

Extracts from Thomas Shelton's *Tachygraphy or Short-Writing* (1647)

Kate Loveman

Thomas Shelton devised a shorthand system called 'tachygraphy' in the 1620s. It appeared in lots of editions across the seventeenth century. This is the system that Samuel Pepys learned and used for his diary. Extracts here are from the 1647 Cambridge edition.

There are symbols for **letters**:

| The letters of the Alphabet. | |
|------------------------------|---|
| a | ^ |
| b | |
| c | Γ |
| d |) |
| e | 8 |
| f | 7 |
| g | 4 |
| h | < |
| i | L |
| k | C |
| l | U |
| m | \ |
| n | - |
| o | c |
| p | 9 |
| qu | r |
| r | p |
| t | / |
| v | v |
| w | L |
| x | x |
| y | y |
| z | z |

There are symbols for common beginnings and endings of words

| Prepositions for longe words. | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|---|-------|---|---------|---|
| Ab | } | t | Con | a | Pre | d |
| ob | | | cor | r | pro | L |
| ac | } | < | col | p | re | ∩ |
| ad | | | de | ∩ | sub | ∩ |
| af | } | r | di | ∩ | suff | α |
| all | | | dis | z | sup | p |
| am | } | c | fall | ∩ | sen | r |
| an | | | full | ∩ | sin | ∩ |
| ap | } | p | for | ε | sal | ∩ |
| op | | | im | < | sol | ∩ |
| as | } | s | liber | ∩ | temp | ∩ |
| at | | | mess | ∩ | trans | ∩ |
| circum | } | b | miss | ∩ | vn | ∩ |
| com | | | per | ∩ | op | ∩ |
| | | | par | ∩ | vt | ∩ |
| Terminations for longe words. | | | | | | |
| Able | } | 7 | ing | 3 | serie | ∩ |
| ible | | | len | ∩ | sion | ∩ |
| ation | } | ∩ | lent | ∩ | tion | ∩ |
| ceue | | | litie | ∩ | soeuer | ∩ |
| dure | } | ∩ | mer | e | ternall | ∩ |
| fect | | | mar | ∩ | ther | ∩ |
| ference | } | ∩ | ment | ∩ | tent | ∩ |
| fication | | | ness | 3 | ture | ∩ |
| fulness | } | s | ous | 6 | ver | ∩ |
| iect | | | cent | ∩ | | |
| itude | } | y | sent | ∩ | | |

There are symbols for **common words** (or words common in sermons). Here are some examples:

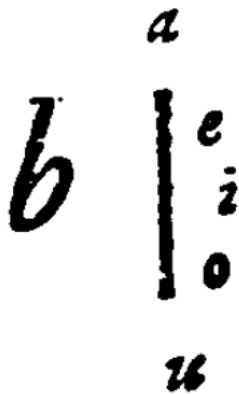
| | | | |
|---------------------------|---|------------------------------|---|
| Acknowledg | u | H | |
| Advantage | i | He | o |
| Afflictions ^{by} | e | Hath that | h |
| Away | ^ | Holie ^a | e |
| Anger ^{with} | a | Humble | h |
| And | - | Heart | 4 |
| Adulterie | y | His | a |
| Admonish | h | Hope | p |
| Arguments ^{by} | m | Helpe ^{and} | a |
| Against | p | Heaven ^{is in} | |
| Account ^{the} | o | Holighost ^{and the} | 4 |
| After | a | How ^{yet} | 6 |
| Abundance ^{for} | 7 | Hands ^{doe the} | h |
| Actions ^{of} | 6 | Hipocrites ^{of} | h |
| As ^{when} | s | Heretic ^{les} | f |
| Appere ^{will} | o | Hurt | o |
| Amonge | ^ | Him | < |
| Apostles | A | | |
| Angells ^{and} | A | | |

Vowels

When writing shorthand words, you join symbols together.

However, to show vowels in the middle or at the ends of words, you don't write the letter symbol for that vowel. Instead, you take your pen off the page, and then start the next symbol in a position that signals the vowel.

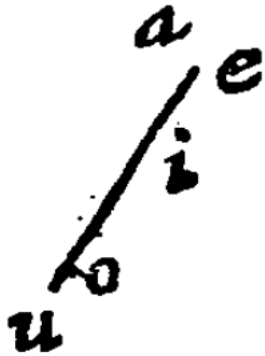
Here are Shelton's tables to illustrate the vowel positions around the symbols for 'b' (a vertical straight line), 'm' (a line sloping up) and 't' (a line sloping down)



So, to write 'bat', you would write the symbol for 'b' (|) and then put the symbol for t (\) directly above it.

To write 'bet', you would write the 'b' symbol and put the 't' symbol towards the top right of it.

Vowels positions around 'm':



Vowel positions around 't':

