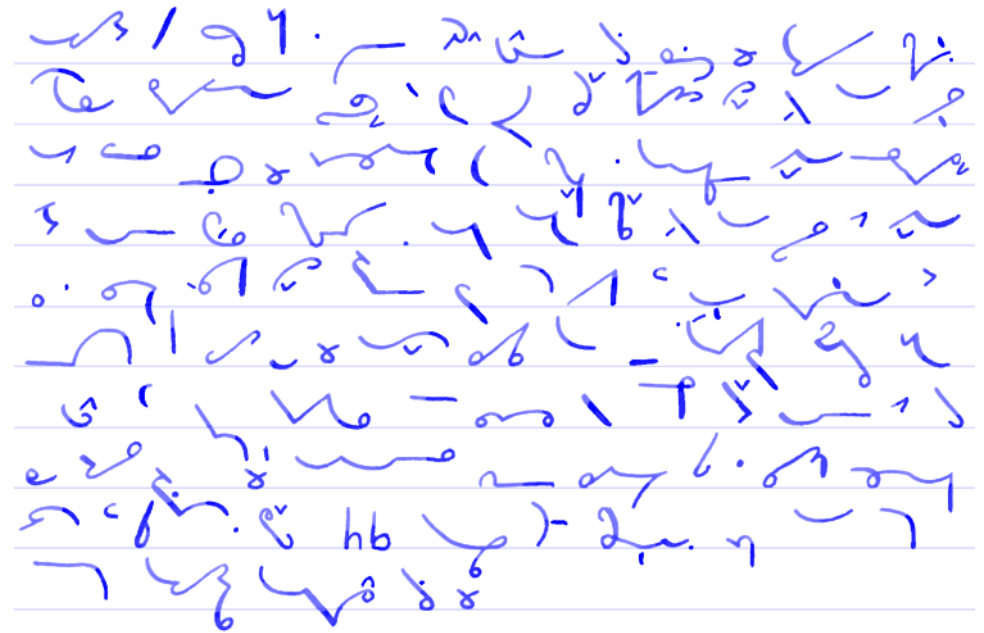
Merry Shopping

The food shop windows have the most amazing* and attractive Christmas confections, large cakes and individual cupcakes, towering creations with layers of cake, chocolate and cream, with strawberry or chocolate chunks on top. As the darkness fell and the rain started, it was easy to imagine one could eat a whole plateful of chocolate cake and not leave a single crumb, but we had no excuse to do that, as we had already consumed our

snacks, the three B's - bagels, bananas and biscuits. The midwinter feast that has gone on for centuries is still the priority, although we are no longer ancient Britons huddling round the fire in our round-houses, waiting for the return of warm weather and the availability of fresh food.

* "amusing" "amazing" Always insert the vowel

Blank lined writing area for notes.



Merry Shopping

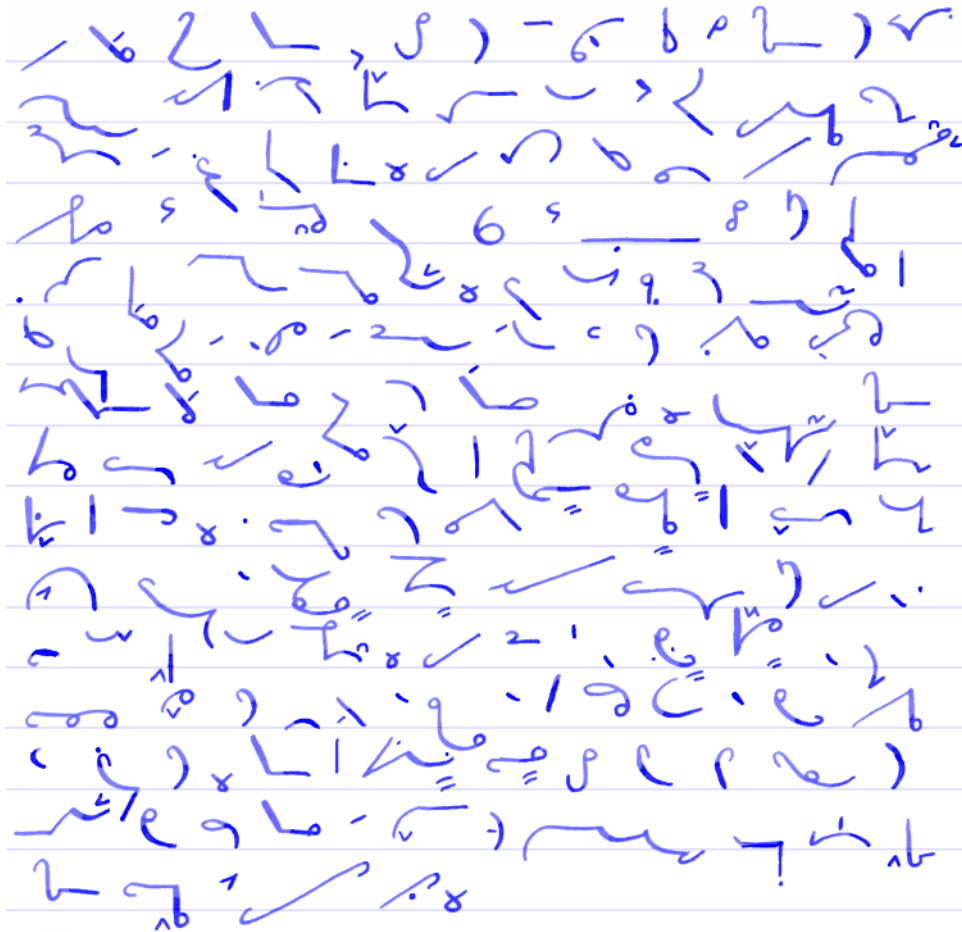
In one of the large stores, I had a look around the fountain pen section. They were truly* magnificent sparkling creations of every shape, size and adornment, lined up in rows in the glass cases. I am certain that they provide a fantastic writing experience, and that the ink flows perfectly, the nib never dries up in use, and the writing is a smooth solid line of black, blue or red with no pooling of the colour at one end. In my searches for good affordable shorthand pens, I have found that poor performance

can sometimes be caused by the ink and the pen is not always to blame. In any case you can certainly achieve a hundred words a minute*, and more, with just a supply of HB pencils, so there is no need to trade in your car for one of these fabulous pens.

* "truly" "utterly" Always insert the vowel, as they are similar in outline and meaning

* Omission phrase "words (a) minute"

Blank lined writing area for notes.



Merry Shopping

Our bus journey back to the station was quite slow at first*, as the traffic was hardly moving, and we had ample time to look in all the shop windows from the warm and comfortable top deck. We also passed some rather luxurious restaurants, with the occupants busying themselves with the cake stands on their tables, the little teapots and coffee cups. People in the street were queuing at fast food shops and stalls, and walking off with their wraps, waffles, hamburger buns, bags of chips or boxed meals. Eventually the traffic jams cleared, and we soon arrived at Trafalgar Square, by which time the daylight had

gone. A group of very happy Santas had climbed onto the lower plinth of Nelson's Column and were clearly on their way to a great night out in costume. We walked on to Seven Dials to see the Christmas lights there, made up of strings of large stars along all seven roads that converge there. Back at Charing Cross Station, every other person was carrying several store bags, and, like us, looking forward* to getting home out of the traffic, crowds and the winter rain. (919 words)

* Omission phrases "at (fir)st" "looking fo(r)ward"



Omission Phrases 2

I hope you have obtained satisfactory results over the past year of your shorthand studies.

I hope you will remember that it is most important to practise regularly every day.

There is still time for the shorthand students to take steps to improve their performance.

We know that the shorthand writers were very pleased indeed with their results.

They got first rate passes because of their work over the past few months.

Last time I spoke to them, they were taking steps to get better results.



Omission Phrases 2

It is almost impossible to write slowly once you are a shorthand writer.

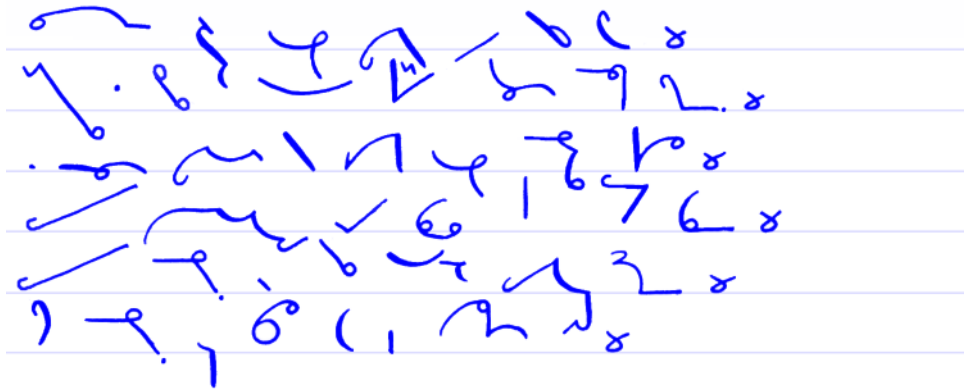
We know that it is almost certainly going to be a worthwhile project.

I was very pleased indeed to read in your last letter of your shorthand success.

The shorthand class was for the most part making remarkable improvements.

In fact it will only be a short time before they finish the course.

This week we are learning the basics and next week it will be phrases.



Omission Phrases 2

As a matter of fact, I believe that next month will be our best ever.

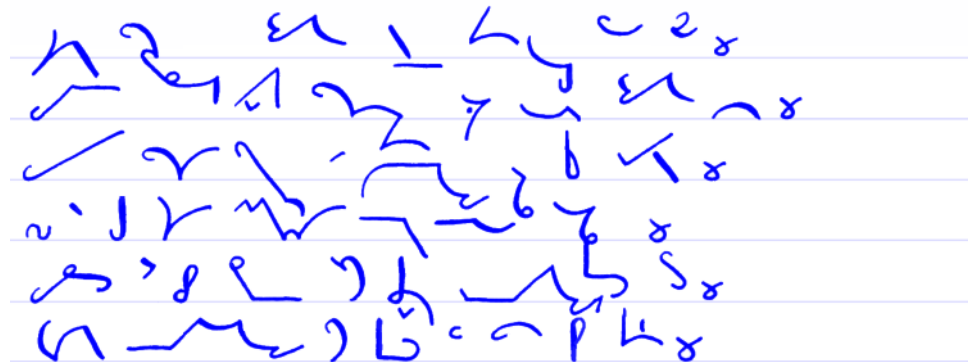
I hope there is a space in their diary for some extra practising.

The exam will now be held next month because of these delays.

We are looking forward to our lessons at college this week.

We are expecting to pass, owing to the fact that we have done the work.

They are expecting to do as well as they did last time.



Omission Phrases 2

She will be very pleased indeed that we have become much more confident in our shorthand.

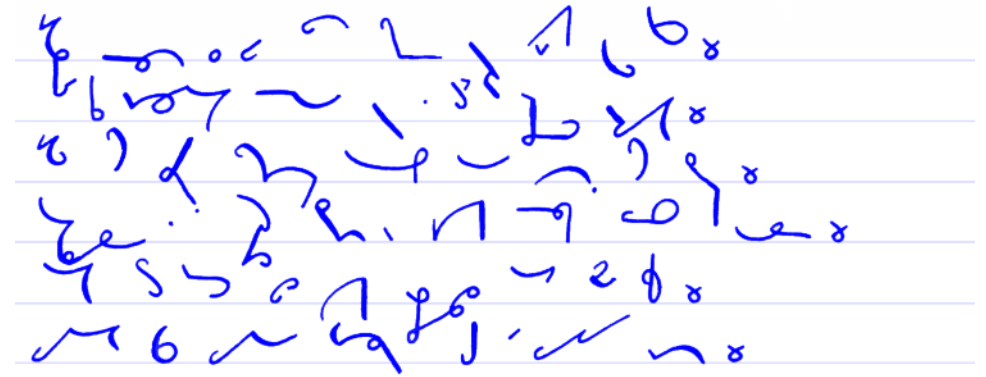
We can write very much more neatly now that we have improved.

We are very well prepared and look forward to this test of our ability.

You have all done so well and I hope you will keep going in this direction.

Once again all the students spoke of their desire to carry forward the plan.

They will be carrying forward their education with more study at home.



Omission Phrases 2

On the other side of the exam is yet more practice to be able to write even faster.

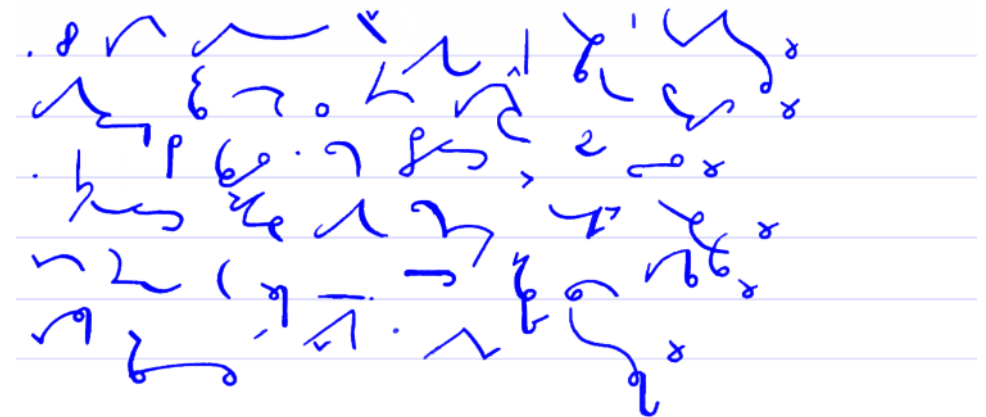
It is almost certainly going to be a point of discussion between them.

On the other hand they are, generally speaking, very much interested in improving their speed.

For this reason an arrangement has been made to hold extra classes next week.

Any other plan of action will not lead to satisfactory results in the shorthand tests.

We know that this is one thing that must be done and one way to improve.



Omission Phrases 2

The students helped one another by reading out passages on foreign affairs.

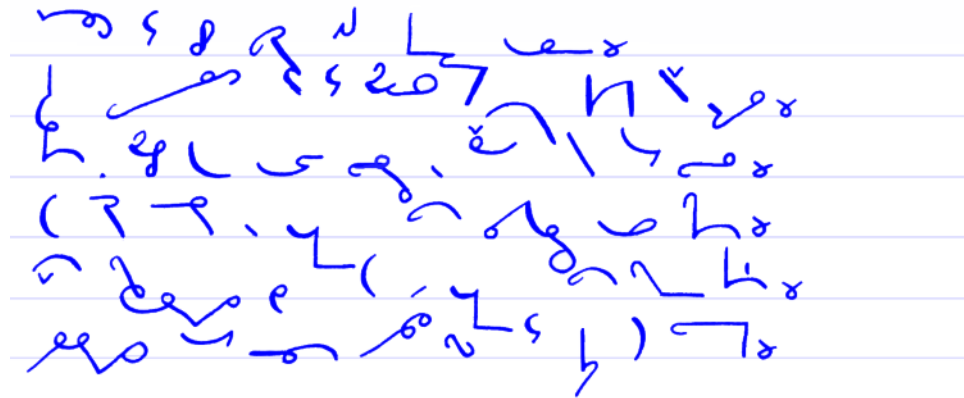
We have concluded that this method is much more helpful for everyone.

The teacher said this was a very satisfactory conclusion to the shorthand course.

In conclusion I would like to say that we have very much enjoyed the past few months.

I am asking them to consider coming again on the other side of the summer holidays.

I will consider all these matters and write a report for your consideration.



Omission Phrases 2

I am concerned that the students will not be able to attend the technical college next week.

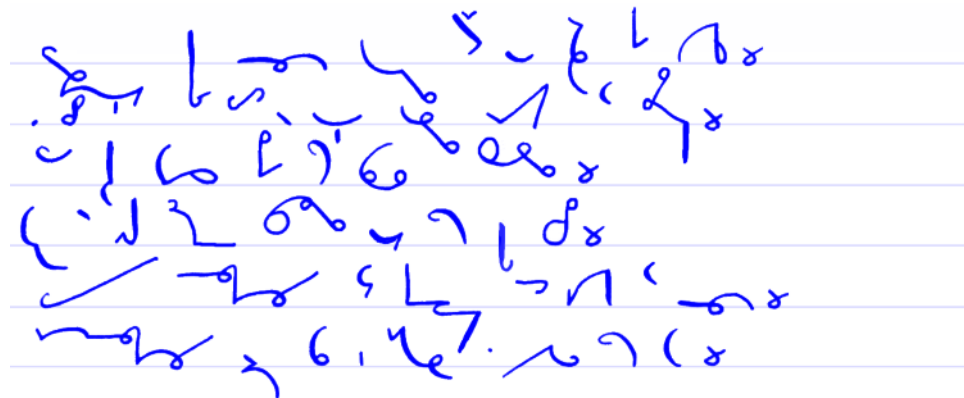
At this time we are concerned that the shorthand classes may be delayed by two weeks.

The shorthand students have incurred great expense to sign up for the course.

They cannot be expected to undertake more heavy expenses next term.

My personal experience is that they should undertake more practice at home.

Recent experiences in the exam results proved that the teacher was correct.



Omission Phrases 2

Please let me know the date of the exam, if possible by the end of this month at the latest.

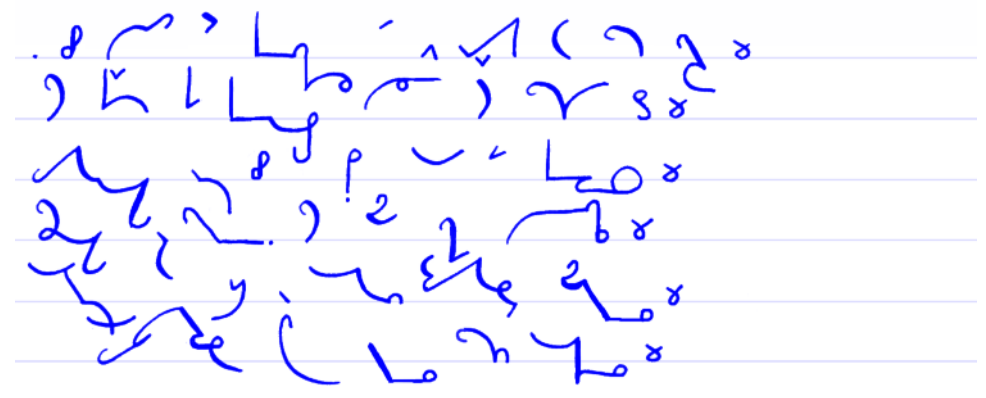
The students want to know if it is possible to reach that high speed.

In order to do that, they must start their lessons as soon as possible.

They have all done the work as well as possible under the very difficult circumstances.

We are extremely sorry that the technical college cannot hold that exam.

I am extremely sorry to hear this but I have received a refund from them.



Omission Phrases 2

The students learned all the technical terms and how to write them very briefly.

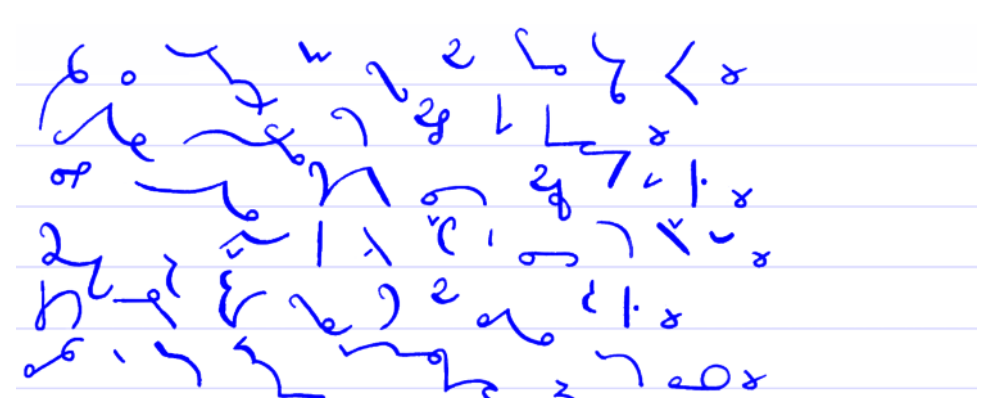
Their time at the technical institution last week was very well spent.

We have no objection to your students sitting in on the technical classes.

There is no objection to them practising their shorthand during the lectures.

In reply to your enquiry, I wish to inform you that we have received the shorthand books.

We will be glad to receive further books from you in due course.



Omission Phrases 2

This letter is in reply to your enquiry about the number of shorthand applicants for this job.

We have received many applications from shorthand students at the technical college.

As regards the interviews, there will be some shorthand tests on the day.

There is no objection to them writing it up either on screen or by hand.

It is also expected that they will present their shorthand certificates on that day.

As a result of all your hard work, I am extremely pleased to hear of your success. (862 words)