

Handwritten shorthand symbols on a blue-lined background.

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Short Letters 1

1. Here are some simple business type letters. The content may not be wildly interesting but I hope that you will be able to* write these more easily and so have the satisfaction of achieving a higher speed on them. Any* one passage can be used in several ways to get the most benefit. You could* first take it unseen which would mean getting a friend or a text-to-speech programme to read it to you. This is the most lifelike version of practising, not knowing what is coming next and surviving the assault of unknown words having to be written without hesitation. What you are practising is your reaction to the situation rather than learning new outlines.

2. After that, you can use the passages to improve your shorthand reading speed, going faster each time and recording your own voice on the last attempt. Next you can write the passages as many times as it takes to get it down smoothly, completely and legibly*, starting with copying* and going on to dictation. Anything that you hesitate over should be drilled thoroughly. You can lengthen the recording by inserting silences at intervals, or using the free Audacity programme to reduce the tempo for you.

3. Finally, once you are sure you know all the outlines well, you can reuse the passages by mixing up the sentences, so that the words come in a different order, or substituting* other words to provide some variation. It is also very useful to do all this quite quickly and then come

back and repeat it all after a gap of several hours or the next day, as that is the real test of whether you have learned the outlines sufficiently, or whether they are merely "hanging out" in your short term memory. As you can see from the blog title, this type of offering will be repeated, to give beginners more practice in easier matter, as the blogs are mostly aimed more at vocabulary extension and are not written specifically to be simple. The paragraphs below are all 150 words long, so it will be easy to calculate your speed: 60 seconds will be 150 words a minute, 90 seconds will be 100 words a minute, and 180 seconds will be 50 words a minute.

4. Dear Sir, Thank you for your prompt reply to my email* which I sent to you last week*. I am glad that you have now been able* to read the report and make some valuable comments on the contents. We shall be meeting next week* to discuss all these matters. The meeting will take place* in the new conference rooms at our head office in New York* and I enclose an agenda and a copy of reports for the previous two years. The Chairman and Secretary of the company* will be present, as well as our financial advisers, and we look forward to the challenge of drawing up the plans for our activities over the next few years. I look forward* to seeing you at the meeting but if you have any questions* in the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me directly. Yours faithfully, John Brown, Senior Director (150 words)

Short Letters 1

5. Dear Madam, Your recent letter* addressed to the Customer Services Department has been passed to me for attention. I am very glad to hear that you are happy with the order which you received a few days ago. Thank you for taking the time to send us your comments on the item, and for the suggestion on the improvements which would make the item more useful. I have forwarded these to our Design Department, who are always looking at ways to improve our products, so that we can maintain a high level of service to our customers. I would like to add that we do have plans to expand* this particular line to include more sizes and colours, and these will be available online in about two months' time. I have enclosed our latest online discount voucher code which you may find helpful. Yours sincerely*, Mary Green, Development* Team Manager (150 words)

6. Dear Sirs, It has come to my attention that our invoice dated 31 December is still outstanding. We would be grateful if you could* attend to this at your earliest convenience*. If there is* any query regarding this or some other* problem, please advise us as soon as possible* so that this matter can be sorted out quickly. We have noticed that one of our previous letters was returned to us by the postal services and wondered whether we have some error in your address on our database. If you can confirm your correct name and address* details in your return email*, we will update our records immediately, so that no further errors are made and delays are avoided*. We thank you for your valued custom over the past five years, and look forward* to continuing to provide our services to you in future. Yours faithfully, Roger* Black, Finance Manager (150 words)

7. Dear Miss Smith*, I have pleasure in enclosing our latest catalogue of our summer clothes collection, as requested, which I hope you will find* of interest. We have introduced many new lines, including for the first time* a very attractive range of summer footwear*. We are giving an introductory discount to all existing customers, just send in the discount voucher with your order, or quote the discount code online, to get a twenty percent reduction on your first order from this catalogue. This in no way* affects our returns policy, and if you are not delighted with your purchase, it can easily be returned for a full refund. We also have an online offer of a further discount to the first 50 customers who order this month*. I hope you will* enjoy browsing the literature and find some great items to add to your summer wardrobe. Yours sincerely*, Sarah Williams (150 words)

8. Dear Friends, I am delighted to confirm the results of the shorthand speed exams. All the class members reported back to me that this set of exams was a really tough one, and the political passage, given at a hundred* words a minute*, had quite a lot of tricky* words in it. I am glad that those taking it managed to overcome this and get down something for everything. Only one person has failed, but this is no reflection on their ability*, as we all knew that they were aiming for a really high speed. I am sure this can easily be retaken quite soon, and maybe at ten* words a minute* slower to ensure a pass. Well done everyone, and I look forward* to seeing you all at the next session. Meanwhile, we welcome comments and exam hints on our Facebook page to help future students. Regards, Joan Anderson (150 words) (Total 1127 words)