

WRITE IN SHORTHAND WITH LARGE OR SMALL SIGNS?

Prof. Waldir Cury

Shorthand is a skill that requires speed, dexterity, concentration, conditioned reflex and motor coordination.

The study of shorthand speed requires, besides the daily, constant and repetitive training, the necessity of observing certain details related to the technical aspect in order to write more and better in shorthand.

Regarding shorthand signs, it is highly advisable to write in shorthand with small shorthand signs and the words should be quite close to each other. Writing in shorthand with large signs and leaving large spaces between the words generates a waste of time, impairs mental alertness as well as shorthand fluency and may cause fatigue.

Shorthand has a lot to do with space and time. Because it is written in a highly abbreviated nature, it requires that *everything be highly abbreviated*, including the size of the sign and the space between one word and another. It would be a contradiction to speak about highly abbreviated writing when there are huge signs and large spaces (superfluous spaces) between one word and another.

Shorthand aims to "save writing" in every way!

The advantage of writing in shorthand with smaller signs is indisputable. It's pure math! Even running at the same speed, it takes longer to run the distance of 20 meters than 10! That is, even if you are writing fluently in shorthand, it will take longer to write the same sentence or the same word in shorthand making larger signs than if making smaller ones.

The distance between a word and the other must be as small as possible (it must allow the shorthand signs to be sufficiently separated in a way that it will not hinder reading), because greater distances slow the speed and generate dispersion of mental concentration.

Below are e-mails, that are worth reading, between the shorthand student Roberta Moraes and myself, on this very subject.

After reading them, watch the two videos below that were placed by her on YouTube:

- the first one has 2 minutes with 80 words per minute, where she writes in shorthand with large signs and leaves a lot of space between words;
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U0x-LRJRhjc>
- the second one has 1 minute with 80 wpm, where she, following my recommendations, begins training with smaller shorthand signs and leaves less spaces between words.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9V1gBB6MJ2Y>

It's interesting to watch what she says when commenting on her switch to smaller and closer signs: *"In fact, I realized that I gained speed and, in the end, I did not feel tired like I used to feel before"*

Also notice that, in the second dictation, Roberta is able **to write more words in shorthand on each line**. This detail is important because, moving your hand less often to the line below, also represents a gain of time and space.

Roberta Moraes' e-mail:

Prof. Waldir, everything was going well so far.

I am studying 3 minutes of 80, I already managed to make the studied dictation, with very few errors, several times.

But I don't know why, for the last three days, I'm losing a lot of words, even at lower speeds, especially when I get dictations from other speakers (Taquiabrás 55 wpm).

Why is this happening? Is it normal?

I have been studying the shorthand brief forms in the recommended way and I already feel the benefits.

Thank you for your attention.

B Regards,

Roberta.

Prof. Waldir Cury's E-mail:

Hello Roberta!

It is normal to have more difficulty to get new dictations, especially at this stage where the student is trying to overcome each speed level. I always advise everyone as I'm

doing here with you, to study well each dictation, even the new ones. If you are having difficulty to get a dictation, it's because there are a few words that are causing hesitation at the time of writing them in shorthand. So, what to do? Underline those words that are being difficult to trace, the ones that are causing hesitation and train them several times for several days. And always persist on the same dictation, doing it several times until you have digested it well. Gradually, with continued training at a given speed, you will "mature" at that speed and dictations will become easier. Every step you improve as to speed, there is a new round of intense studies. With a methodical, persistent study, progress is certain to happen. But always train hard-to-trace words, words that are generating doubt, hesitation, at the time of writing in shorthand.

Can you send me a short video (one or two minutes) with you writing a dictation in shorthand? If you can, it would be great because then I would be able to see how you are writing in shorthand, how your signs are being made and if you are placing a lot of pressure when writing in shorthand that is, pressing the pencil too hard against the paper, etc.

B Regards,
Prof. Waldir

Roberta Moraes' E-mail:

Professor,

I am studying a dictation of 5 min at 80wpm and applied, in the first minute, the recommendations that you gave me. I think the result was good.

I put this video on You Tube ("taquigrafando 1 min de 80" (writing in shorthand 1 min of 80) or "robertataqui")

I was able to write the pause (the period) in shorthand. I tried to write in shorthand between the lines and reduced the size of the signs and spaces between them.

Please take a look and see if I am on the right track.

I will continue striving to reduce the size of the signs.

In fact I realized that I gained speed and at the end I did not feel tired like I used to feel before.

B Regards, Roberta

Prof. Waldir Cury's E-mail:

Hello Roberta!

Yes, now you're on the right track: smaller signs, less space between the words and writing in shorthand in-between the lines. See that the size of signs in relationship to speed is just a matter of math. You will take longer, even at a same speed, to run 20 meters than 10! An exercise that I often give is the following: the student makes a copy with tiny signs (extremely small), between guide lines that are very narrow. This exercise, which is called "microshorthand", aims to be the antidote to the trend of, when increasing the speed, the tendency is to also increase the signs that end up becoming absolute scrawls!

Also, another important thing is the lightness of the hand in the moment of writing in shorthand. I usually play with my students and say: "think that the pencil is a feather floating in the wind, way up in the clouds; everything very light, with no pressure on the hand, without pressing the pencil too hard on the paper. The only pressure you will exert on the hand is when holding the pencil so that it does not fall from it. Do not hold the pencil with a strong grip. In the training course that I gave to new stenographers from Alerj, a few years ago, I used to play a recording of a dictation for them to write in shorthand. I would "sneak up" on them from behind and pull their pencils out of their hand. I would do this with each one of them and if the pencil came out easily, it was because they were holding the pencil properly that is, without any pressure. If it did not, it was a sign he/she was holding it too strongly.

All the best!

Prof. Waldir
