

# How to take notes faster with speedwriting



When you take notes during a meeting, phone call, or interview, you're likely battling between listening to what's being said and writing it all down without missing important information. It can feel nearly impossible to write quickly enough when you're writing full words or using complete sentences, which is why many people turn to speedwriting.

Speedwriting is a method similar to shorthand, making it easier for you to take notes more efficiently. Plus, it doesn't take long to learn, so you can start implementing the practice as soon as your next meeting or interview.

## What is speedwriting?

Speedwriting is a system that was trademarked in 1924 by Emma Dearborn, a professor at Columbia University. It was developed as an alternative to shorthand, which is a method of rapid writing using abbreviations and symbols that first appeared in 1837. Shorthand is a quicker method, but takes much longer to learn.

When speedwriting, you use a combination of letters and punctuation marks as a form of shorthand. With practice, you can learn to write 70 WPM while utilizing this method.

The main idea of speedwriting is to write words as they sound and only long vowels when they are expressed. Therefore, you could write the word "sell" as sel or "make" as mk. With the letter "i" and "j", you don't add the dot to save time while you're writing, and you can use symbols to represent parts of a word, such as underlining the last letter in a word to denote "ing."

While speedwriting might not be as fast as shorthand, it is much easier to learn and start implementing quickly.

## What are the benefits of speedwriting?

There are a plethora of benefits associated with speedwriting. Here are some of the most common ones you might experience.

- **Save time.** You can write your notes quicker without decreasing accuracy.
- **Increase efficiency.** Since you write your notes quicker, you are more efficient. Also, with this system you'll take notes using a consistent process, so you can easily reread what you've written. You'll spend less time reviewing your notes to determine what you were saying.
- **Take better notes.** You can write your notes quicker, with less stress. Faster, more accurate notes equal a better note-taking process overall.

## Tips for taking notes

Before diving into the details of shorthand, here are some note-taking tips to keep in mind.

- **Write small.** the bigger your letters, the longer it takes you to write them.
- **Write close together.** the more space you put between your words, the longer it takes you to write them.
- **Don't press too hard.** Doing so slows you down and makes your hand more fatigued.
- **Use lower case letters.** Capital letters take longer to write.
- **Write in the middle of the page.** Writing close to the edge of the paper causes you to slow down, so you don't run out of space.
- **Do what works for you.** While there are guidelines for shorthand, there are no set rules. You can ultimately write in a way that works best for you unless you're in a company that requires everyone to use the same shorthand spelling for consistency.
- **Practice quick flipping.** As you near the bottom of a page, prepare to push the paper up and flip it over quickly as you reach the end. This lets you continue writing without pausing.
- **Use a good writing utensil.** You should utilize a sharp pencil or a good quality pen while taking notes.
- **Be repetitive.** When you get started, write each word several times and say it in your head. This repetition will help you remember how to write the word the next time you hear someone say it.
- **Implement speedwriting ASAP.** You will get better with speedwriting by doing it. The next time you're in a position to implement the practice, do so, and you'll improve each time.

## Getting started with speedwriting

### Level 1: The Basics

The easiest speedwriting words involve these 1 letter or 1 number representations.

- 2 = to, too, two
- 4 = four, for
- i = eye, I
- c = see, sea
- r = are
- y = why
- b = be, been, being
- & = and
- s = is
- t = it

- f = of
- . or "th" = the (meaning you can use the letters "th" or a dot (.) to represent the word the)
- M - me
- W - we
- v /hv = very/have

## **Level 2: Silent letters and vowels**

The next level of speedwriting involves words in which you simply remove all vowels and silent letters.

- No = know
- Tl = tell
- scs= success
- Btr = better
- Ltl = little
- Mbr = member
- Dpt = department
- Org = organization
- Mtg = meeting
- Mkt = market

## **Level 3: Vowels**

The next level merely involves removing all vowels.

- Sl = sell
- Sel = seal
- Sal = sale/sail
- Fl = sill
- Fil = file
- Vlu = value
- Bk = book
- Fct = fact
- Efct = effect
- Inspr = inspire
- Acpt = accept
- Othr = other
- Xcpt = except
- Xtnsv = extensive

## **Level 4: Phonetics**

The next basic level of speedwriting involves simply writing the word how it sounds.

- K (cn) = can
- Kd (cd) = could
- Klnk (clnc) = clinic
- Bk = back
- Lk = lack/luck/lock
- Cntr = centre
- Aj = age
- Mnj = manage

- Hj = hedge
- Klj = college

There are further levels involved in speed writing such as phonetics, subscripts, suffixes, and prefixes.

## How to prepare for speedwriting in a meeting

When you're preparing to speed write in a meeting or during a phone call or interview, here's what you can do to improve your practice.

- **Practice abbreviations.** You don't want your first time speedwriting to be when you are in your first meeting, so practice regularly before you need to use it.
- **Be informed.** You want to consider the topics and possible vocabulary used during the meeting and think about how you can use speedwriting.
- **Consider relevant lingo.** You should also consider people's initials, in-house jargon, products and services that might be mentioned, and how you can use speedwriting.

## Final speed writing strategies

- **Practice all words.** A great way to practice your speed writing is to get a notebook, write the letter A-Z on your pages, and then enter all new words as you create them.
- **Use it ASAP.** Applying the system immediately and add more words as you find more words you'll utilize regularly.
- **Use it daily.** You want to continue using your speed writing skills as much as possible to practice.
- **Don't give up.** While your speed writing might not be perfect, don't give up. The more you practice, the easier it will become over time.

**Additional Resource:** Still looking to up your note-taking game? Consider these [18 tips for taking better meeting minutes](#).