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## Fraser's Numbers

This article practises writing numbers in shorthand outlines. Most of the number outlines are quite short and as long as the number is isolated in the sentence, it is often quicker to write the outline. Where numbers are occurring all the time, both short and long, it might be clearer to write the Arabic numerals. It all depends on context as to which will be more suitable, and that applies also to the transcription, where again the isolated number is best spelled out, and larger numbers typed in numerals. A few must always be vocalised, such as ten and eighteen, also eight and eighty so that they do not look like the numeral one. Seven must have a clear hook as it is similar to several. The outline for six is preferable when alone, as the numeral is too much like another outline. An Arabic numeral poorly written can be identified by a wavy line underneath, so you don't puzzle over whether it is an outline or longhand. Numbers are all but unguessable if they are not written clearly, and there is no such thing as the transcription of a number being "nearly right".

As the purpose is to get the outlines thoroughly learned, you will have to resist the urge to write numerals at this time. As soon as I told our fictional friend Fraser about this subject, he offered to rewrite some of his diary for us, inserting the numbers and quantities of everything he did on one particular day. I am giving him ten out of ten for his helpful attitude to the hundreds, if not thousands, of fellow shorthand writers, who will be practising hundreds of thousands of outlines and thus writing faster than the millions, if not billions, of people in the world. He clearly has zero tolerance for his own hesitations, aims for nil mistakes, and wants everyone else to gain the benefits of targeted practice, even on fairly simple stuff like numbers.

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Dear Diary, I rose very early and for breakfast I had one apple and one banana, each cut into four pieces and mixed into two spoonfuls of yogurt. I put on my two new trainers and ran two miles around the streets. Sometimes I can get in the two miles by running three times round the park playing field, but this morning I decided to make four laps of the nearby pond, and then four lengths of my road. All this took about three quarters of an hour, but today my timing was four to five minutes longer than usual. When I got back home, I had a meal of three tablespoons of oatmeal mixed with three tablespoons of milk, and on top I put five blueberries and five raspberries.

At about six o'clock I started work on the computer. I had six folders each containing several items. The first of the six contained seven letters that were waiting for a reply. I like to do the easy things first, so I answered the seven letters quite quickly, and this meant sending seven emails to them, which is much quicker than taking five minutes to print pages and another five minutes to go out and post them. Four of the folders held reports on four different premises that need decisions made. I knew that this was going to take at least four hours to do properly, so I allocated four time slots on four different days to do those. In the last folder were eight job applications from eight people in the company. One had to be discarded as quite unsuitable and the other seven will have a preliminary interview, from which I will draw up a shortlist of three for further attention. Only one of the eight applicants will be successful, leaving seven a little disappointed with the outcome.

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## Fraser's Numbers

By now it was nine o'clock and I had done a lot of work in those three hours. I planned to spend from nine to ten making phone calls. Just after nine I received a call from my friend who had just returned from seven days at a conference. At half past nine I had another call from a colleague who needed to spend ten minutes with me to discuss some reports and so I told him to come over at about eleven this morning. I think it will take longer than ten minutes to sort it all out. I managed to make eight of my ten calls, and the other two will have to wait until this afternoon. At ten I stopped for a break and walked round the garden. I fed my ten or eleven goldfish, but after a quick count I think I may have more like twelve or thirteen, which is good as I started off with at least fourteen to sixteen some time ago. At ten fourteen I resumed my work and did in fact make those last two phone calls within the first five minutes. Unfortunately my inbox now showed fifteen work emails and thirteen other emails, of which nine were from friends and four were junk. The fifteen work items took one to twelve minutes each to complete.

At eleven fifteen my colleague arrived with five folders under his arm. I joked that we only had two minutes per folder. We went through all five folders, plus two more of mine. It took us two hours and fifteen minutes and then it was time for lunch. I made two pizzas, two coffees and two fruit salads. We agreed that finishing the last three reports would have to wait until another day. He left at sixteen minutes past two, and then I went out for a while. I caught a number seventeen bus, and rode for eighteen minutes to the shops. I spent an hour and nineteen minutes shopping. I caught another number seventeen bus and the return journey took sixteen minutes. I spent eighteen minutes putting things away and a further nineteen minutes talking on the phone.

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I still had six reports to read and comment on, so I allocated twenty minutes to each one. Halfway through I took a twenty minute break. By five I was finished with the work, I had dinner at six, watched the television and news at seven, and visited my neighbour from eight to nine o'clock. I enjoyed twenty minutes soaking in the bath, and by ten I was in bed. I read a book about a man who in his twenties decided to walk thirty miles each week. He did this for forty weeks, and was able to visit fifty different villages in his county. He described his journeys in detail, passing sixty farms, and an amusing tale of crossing a field with seventy sheep on a very hot day with temperatures in the eighties. It was so interesting that I read several chapters in about ninety minutes. As my schedule for tomorrow seemed to list hundreds of things to do, I went straight to sleep before I could count from one to twenty. (1177 words)

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