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Blogs - 2020 - August

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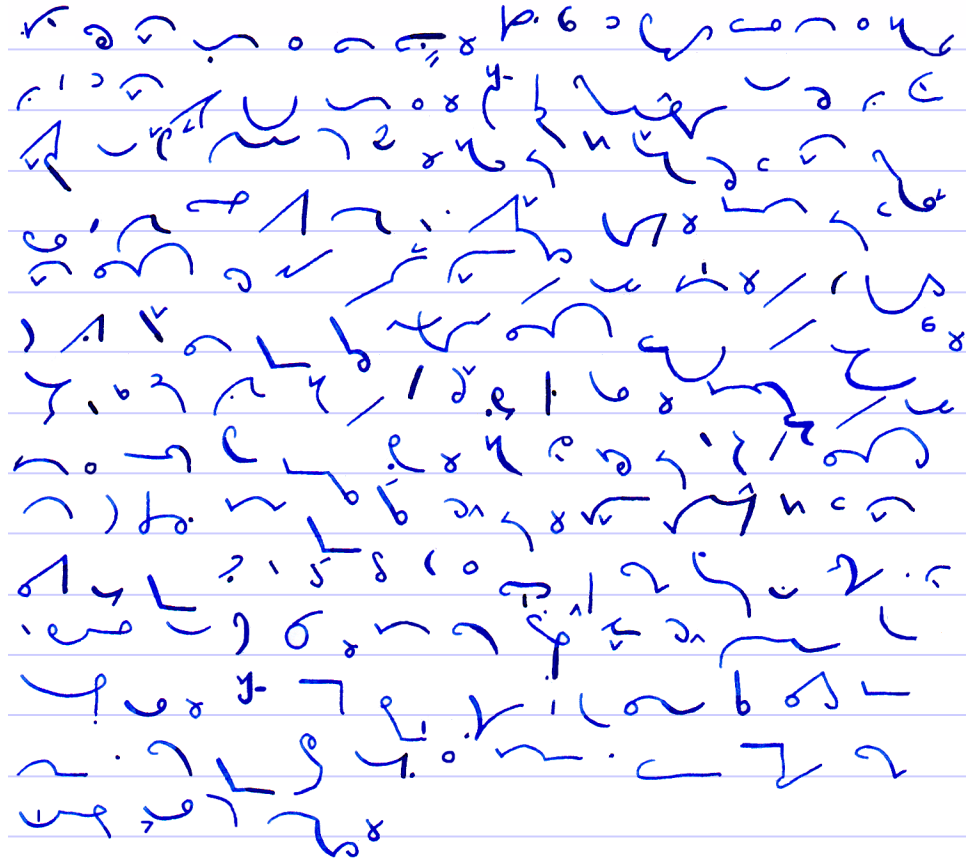
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PDF Date: 17 July 2023



Pond Interviews

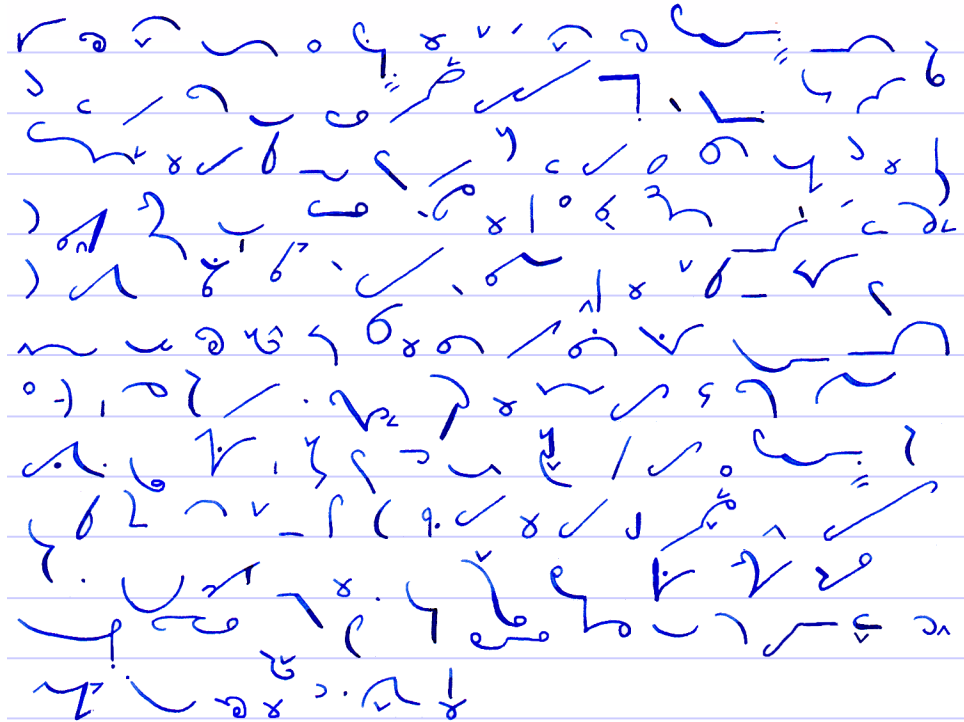
Hello friends, my name is Mr Grey. At least, that is what everyone calls me, as I have not yet let on what my real fish name is. I don't think it would be pronounceable in words, let alone writable in either longhand or shorthand. I have been here about five years, when my previous owners, who lived across the road, moved to a retirement village. I came here with my smaller friend and we really like our new home. Our old fishpond was raided by some big birds, and unfortunately the smaller goldfish are no longer with us. Only the two of us were left, I think our large size saved the day for us. I am very glad that our new home is covered over to keep us safe. I have lots* of friends here, all of them much smaller

than me, so it seems* I am the big boss around here. I like to lounge about with my head under the big raft of pond plants that has grown out from the far end, and there are a lot of snacks in there as well. I am very placid and glide around looking for interesting things. I don't get spooked easily but if something does happen, I can make a very big splash indeed as I make a quick get-away from the unexpected noise or movement.

* "lots" "masses" Insert the vowel, as these are similar in outline and meaning

* "it seems" Insert the vowel in "seems" so it does not look like "it is impossible"





Pond Interviews

Hello friends, My name is Freddie. I and my friend Frankie came to this pond when our very young owners realised that we were getting too big for the little aquarium. We just could not* believe our eyes when we first swam into the pond. It was so huge and there were no glass walls. It has hot, warm, cool and cold areas, so we have endless choice of where to hang out. I just could hardly believe how many new friends I found here as well. Some are the same pale pink colour as us but most of them are a brilliant orange. I am the one with the very long wavy fins and tail, but I think the

people cannot now identify which one is Frankie, although if they just asked me, I could* tell them straight away. We did not realise how wonderful a fish world could be. The food arrives several times daily, and there are always interesting corners to find other snacks in, or we can glide around and enjoy the company of friends. What a life!

* Omission phrase "there (w)ere"

* "I could" Not phrased, so it does not look like "I can"

Blank lined area for notes on the left page.

Blank lined area for notes on the right page.

Handwritten shorthand notes in blue ink on lined paper. The notes are dense and cover approximately 10 lines of the page. The shorthand appears to be a form of Pitman's shorthand, with various symbols and strokes used to represent letters and words.

Pond Interviews

Hello friends, my name is Fynn. I came here several years ago. My previous owner bought me from a shop because I only had one eye, and she took pity on me, as no-one would be likely to buy me. Who knows what my future there might have been, something pretty drastic might have happened. But no, this lovely kind lady* saw me. When I and my friend Bubbles got to her home, we had a very nice life in an aquarium for a few years. When we grew a bit larger, they had the very kind thought that we should have a bigger place to live, even though it was with someone else. That is how I came here. It was tough at first*, because I can't see the food at all. My one eye is not really much use to me. I have to swim in fast circles when I hear the food pellets plop, like I did in the aquarium, to scoop it all up, and I am amazed* that here I do actually manage to get some

every time. As soon as I have a decent mouthful, I drop down into the weed to chew on it. I now know my way around, although not by sight. All my friends are my early warning system, as well as the unmistakable* sensation of feet treading on the ground near the pond, which I always react to, because I know someone is nearby and probably has lunch ready. Life is good here.

* "lady" Helpful to insert the final vowel, so it is not misread as "lad"

* Omission phrase "at (fir)st"

* "amazed" "amused" Always insert the vowel

* "unmistakable" Omits the T. "mistook" includes the T stroke

A series of horizontal lines for writing, corresponding to the lines of the text on the left. The lines are empty, providing space for additional notes or a response.

Handwritten shorthand notes in blue ink on lined paper, corresponding to the text below.

Pond Interviews

Hello friends, my name is Bubbles. I came to this pond with Fynn. I am a blue, black and white speckled shubunkin. I was very small indeed but I have grown some, as has Fynn. It's all down to the good diet of pellets and green algae round the pond edges. I don't think Fynn knows it but I have seen the person making special efforts to get his dinner to him. They wait until he is at the surface and then sprinkle the pellets over him, resulting in very rapid circling. Unfortunately the circling swishes them away, but more pellets keep coming. The remaining pellets are eaten by the

others in the crowd. I did once see a small tea strainer on the end of a bamboo cane delivering his rations to his face, but now the above routine is the norm, so everyone gets their meal. It is so good that we were able to move on from the shop and stay together, as well as meeting new friends. Having lots* of friends around means we can all look out for anything that requires us to retreat under the lily leaves quite sharpish.

* "lots" "masses" Insert the vowel, as these are similar in outline and meaning

Four horizontal lines for handwritten notes.

Handwritten shorthand notes in blue ink on lined paper, corresponding to the text below.

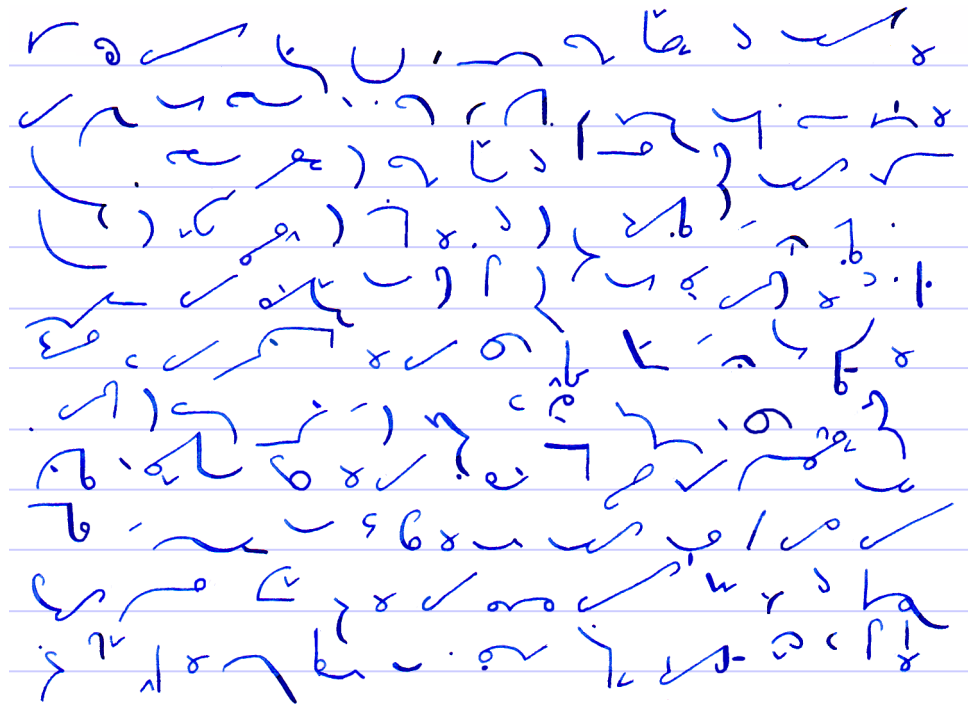
Pond Interviews

Hello friends, I am one of the black goldfish in the pond. I do have a name but it is a secret. We are not as well-known as the orange crowd, but we are there all the time, it's just that no-one sees us much, as the view down into the water is fairly black as well. When there is a sunny patch we can be seen quite clearly. I and some of my friends came here very many years ago. The family next door* had to close down their small pond because some building work was going on. All we fish were passed over the fence in buckets and put into the pond. This went on well into the evening,

until it got dark. The next morning they made a check of the empty pond to make sure they had got us all. I was out in the first load, so I counted all my friends in. What a novelty it was, the pond has more open space, so now we can swim really fast if we want to. Sometimes one of us will dart away in fright, and then so does everyone else and most of us have no idea what started it. But better safe than sorry, as they say.

* Omission phrase "ne(k)s(t) door"

Four horizontal lines for handwritten notes.



Pond Interviews

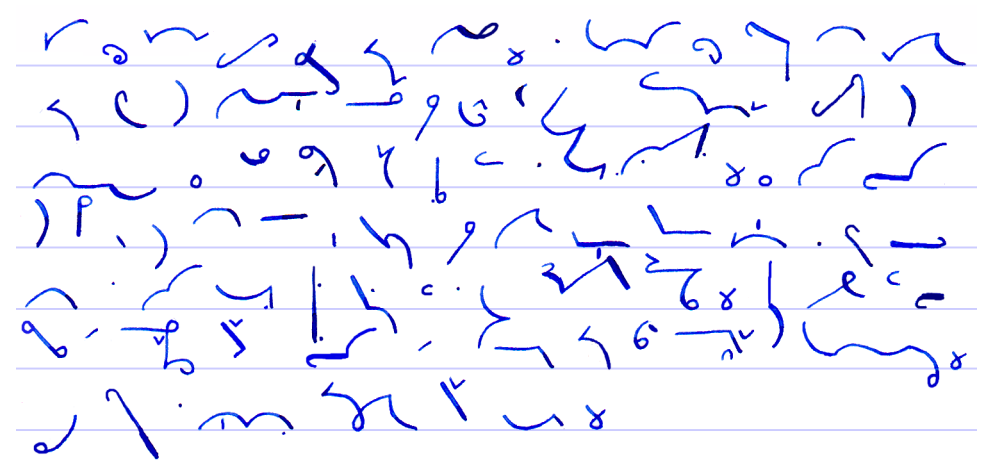
Hello friends, we are the four fish who came from the tiniest pond in the world*. We lived in the garden of a very old lady who had to move into a care home. After that, the gardener rescued us from the tiny pond, because there was no-one to look after us while the house was empty. The pond was full of weeds and mud and it's a miracle we survived in there at all, especially in the hot weather. What a day that was when we relocated. We swam out of the bucket and made for the shadows*. The water was clear, cool and easy to breathe, with lots* of room to swim, and there were* loads of hiding places. We soon got used to our luxurious new

accommodations and mingled in with the others. Now no-one knows which ones we are, everyone looks alike to them. We sometimes wonder about the old pond, it must have completely dried out. Maybe it is now under a smart patio, but we don't mind that at all!

* Omission phrases "in (the) world" "there (w)ere"

* "shadows" Insert the last vowel, so it is not misread as "shades"

* "lots" "masses" Insert the vowel, as these are similar in outline and meaning



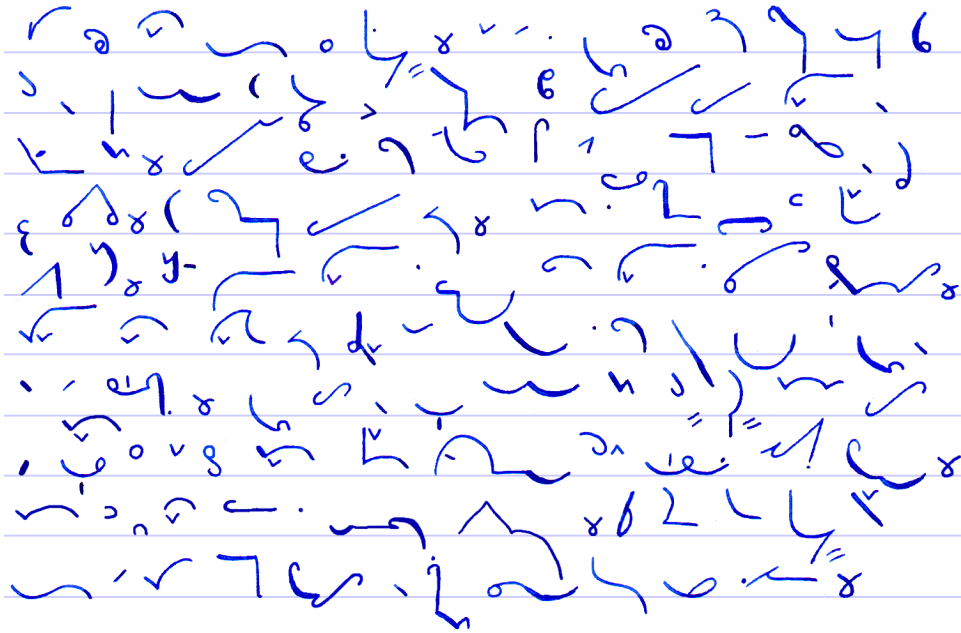
Pond Interviews

Hello friends, I am the one who has been here the longest*. A family friend brought me to live here, ever so long ago, because he found that changing the aquarium water was making his hands sore, I think it's called an allergy. His little girl was sad to see me go, but before he left to go back home, the people gave him a little knitted

teddy bear with a full wardrobe of clothes. It was received with great surprise and excitement by the girl and kept her thoughts occupied for many years. She is probably a mummy herself by now.

* "longest" Optional contraction that omits the G stroke, likewise "strongest"

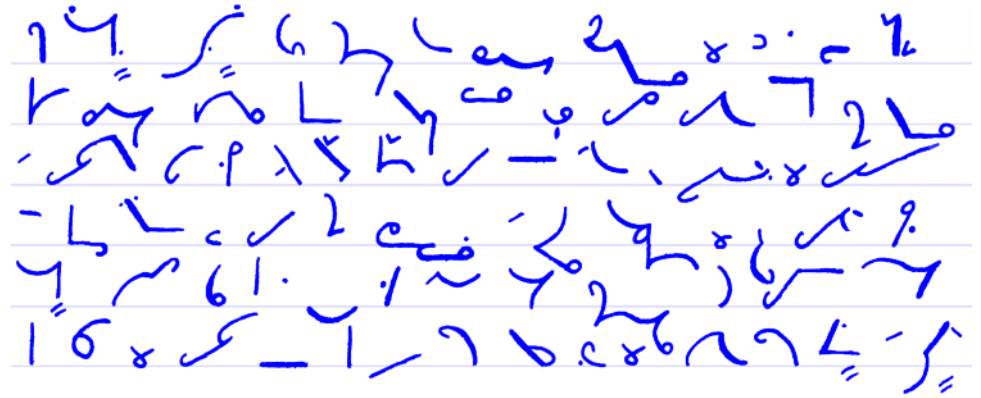
Blank lined area for additional notes or practice.



Pond Interviews

Hello friends, my name is Tench. I and a few friends were brought into this pond to eat anything that falls to the bottom, as that is where we like to poke about. We are not seen very often at all, and the owners get quite surprised to see us, when that happens. They forget we are here. I am a dark green with tiny red eyes. I don't look like a goldfish, more like a slender submarine. I like my life here, despite not

being a very public fish, on view to all and sundry. If you want to know anything about Pond Estate, I am the one who knows, as I spend all my time lurking around unseen and watching everything. I am what you might call an under-cover reporter. Just ask for Tench by name and I will get everyone to contribute something for your next article. (1978 words)



Jack And Josh

Each paragraph is 100 words

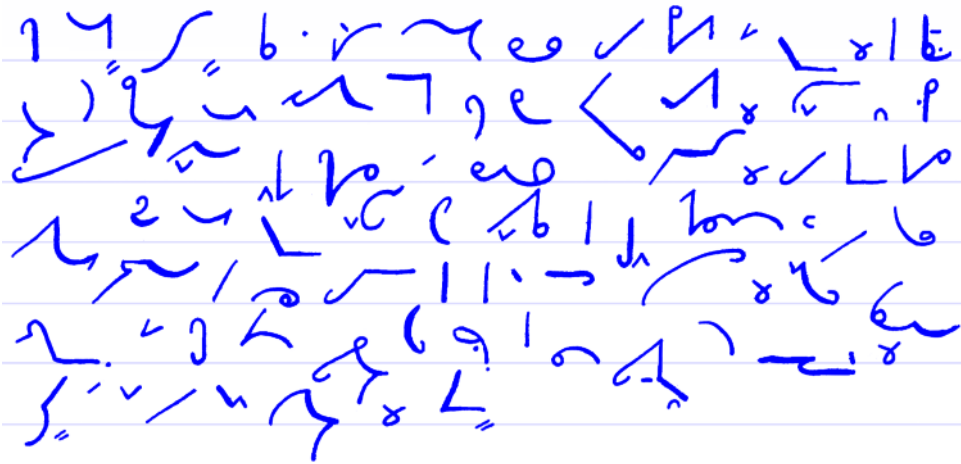
Dear Auntie Sheila*, Thank you so much for sending the shorthand books. What a great idea, it will certainly help us take better class notes, once we have got through the books, and we will be well set up by the time we go off to uni. We were quite taken aback when we saw the squiggles and shapes for the first time*. But then we thought, hey, Auntie learned

this at a young age and in only three months, so we can manage it as well. We will give it our very best effort. Love from Jack and Josh*

* "Sheila, Jack, Josh" Insert the vowels in names on the first occurrence, and then omit, as long as there are no other similar names later on

* Omission phrase "for (the) first time"

Blank lined area for writing practice, consisting of ten horizontal lines.



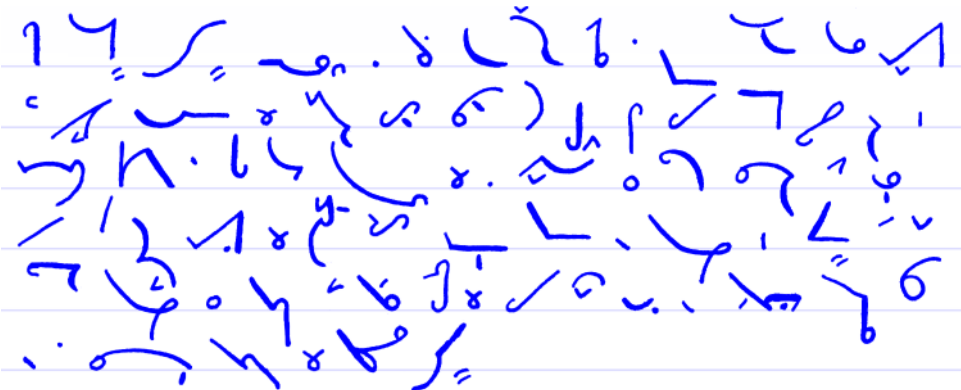
Jack And Josh

Dear Auntie Sheila, It is a whole month since we started on the book. It doesn't feel so strange now, and we have got through several chapters already. Like you said, we are writing out the drills and sentences regularly. We take turns reading the shorthand in the book while the other writes it down, and at the same time* with

our phones recording, which means we can do it all again later on. I have been listening and practising on the train, much more* useful than staring at some Youtube or Google. Josh and I are about level. Jack

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

* Omission phrase "much m(ore)"



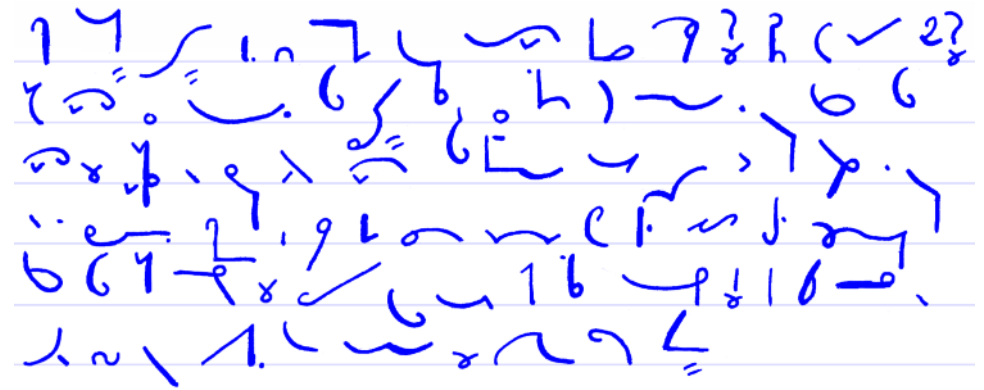
Jack And Josh

Dear Auntie Sheila, Good news, the pens have arrived and it is a big novelty for us to write with real ink. I hope that won't slow us down till we get used to them, but I am sure it will be an advantage for the future. The writing is very smooth and the notes are much easier to read*. I don't think I want to go back to pencil, but Jack and I

agree that pencil is better on the bus and train. We might need to upgrade the pads as well to a smoother paper. Best wishes*, Josh.

* "read" Insert the vowel when phrased, likewise "to write" "I wrote"

* "Best wishes" Upward Ish in order to join the phrase

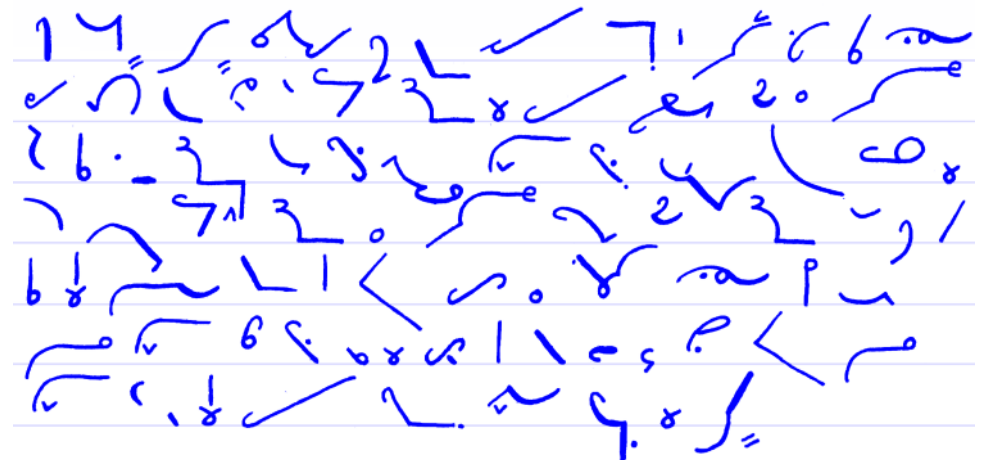


Jack And Josh

Dear Auntie Sheila, Did you get the photos in my text message? What do you think of our shorthand? I think mine is neater than Josh's but then his attempt was going a bit faster than mine. I decided to speed up my talking in the middle of the passage, a bit

of a sneaky trick, but he did the same to me the other day and went ten words a minute* faster than I had expected. We are even now and it adds interest! It just goes to show, you have to be ready for anything. Love from Jack

* Omission phrase "words (a) minute"

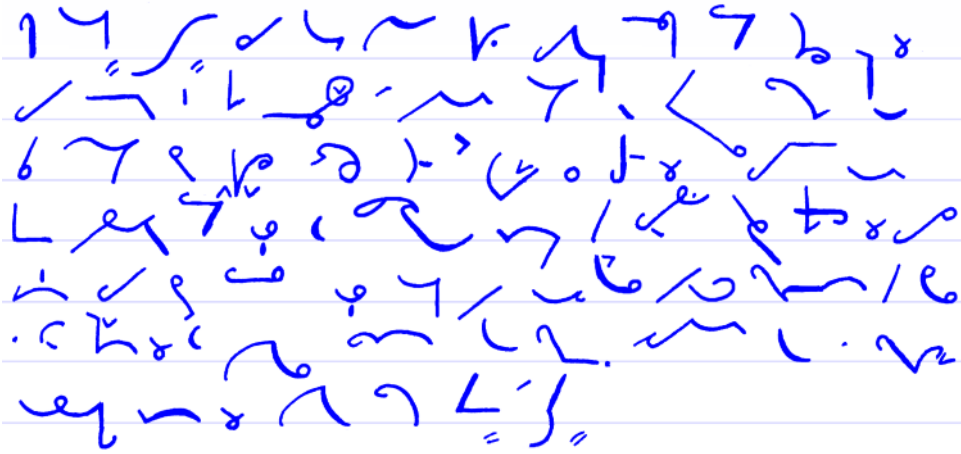


Jack And Josh

Dear Auntie Sheila, Halfway through the book and we are getting on really well, which is amazing* as we also have lots of college work. We are using the shorthand as relaxation, although it is a good workout for the brain and fingers, like playing football after classes. Or maybe the college work is relaxation from the shorthand work,

not sure which it is! Looking back at chapter one is absolutely amazing*, as it now looks like child's play to us. Won't it be great when the last chapter looks like that too! We are practising writing every day. Josh

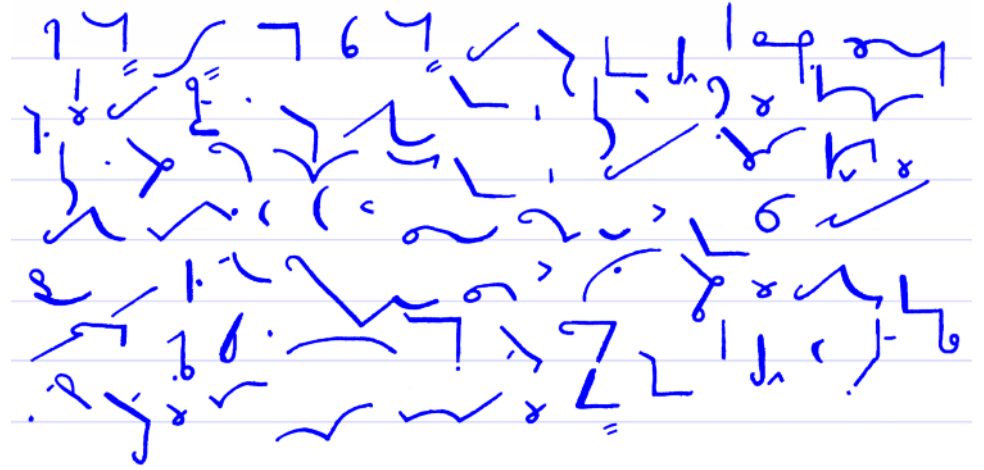
* "amazing" "amusing" Always insert the vowel in these and derivatives



Jack And Josh

Dear Auntie Sheila, Sorry for the long delay, we have had extra college assignments to do. We kept on at the exercises, and are now only two chapters from the end, which is mainly special outlines and phrases, so all the theory is done. We can now take reasonable college notes without stumbling too much*, which wasn't* possible at the beginning. Once home, we speak the class notes into our new voice recognition program, which saves a lot of time. That leaves more time* for practising, and we

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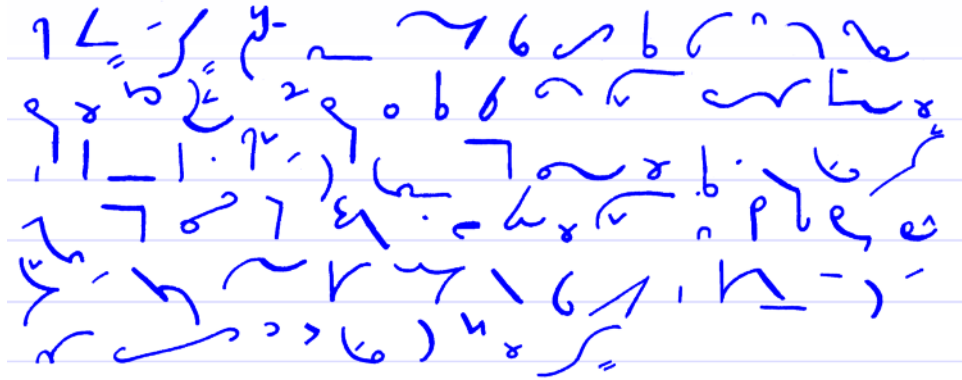
Jack And Josh

Dear Auntie Sheila, Get this, Auntie, we both took down at sixty words a minute* today! We struggled a bit reading back, but it was all there. Admittedly it was a passage from early in the book, but we are absolutely delighted. We have to repeat that, though, with something from the end of the book as well, and we are spending

our day off preparing some of the later passages. We have the dictations recorded and it's just a matter of getting up the courage to take it down without touching the stop button. I will email tomorrow. Jack

* Omission phrase "words (a) minute"

Blank lined area for notes on the right page.



Jack And Josh

Dear Jack and Josh, I don't think you can manage this one, it is well beyond your present speed. I am not saying what the speed is, it is just more like normal talking. But do give it a try and see if you can get something. It's a bit of fun really, and if

you get half of it, that would be a great achievement. Like you said, save the sound file and before long it will not only be within reach, but it will become quite easy and you will wonder what all the fuss was about. Sheila

Blank lined area for writing a response to the letter.



Jack And Josh

Dear Auntie Sheila, We saved that attempt* for our day off, so we could work up our courage to do it. We had a while of drilling to get ourselves into fast mode, but before I could suggest another hour's practice, Josh said, "Let's do it now, before we think too much* about it, we can always retake it later on as well." It was the longest* two minutes of my life and I could feel my palms getting sweaty. What a relief when you said, "That's it, boys". Our

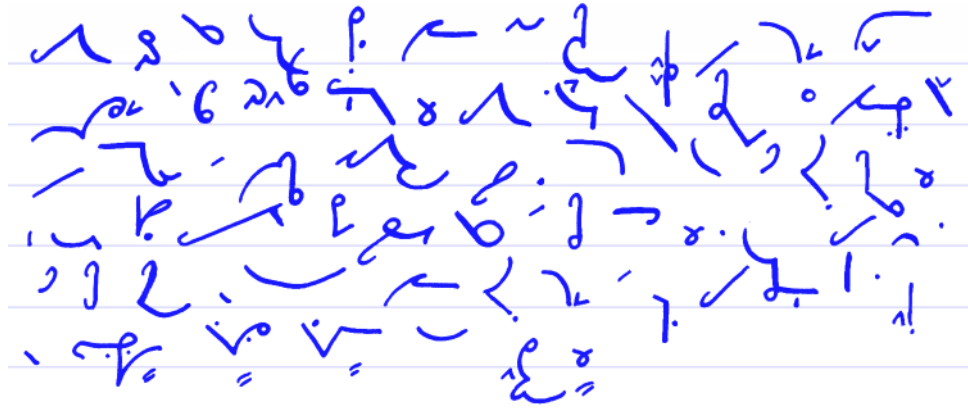
sixties now seem ridiculously slow. Thanks, Auntie, Jack and Josh

* "attempt" Omits the lightly-sounded P

* "too much" Includes the M in order to form the phrase

* "longest" Alternative outline that omits the G stroke

Blank lined area for writing a response to the letter.



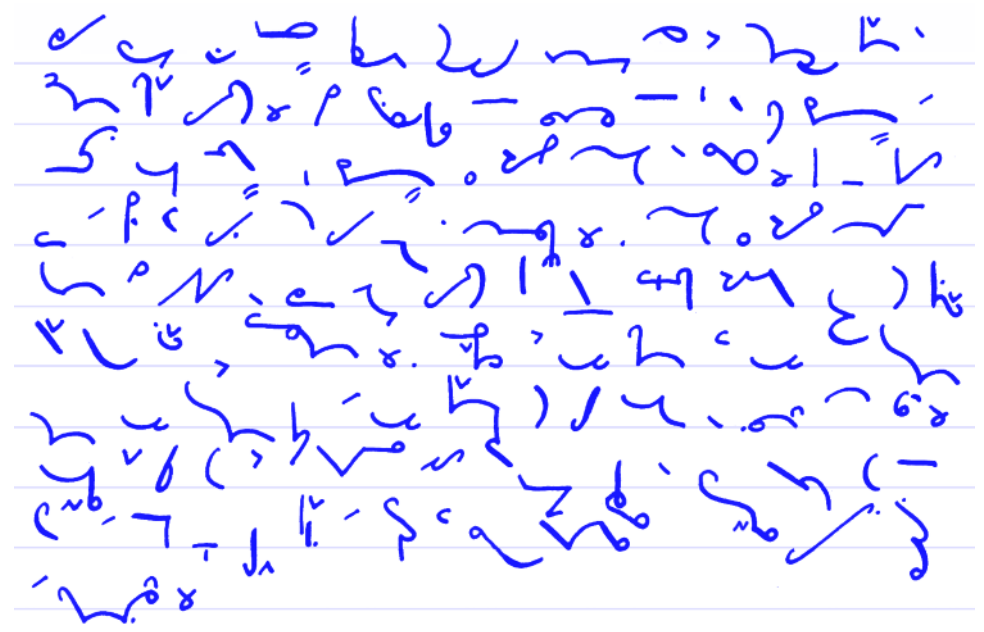
Travelling Again

We have spent the past five months staying local and not travelling outside our area, like millions of others around the globe. We have avoided public transport, as requested by our government and leaders, and we have only used the car for short shopping trips. But now, at last*, we are able to start using the buses and trains again. A few

days ago we made a short train journey to another local shopping area, and today we had an outing to Crystal Palace Park in South London.

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

Blank lined writing area for notes.



Travelling Again

As we near the end of August, it is now essential to make the most of the remaining time of warm dry weather. Such pleasant* conditions can sometimes go on all through September and occasionally into October, but September is always the month of surprises. It could turn cold and stay that way, or we could* have a mixture. The month is always marked for me as the return to school, and if the weather had become colder, I would not be feeling so deprived by being confined to the classroom. The excitement of the new term, with new form room, new form teacher and new timetable, was generally enough to

consume my thoughts. Nowadays I just think of the parks and want to catch the displays of flowerbeds before they go over and get cut down, tidied and planted with spring bulbs, winter *pansies and primulas.

* "pleasant" "pleasing" Helpful to insert the first vowel

* "we could" Not phrased, so it does not look like "we can"

* "winter" Insert the vowel, so it does not look like "wonderful"

Blank lined writing area for notes.

The first page of the document contains a dense block of handwritten shorthand in blue ink. The text is written on a set of horizontal blue lines. The shorthand consists of various symbols, including straight lines, curves, and dots, which are used to represent words and phrases. The writing is fluid and continuous, filling most of the page's width and height.

Below the handwritten text, there are several horizontal blue lines that serve as a writing area. These lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page, providing space for additional notes or practice.

Travelling Again

Today has been gloriously sunny* and warm, with a few gusty winds, and we really could not waste it all by staying* at home. We took the bus and train to Penge East station, both of which were very sparsely occupied. A ten minute walk led us to the lower entrance to the park. We went up to the lake and spent a while watching the crowd of pigeons on the lake edge who were watching us. There seems to be* two sorts of pigeon, the independent ones who will look out for certain arm movements (bread flinging) and fly towards them immediately, and the rest of the mob who just follow what everyone else is doing, no questions* asked, whether the flight is towards food or away from trouble. Beady dinosaur eyes kept glancing at us but our arms did not make any of those meaningful movements. There is a café nearby where people may drop crumbs, so we need not

This section of the page contains a series of horizontal blue lines, similar to the ones on the previous page. These lines are intended for the student to practice writing the shorthand for the text provided in the 'Travelling Again' section.

kid ourselves that the pigeons are starving, hungry or even peckish at times. Indeed park pigeons often just sit and snooze, with a temporary lack of interest in the offerings. It is however an unbreakable rule that food must be* eaten when available, if there is the slightest room in their tumms, as who knows what tomorrow may bring, maybe rain and no offerings at all.

- * "sunny" "snowy" Generally helpful to insert the vowels, although here the meaning is clear
- * "staying" The Dot Ing includes the vowel, so no need for a diphone
- * Omission phrases "there seems (to) be" "mus(t) be"
- * "questions" Optional contraction



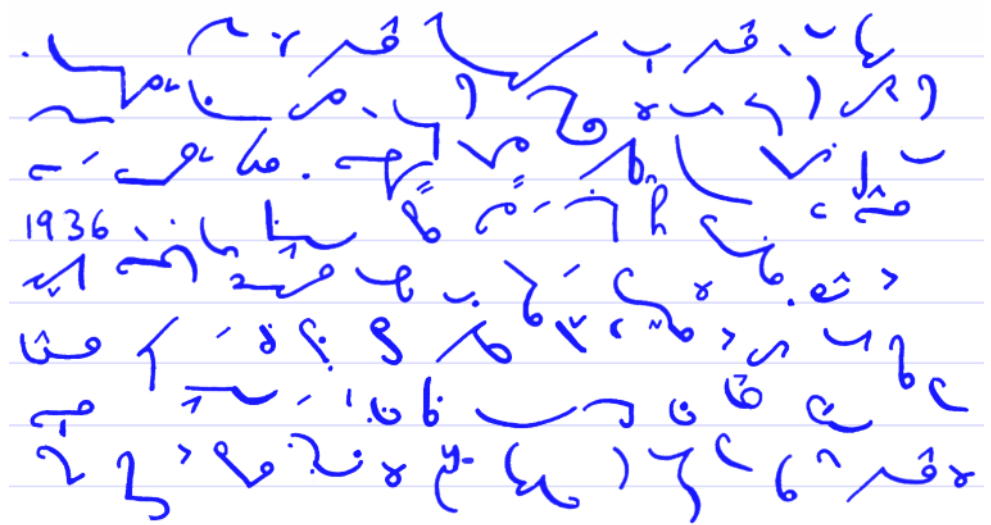
Travelling Again

We took one of the paths up the hill and went past the large sports centre and stadium. Further on* we stopped to greet the giant sculpture of the head of Joseph Paxton, who designed the glasshouse. We then walked further up the grassy slope to the hilltop where the Palace once stood. It is a wide open space of several terraces, with two grand marble stairways in the centre. We sat on a large chunk of marble at the very top and had our sandwiches, watching the scudding clouds and looking out over the distant view of the countryside

of North Kent. It was somewhat misty in the distance, as we have had some rain in the past few days*. Most people were strolling, some were jogging and a few were dog walking. The only relatively crowded places in the park are the children's playground and the lakeside café nearby.

* "further on" Adding N Hook can also mean "further than"

* Omission phrase "pas(t) few days"

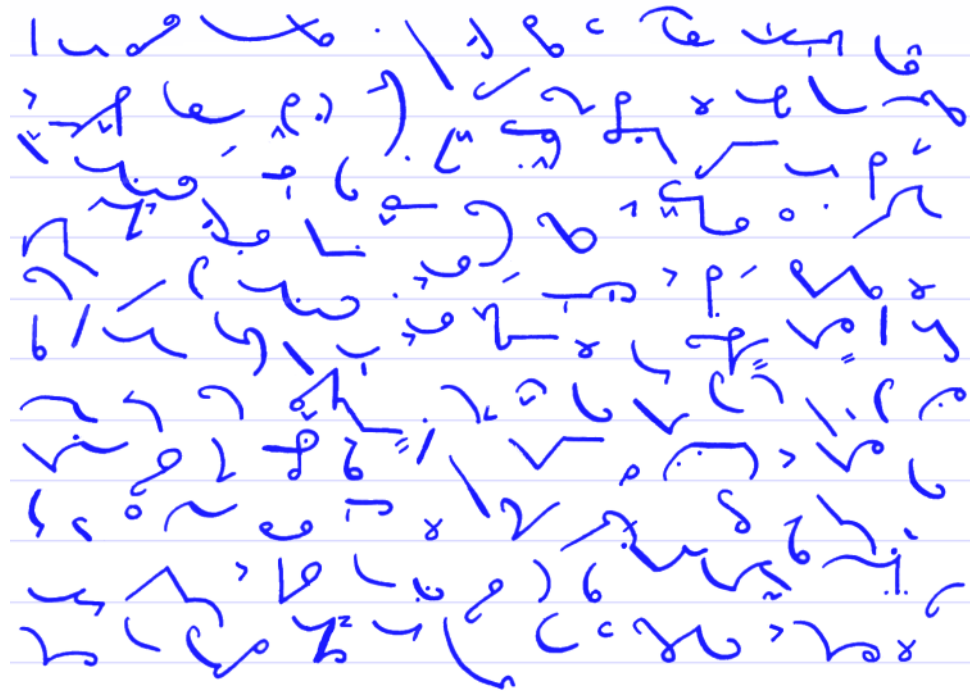


Travelling Again

The Victorians loved old ruins and if there were no ruins to hand they would make fake ones to feed their imaginations. Now here was one of their great and glorious achievements, the Crystal Palace, reduced, after burning down in 1936, to a few decaying steps, walls and empty statue plinths with grass and wide gravel walkways instead of neat paths and flowerbeds. The sound of the fountains,

chatter and bands playing* has been replaced by that of the wind in the trees, crows cawing and, on event days, intermittent faint voices floating over from the direction of the sports arena. I don't think they would have been so enthusiastic over these particular ruins.

* "playing" The Dot Ing includes the vowel, so no need for a diphone

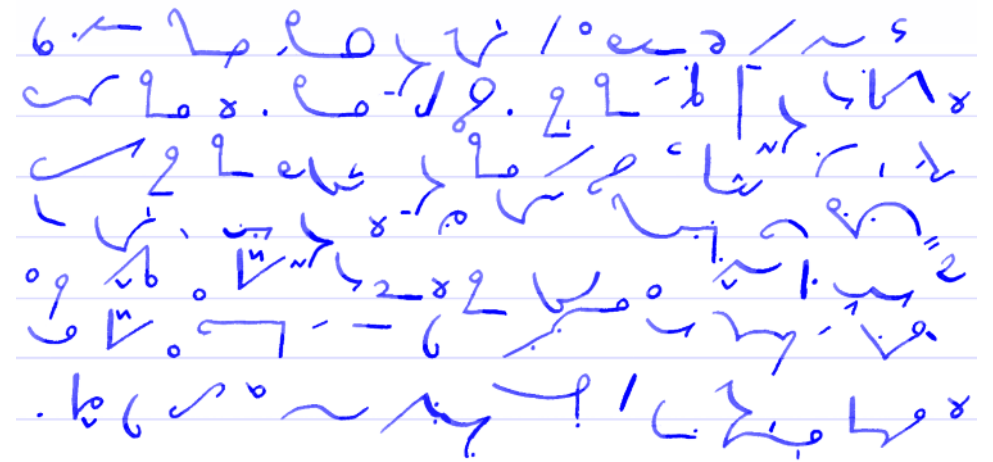


Travelling Again

It now serves another purpose, a public open space with magnificent uncluttered views of the countryside, facing south east and therefore away from the cityscape. Instead of being impressed by inventions and goods within a giant glasshouse, we can now sit on the hilltop and enjoy the openness, big sky, fresh breezes and the quietness, as a relief from our other invention, the noise and commotion of the city and suburbs. It is large enough for there to be no noise of traffic. If the Crystal Palace had not been moved here from Hyde Park, the area might have been built over

or put to other less appealing* uses, so the existence of this large public park is the legacy of the Palace, even though the building has long since gone. There are refurbishment plans and these appear to include the repair of the terraces, for event use, so this valuable amenity will remain for everyone's enjoyment in the future, along with preservation of the remains. (894 words)

* "appealing" "appalling" always insert the second vowel



Full And Fully

This article practises the suffixes -ful and -fully, which as single words are written with the normal strokes. The suffix generally uses the hooked stroke, and adds the dot vowel for the adverb. Where the hooked stroke is not convenient, full strokes are used, with downward L, but upward for fully, to indicate the vowel. Let's

follow the pernickety Mr Speller as he writes his diary for the week. He can finish his writing day knowing the shorthand in his diary is correct, and can then relax in the armchair and peruse the delights within one of his many rivetingly interesting, large, thick and voluminous dictionaries.

Blank lined area for handwriting practice.



Full And Fully

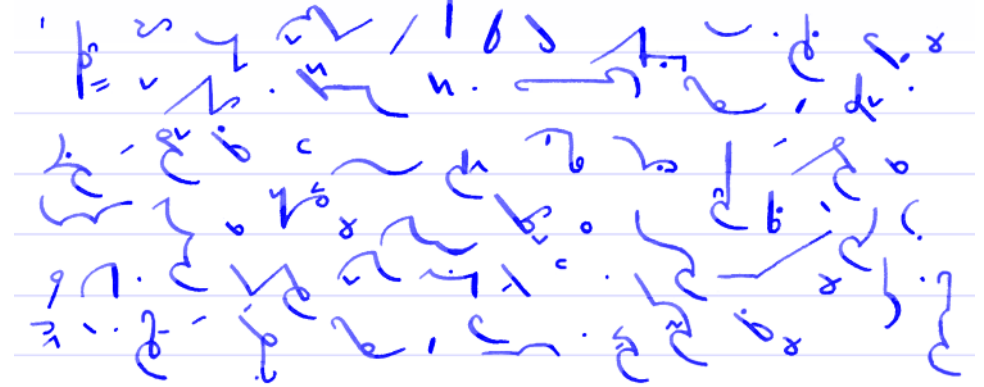
On Monday, I rose at dawn, when everything is peaceful and quiet. It was a beautiful sunny* day but I was mindful that the weather forecast had shown some frightful rain and possibly harmful high winds coming our way. This was very helpful information and so caution was definitely needful*. I decided to make a short trip to the park to see the colourful displays, hopeful that I could avoid the rain. I was grateful to the skilful gardeners for the delightful and cheerful sight that

greeted me as I entered the park. I was thankful for the thoughtful way in which the park was supplied with plentiful seats everywhere.

* "sunny" "snowy" Generally helpful to insert the vowels, to differentiate

* "needful" Special outline, to enable the first vowel to be clearer, compare the distinguishing pair "needless" "endless"

Blank lined paper for writing practice.



Full And Fully

On Tuesday, I went into the library which had just been redecorated in a tasteful* blue. I returned a biography about a characterful person who, despite a shameful and spiteful past, with many doubtful* motives, remained dutiful* and respectful to his family and faithful to his ideals. Leaving behind his fearful days of wishful thinking, he led a purposeful life and ended up with a powerful career. It

was a truthful account of a trustful* and positive person who overcame a hurtful past.

* "tasteful" "trustful" Omit the lightly-sounded second T

* "dutiful" Special outline, to distinguish from "doubtful", so that vowels can be safely omitted

Blank lined paper for writing practice.



Full And Fully

On Wednesday I decided to clear the garage. It was full of awful rubbish and I had to be careful that I did not trip over it. It was not going to be a restful* day. It was a fanciful notion that I might need any of it. There was a handful of boxes of paperwork that I should keep, which I had been neglectful to file properly*, and which consisted mainly of items that proved I was the lawful owner of the house. I drummed up a forceful attitude to deal with it all, so ditching the rubbish was not so painful after all. I became quite resourceful and was successful in converting some spare

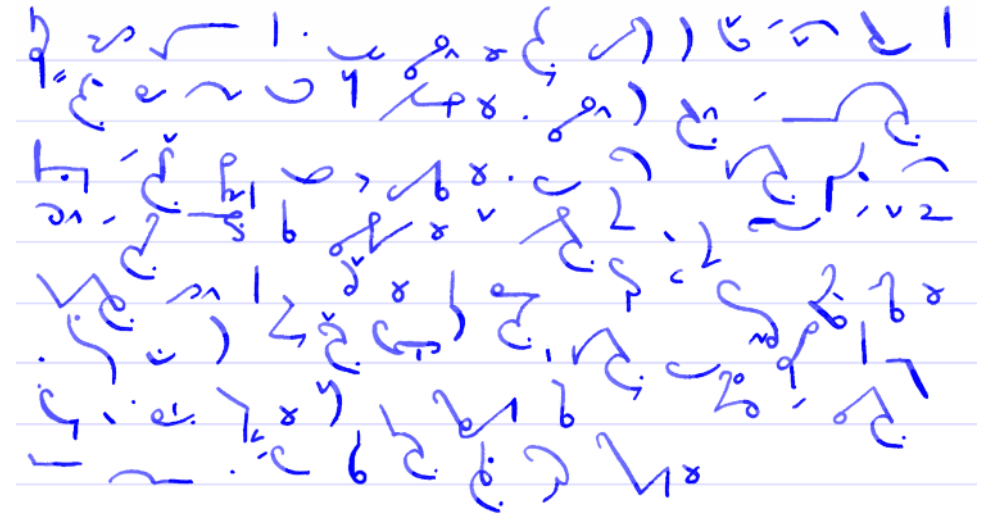
wood into shelves, a useful addition to the storage. It was a truly* wonderful feeling when it was all finished.

* "restful" Omits the lightly-sounded second T

* "properly" Insert the first vowel, and the diphone in "appropriately", and their derivatives, as these are similar in outline and meaning

* "truly" "utterly" Insert the vowel, as these are similar in outline and meaning

Blank lined writing area for notes.



Full And Fully

On Thursday I went to look at a new house. Thankfully the weather was fine and my banker had thoughtfully sent me the information I had requested. The house was beautifully and colourfully decorated, and delightfully situated next to the woods. The owner very helpfully showed me around and cheerfully explained its history. I respectfully asked to see the garden and I walked purposefully round it to check the size. It was skilfully planted with flowers, shrubs and trees. The far end was

frightfully overgrown* but helpfully the owner suggested it could be converted to a sunny patio. I was powerfully persuaded of its charms and hopefully I can make an offer on this tastefully* furnished property.

* "overgrown" "evergreen" Insert the last vowel, to prevent misreading

* "tastefully" Omits the lightly-sounded second T

Blank lined writing area for notes.

