

# Lesson - 1

## Introduction to Stenography

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

You have learnt to read and write English language. You must have learnt an Indian language as well. So, you are quite familiar with their scripts or alphabets. But, do you know that these scripts are not fast enough to write the language as quickly as you might require ? Look at Fig. 1.1 and Fig. 1.2 below wherein a word and a sentence have been written both in English script as well as in shorthand. Compare the movements of pen and time taken in writing the word and the sentence in English and shorthand. You will definitely find the difference.

	English	Shorthand
Fig. 1.1.	Know	.....
Fig.1.2	I do not know	.....

Don't you see that the word 'know' and the sentence 'I do not know' have very small and short outlines in shorthand ? Since the language scripts are not fast enough, there arose a need for a 'speedy script' to write a language as quickly as you might require. This is exactly what shorthand is. The shorthand has as such all the qualities to record the human voice speedily. Ordinarily, shorthand writing is six times quicker than the language writing.

In order to record the human voice into neat and clean shorthand script, and to transcribe the same accurately, you require thorough knowledge of the

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principles of the system of shorthand, aided by a good background of the language.

With the invention of the typewriter the transcription of notes written in shorthand is now done on a typewriter/computer, so that the documents could be typed speedily, accurately and neatly. Thus, the term 'Stenography' has now come to be used in a wider sense, to represent the combination of three skills - Shorthand, Transcription and Typewriting. While the Shorthand and Transcription shall form the contents of these lessons, you will also have to acquire a fairly good speed - say 30-40 words per minute - in typewriting, unless you possess it already.

Wherever you start learning any subject or skill, it is necessary for you to know its background, importance and the methodology used in learning this subject or attaining that skill. You will, therefore, study in the first lesson, importance of shorthand, qualities required for a successful Stenographer, techniques for writing shorthand and the material used in writing shorthand.

## **1.2 OBJECTIVES**

After going through this lesson, you will be able to -

- recall the meaning of Stenography and definition of shorthand;
- explain the importance and scope of shorthand and other related subjects or skills.
- enumerate the essential qualities of a Stenographer;
- adopt correct sitting posture when taking dictation;
- list the equipment (including dictation equipment) and the materials required for writing shorthand.
- list the points to be kept in mind while transcribing.

## **1.3 WHAT IS STENOGRAPHY ?**

The term 'Stenography' is composed of two words 'steno' and 'graphy'. 'Steno' means narrow, 'graphy' means to write. So, Stenography means the art or any method of writing very quickly.

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Stenography was later known as Shorthand. Shorthand has been described by Sir Isaac Pitman as 'the art of representing spoken sounds in shorthand characters (written signs)'. Shorthand provides a way of representing every sound heard in English words.

Originally the transcription of shorthand notes was done in longhand or the language script, which involved a longer time to transcribe. The transcription of shorthand notes speedily and neatly be done on either the typewriter or computer.

### **Pitman's system of Shorthand**

The system of shorthand invented by Sir Isaac Pitman in 1837 in England, has been found to be scientific and complete. In this system all minute sounds of English words can be written in shorthand, and the shorthand outlines can be read back accurately without any difficulty. Since this system is widely practised all over the world and each and every town of India, it has been adopted by the NIOS for imparting instructions to the students.

#### **DEFINITION**

Shorthand may be briefly and accurately defined as "the art of representing spoken sounds by geometrical characters. It is also called 'Phonography' or 'Sound Writing.' It is a system to write words as they are pronounced. Since shorthand is written as briefly as possible, it is called Stenography.

### **Pitman's system is phonetic**

It is a philosophical system of writing - a method based on phonetics (sounds). Ordinary longhand is seldom phonetic. But Pitman's shorthand is phonetic, that means, words are generally written as they are pronounced, and not according to ordinary longhand spellings. With a few exceptions, only such sounds, as are heard in pronouncing English words, are written in shorthand. Unspoken or unheard sounds are not to be written. A few illustrations are given below :-

<b>Words</b>	<b>Sounds to be written</b>
palm	p-ah-m
tomb	t-oo-m
ache	a-k
coal	k-oh-l

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## **1.5 IMPORTANCE OF SHORTHAND**

When shorthand was invented in the 4th Century B.C. it was used only for verbatim reporting of speeches. Its use was later extended to write communications. It shows that the usefulness of shorthand has been recognised by all in every part of the world. Shorthand has received greater importance because of the following factors:-

- (i) Shorthand writing is faster than longhand writing**
- (ii) It provides jobs to a number of persons**
- (iii) It saves time and energy**

## **1.5 STENOGRAPHER, HIS TECHNIQUES AND EQUIPMENT**

### **QUALITIES OF A SUCCESSFUL STENOGRAPHER**

During the course of his official duties, a Stenographer may have to take dictation, receive telephone calls and visitors, fix appointments for his officer, maintain diary of engagements, meetings and reminders to be sent, keep a note of movement of files, and generally assist his officer in such matters as the latter may direct. He may also dispose of such work which he is authorised to do, during the absence of his officer. In order to take dictation accurately and neatly, speed, legibility, sharp grasp, hard work and good knowledge of the language are essential pre-requisites. But to perform the general duties, as listed above, he should possess the following qualities :-

- (i) Punctuality**
  - (ii) Patience and personal qualities**
  - (iii) Sincerity**
  - (iv) Personality**
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## **SITTING POSTURE AND TECHNIQUES FOR WRITING SHORTHAND**

In writing shorthand three things have to be kept in mind, viz. speed, accuracy and freedom from fatigue. This depends on correct position of the shorthand notebook, size of notes, body, hand and fingers outline, rapid leaf-turning, besides table and chair of proper sizes. When sitting for dictation you should feel at ease and there should be no tension in mind.

- (i) **Position of body** : Sit erect at table, body close to the table. Hold your head high at a distance of about 40 cms . from the notebook. Keep your feet on the floor.
- (ii) **Position of Shorthand Notebook**: Keep your note book at right angle or slightly turned inside. Number pages and turn a few left hand page-ends for rapid turning of leaves.
- (iii) **Position of arms, hands and fingers** : Keep your left elbow on the table and throw your entire weight on the left arm. Rest your right elbow firmly so that it does not move forward or backward, or from side to side.

Keep your right wrist on the note book to ensure easy writing on the writing line. Hold the pen/pencil low between the thumb and the first and second fingers. Grip the pen lightly. The third and fourth fingers shall simply touch the paper.

- (iv) **Size of outlines** : Writing very small or very large characters should be avoided. You are advised to write shorthand stroke of the size of 1/6" (5 mm approx.).
  - (v) **Rapid leaf-turning** : While writing on the upper half of the leaf or page, introduce the second finger of the left hand between it and the next leaf. When convenient (not necessarily at the fag end of the last line) turn the leaf.
  - (vi) **Time Management** : You should keep the dictation material ready in a certain place on the desk, so that no time is wasted in searching for them when called for dictation. The pen should be filled with ink, and the pencil sharpened even before receiving the call from the officer. The date should be written at the top left hand corner of the first page to be started for the day's notes. If you have to attend to many officers in the office, the
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name of the dictating officer should also be written near the date. The rubber band should be used to mark the end of a finished page of your notebook so that you can start writing on the next blank page without waste of time. If these details are attended to beforehand, the buzzer (bell from the officer) can be responded to at once.

- (vii) **Knowledge of Language** : Sound knowledge of language is very important. Use dictionary wherever required.
- (viii) **Concentration** : Shorthand writing requires good amount of concentration. Give your full concentration on what you are writing.
- (ix) **Proper lighting** : The room should have proper ventilation and light should be adequate in the room.
- (x) **Believe in yourself** : Always have a positive approach towards your duties & never avoid responsibility.

## 1.6 MATERIAL REQUIRED FOR WRITING SHORTHAND

For a skilled subject like shorthand, proper choice of material is essential. The list of material and equipment can vary from situation to situation.

- (a) **Pen or Pencil** : Any good quality pen with a nib, not too stiff, can be used for writing shorthand. Such a pen should be used exclusively for writing shorthand. In no case a ball point pen should be used for writing shorthand. You can use either pen or pencil, especially available for writing shorthand.
  - (b) **Shorthand Notebook** : Only ruled paper is used for writing Pitmans system of shorthand. Standard size ruled shorthand notebooks of the size 12 cms. x 19 cms. are commonly available in the market, which should be used for writing shorthand. When writing shorthand, only the front side of the leaf should be used, leaving the back side. When the whole notebook has been used, it should be reversed, to enable you to write on the other side of the various leaves of the notebook.
  - (c) **Printed Lessons containing Exercises or Textbooks** : As you have to practice from the exercises given in these lessons and also from other text material at a later stage, these should be readily available when writing shorthand.
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- (d) **Furniture and layout:** You should use an armless chair, approximately 40-45 cms. high depending on your height. For writing shorthand you should prefer an office table (approximately of the height of 70-75 cms.)

You should also make sure that the room in which you write shorthand, particularly when you are transcribing from dictation, should be free from noise. There should be sufficient lighting in the room, so that the thin shorthand outlines can be read easily.

- (e) **Dictation Equipment :** Dictation Machines, Dictaphones are used by some officers when the services of Stenographers are not available, such as, beyond office hours, at homes or holidays, for the purpose of dictating correspondence or any other matter. These machines record human voices (dictated matter) on suitable media, such as, plastic tape, plastic disc, plastic belt, coated paper, wire etc. Shown below is the photo of dictaphone.



### **1.1 Dictaphone**

The Stenographer or audio-typist plays back the recording on any desired speed, listens to it (usually through headphones) and types what he/she hears. Some modern transcribing units incorporate foot or hand controls for starting and stopping the machine, voice control adjustments (to regulate speed, volume

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and tone), a backspacer for repeating dictation, and a signalling device to indicate the length of dictation and places where corrections have been made.

You should be conversant with the operation of the recording machines such as dictaphones, computers etc. the situation can arise when you may have to use one in any office.

### **Transcription techniques**

- (i) The notebook and reference papers should be placed adjacent to each other. Omission of words made from dots and dashes in shorthand is often the cause of many failures in examinations.
  - (ii) The notes should not be read too fast. It is advisable to read the whole dictated passage before transcription.
  - (iii) Once the transcription is over, in order to ensure accuracy, the whole transcription should be read back.
  - (iv) The transcript, should be read back for accuracy before it is removed from the machine. In this way errors can be corrected without the necessity of re-inserting the papers into the typewriter/computer.
  - (v) To avoid repetition, the whole page should be crossed through, once the transcription is over.
  - (vi) Unless you have a good background information of the work you are called upon to do daily, you will not be in a position to follow the sense of the dictation, to take it down efficiently. You should therefore do spare-time reading of the subject relating to your work and should make a list of special terms and phrases which occur frequently in dictation in your office and for which you should prepare brief outlines, phraseograms and intersections. This will increase your speed of writing in shorthand.
  - (vii) Used shorthand note books should be stored for future reference, as the need may arise sometimes to refer back to them. The notebooks may be stored in order of dates/months of use.
  - (viii) When you are transcribing shorthand notes from the dictating machine, you should be well conversant with the operating methods.
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## **SOME BRIEF HINTS TO SPEED WRITING**

1. Buy a good fountain pen with a fine and flexible nib.
  2. Use good clean ink, preferably blue-black.
  3. Buy a good notebook with smooth lined paper.
  4. Prepare the page for rapid turning over before beginning to take dictation.
  5. Cultivate a small and neat style of shorthand writing.
  6. Write lightly, with no digging into the paper.
  7. Hold the pen lightly, not tightly.
  8. Take the cap off from the pen in order to avoid weight.
  9. Keep a spare pen/pencil handy.
  10. Let the little finger of the writing hand rest lightly on the paper.
  11. Concentrate when taking dictation.
  12. Follow the sense of the matter dictated.
  13. Practice drill exercises every day.
  14. Memorize the Short Forms and Contractions.
  15. Understand and apply the Principles of Phrasing.
  16. Learn to spell correctly, whenever in doubt, consult dictionary.
  17. Acquire a good knowledge of the rules of English Grammar.
  18. Do plenty of transcriptions from your own shorthand notes.
  19. Read plenty of printed shorthand matter.
  20. Keep your general reading wide.
  21. Write legible outlines when the speed is comfortably low. When the speed is high try to write the shorthand outlines for all the words dictated.
  22. Read through the shorthand notes before transcribing.
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23. Aim always at a higher speed.
24. Through persistence, achieve your aim.

## 1.7 WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

The material required for note-taking in shorthand is (1) Shorthand Notebook (2) Shorthand Pen/Pencil (3) Rubber Band.

Before taking dictation, be ready with the used pages of your notebook duly marked (enclosed) with a rubber band. Fill in the ink in the pen or sharpen your pencil beforehand.

When taking dictation, you should sit facing the officer, across the table. The room should be well-lighted to improve the writing and reading of notes. The notebook should be kept at right angle and the lower left-ends of the blank pages of your notebook be turned for quick leaf-turning. When a page has been completed, turn it with the left hand fingers.

Your shorthand outlines should be neither too large nor too small. Write approximately 12 outlines in one line. Always follow the sense of the matter being dictated and insert full stop during the course of dictation. Hold your pen with a proper grip and write lightly. Outlines not properly written should be vocalised. Unfamiliar words, names and addresses may be written in English to ensure correct transcription.

You should write outlines of all the words. Never leave any word. Write something for every word. In case you have not heard any word, it is better to ask the officer than to leave some gap. Corrections should be inserted either above the line in the margin or at the end of the page.

All errors should be erased and corrected there and then. If the transcript is a draft, type it in double line space. You are expected to remove all grammatical mistakes cropping up in the dictation, type correct spellings and insert proper punctuation marks in the transcript. Use of dictionary be made in case of any doubt. While transcribing, read a group of 3-4 words at a time and then type the same. After you finish a page of transcript, it is better to compare and read back the same and make corrections while the paper is still on the typewriter/computer. Every page of the notebook transcribed should be cancelled by drawing a line over it.

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Prepare brief outlines, phraseograms and intersections of all common words and phrases frequently occurring in the dictation in your office. Before using dictation machine, be familiar with all the working parts you are required to handle. Listen to the entire dictation of a letter or document before you start transcribing. Make sure that you type the necessary number of copies of the letter/document.