SOFTWARE & TECH

Gregg Shorthand Series 90

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Introduction to Gregg Shorthand Series 90

In a world dominated by digital keyboards and voice recognition software, the art of shorthand might seem like a relic of a bygone era. Yet, for those who seek speed, privacy, and a deeply personal connection to the written word, shorthand remains an indispensable skill. Among the many shorthand systems developed over the centuries, few have achieved the elegance, efficiency, and enduring popularity of Gregg Shorthand. At the pinnacle of its evolution stands **Gregg Shorthand Series 90**, the most refined and streamlined version of this celebrated writing method. Far from being a dusty historical footnote, Series 90 represents a masterclass in simplification and speed, offering a powerful tool for students, journalists, secretaries, and lifelong learners alike. This article explores the nuances of Series 90, its key features, how it compares to other systems, and why it continues to be a relevant and rewarding pursuit for anyone looking to capture the spoken word at remarkable speed.

The Historical Journey: From John Robert Gregg to Series 90

To truly appreciate **Gregg Shorthand Series 90**, it is essential to understand the lineage from which it emerged. The system was invented by John Robert Gregg, an Irish-born educator and publisher, who first published his "Light-Line Phonography" in 1888. Unlike the geometric systems that dominated the era—such as Pitman Shorthand—Gregg's approach was revolutionary. He based his symbols on the cursive, elliptical movements of ordinary handwriting, making it more natural and easier to learn. The system gained rapid acceptance, particularly in the United States, where it became a staple of business education throughout the 20th century.

Over the decades, the system underwent several major revisions, each aimed at increasing speed and reducing learning time. Editions such as Anniversary (1929), Simplified (1949), and Diamond Jubilee (1963) progressively trimmed unnecessary strokes and rules. The culmination of this evolution arrived in 1978 with the publication of **Gregg Shorthand Series 90**. This edition was not merely a minor update; it was a deliberate and comprehensive simplification designed to meet the changing needs of a modern workforce. The goal was clear: make shorthand faster to learn while retaining the high speeds required for professional dictation. Series 90 stripped away many of the finer points and exceptions that had made earlier versions more complex, creating a leaner, more accessible system without sacrificing its core phonetic logic.

Key Features of Gregg Shorthand Series 90

Gregg Shorthand Series 90 is distinguished by several core features that set it apart from its predecessors and from other shorthand systems. First and foremost is its relentless focus on **simplicity**. The Series 90 manual reduced the total number of brief forms (abbreviated symbols for common words) and decreased the number of principles and rules that students needed to memorize. This made the initial learning curve

significantly gentler.

Another hallmark of Series 90 is its **light-line, cursive**nature. All symbols are derived from the natural elliptical motions of handwriting, with no thick or thin strokes. This means any pen or pencil works perfectly, and the writing is smooth and effortless. The system is also completely phonetic—you write words as they sound, not as they are spelled. This eliminates the confusion of silent letters and irregular English spelling, allowing for much faster writing speeds, often exceeding 100 words per minute with practice.

Series 90 also introduced a more logical and consistent set of **abbreviating principles**. For example, common word endings and beginnings (prefixes and suffixes) are represented by simple, efficient outlines. The system places a strong emphasis on **blending**, where common letter combinations are written with a single, continuous stroke. This reduces the number of pen lifts, further accelerating writing speed. Importantly, Series 90 retained the core vocabulary and structure of Gregg Shorthand, so those who learned earlier editions could transition to Series 90 with relative ease.

How Series 90 Differs from Earlier Versions

For those familiar with earlier Gregg editions like Simplified or Diamond Jubilee, the differences in **Gregg Shorthand Series 90**are immediately apparent. The most significant change is the reduction in the number of brief forms. In Anniversary edition, there were hundreds of brief forms; Series 90 pared this down to around 180 of the most common words. This was a deliberate pedagogical choice: fewer items to memorize meant students could start writing meaningful sentences sooner, which boosted confidence and motivation.

Furthermore, Series 90 eliminated many of the "special" rules that applied only to specific word groups. Earlier editions had complex rules for the omission of certain vowels or the treatment of specific consonant clusters. Series 90 simplified these rules, making the system more predictable and easier to apply. The **blending**of common letter combinations was also refined; for instance, the "th" sound, a very common pair in English, was given an even simpler, more fluent form. Overall, Series 90 is less fussy and more forgiving than its predecessors. While a purist might argue that earlier editions could achieve slightly higher potential speeds, in practice, Series 90 allowed students to achieve functional speeds (80–100 wpm) in a fraction of the time.

Learning Gregg Shorthand Series 90: A Practical Guide

Learning **Gregg Shorthand Series 90** is a journey, but one that is well within reach for anyone willing to commit consistent effort. The most traditional and effective method is to work through the official **Gregg Shorthand Series 90 manual**. This textbook, published by McGraw-Hill, is structured in a logical, step-by-step manner. It begins with the basic alphabet and simple word outlines, gradually introducing brief forms, abbreviating principles, and phrases. Each lesson builds upon the previous one, and the manual is filled with reading and writing practice exercises.

Essential Steps for Mastery

- Master the alphabet first. Before worrying about speed or brief forms, become completely fluent in writing and reading the basic symbols for each consonant and vowel sound. This is the foundation of everything else.
- Practice daily, even if only for 15–20 minutes. Consistency is far more important than marathon study sessions. Short, frequent practice builds muscle memory and automaticity.
- Read back everything you write. Shorthand is not just about writing fast; it is about reading your own notes accurately. Always take time to transcribe your practice outlines back into longhand.
- Focus on brief forms early. The brief forms in Series 90 are carefully chosen for their high frequency. Mastering these 180 or so outlines will dramatically increase your writing speed because you will be writing entire common words with a single, simple stroke.
- Use dictation practice. Once you have a basic vocabulary, start practicing from dictation. You can use

online resources, recordings, or ask a friend to read at a slow, steady pace. Gradually increase the speed as you improve.

- Write with a comfortable pen. A pen that glides smoothly across the paper without scratching is essential. Many shorthand writers prefer rollerball or gel pens for their consistent ink flow.

Common Challenges and How to Overcome Them

Many beginners encounter a few predictable hurdles when learning Series 90. One common challenge is **forgetting brief forms**. The solution is simple: use flashcards or drill sheets. Write the brief form on one side and the longhand word on the other. Review them regularly until they become second nature. Another challenge is **hesitation**. When you pause to think about the correct outline, you lose speed. The remedy is to practice until the correct stroke becomes automatic through repetition. Finally, some learners struggle with **reading their own writing**if they are not neat. Focus on clear, consistent penmanship from the start. Speed will come, but clarity must be cultivated.

Practical Applications and Benefits of Series 90

Why should anyone invest time in learning **Gregg Shorthand Series 90**in the age of smartphones and laptops? The benefits are surprisingly numerous and practical. For students, especially in fields like law, medicine, journalism, or business, shorthand offers an unparalleled ability to capture detailed notes during lectures or interviews without the distraction of typing. Unlike audio recordings, which must be replayed and transcribed later, shorthand notes are immediately readable and searchable.

For professionals, the advantages are even more pronounced. Journalists use shorthand to accurately quote sources in real time. Executive assistants and secretaries rely on it for taking dictation, drafting correspondence, and organizing meeting notes efficiently. Even for personal use, shorthand is a powerful tool. It allows you to keep a private journal, jot down creative ideas quickly, or take notes during phone calls and podcasts. There is also a cognitive benefit: learning and using a symbolic writing system like Series 90 exercises the brain in unique ways, improving memory, concentration, and fine motor skills.

Moreover, shorthand provides a degree of **privacy**that digital notes cannot. Your shorthand notes are essentially a personal code, unintelligible to most people. In a world of data breaches and surveillance, this is a non-trivial advantage. Finally, there is a deep sense of satisfaction and accomplishment that comes from mastering this elegant skill. Writing at speeds of 80 to 120 words per minute with a simple pen and paper is genuinely impressive and gives you a tangible, portable superpower.

Comparing Gregg Shorthand Series 90 to Other Systems

Gregg Shorthand Series 90is often compared to its main rival, Pitman Shorthand, as well as to modern machine shorthand systems like stenotype. Understanding these comparisons can help you decide if Series 90 is right for you. Pitman Shorthand, developed by Isaac Pitman, is a geometric system that relies on thick and thin strokes to denote voiced and unvoiced sounds. It is incredibly precise and can achieve very high speeds, but it requires a special nibbed pen or pencil and has a steeper learning curve. Series 90, by contrast, is more forgiving to learn and write with any instrument, making it more accessible for hobbyists and busy students.

Machine shorthand or stenotype is used by court reporters and captioners. It involves a specialized keyboard where multiple keys are pressed simultaneously to produce words. This system can achieve speeds of 225 words per minute or more, making it the gold standard for professional court reporting. However, the equipment is expensive and requires years of full-time training. Series 90, while not able to match those top speeds for most users, offers a far lower barrier to entry. You need only a pen and paper, and you can achieve professional-level speeds (80–100 wpm) with several months of consistent practice. For the vast majority of note-taking needs, Series 90 is more than sufficient.

Resources for Mastering Gregg Shorthand Series 90

While the official **Gregg Shorthand Series 90 manual** remains the definitive resource, there are many other tools available for the modern learner. Used copies of the manual are often available online, and some websites offer digitized versions. Additionally, the **Gregg Shorthand Dictionary**(Series 90 edition) is an invaluable reference for looking up the correct outline for any word. For dictation practice, there are audio recordings that accompany the manual, as well as online communities and forums where experienced shorthand writers share tips, drills, and encouragement.

One particularly useful resource is the practice of **phrase building**. Series 90 includes many common phrases (like "I am," "you will," "in the") that are written with a single, smooth stroke. Learning these phrases is a powerful speed booster. Many learners also create their own personalized flashcard decks using apps like Anki, which use spaced repetition to optimize memorization. Finally, joining an online group or forum dedicated to Gregg Shorthand can provide motivation, answers to your questions, and a sense of community. Enthusiasts regularly share practice materials and stories of their progress, which can be highly inspiring for anyone on the learning path.

Conclusion

Gregg Shorthand Series 90stands as a monument to intelligent design and pedagogical clarity. It took a well-established, highly effective system and made it even more accessible without sacrificing its core power. For anyone seeking to dramatically increase their writing

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