

How to take better notes with Speed Writing

Taking notes by hand is a great way to keep track of information. Writing things down can help you remember them better. It also gives you something to reference later if you need to study the information, send out meeting notes, or verify the instructions that you were given. However, it can be hard to keep up when someone is speaking quickly or sharing a lot of important information at once. That's why speed writing is popular.

When you hear "speed writing" you may think that it simply means to write faster, but there's actually a lot more to speed writing than simply trying to make your hands move faster. Here's what you need to know about speed writing and how it can cut down your writing time and capture the key information needed.

What is Speed Writing?

Speed writing is a shorthand system in which the writer condenses or abbreviates words based on phonetics in order to write more efficiently. It's a system meant to simplify note taking so that you can take fast and accurate notes and dictation in meetings, classes, or work settings.

Speed Writing vs. Traditional Shorthand

Speed writing is a form of shorthand, but it's quite a different system than the traditional shorthand systems.

Traditional Shorthand Systems

Shorthand is a writing system that has been around for centuries. Through a series of pen strokes, you can quickly take detailed notes without writing out any words or letters using shorthand. Two of the most popular types of shorthand are Gregg shorthand and Pitman shorthand.

Pitman shorthand was created by Sir Isaac Pitman in 1837. It uses slanted and squiggling lines to represent common words and phonetic sounds. Gregg shorthand is another shorthand writing system that dates back to 1888. Gregg uses elliptical figures and lines to represent words and phonetic sounds, similar to the Pitman system.

Both forms of shorthand are highly efficient. Those that are highly skilled at Gregg or Pitman shorthand can write 275+ words per minute (wpm). However, they are somewhat complex systems to learn and interpret. They both have heavy cursive influences, so the writing style and movements will feel unfamiliar to those that have never used cursive regularly.

Speed Writing

Speed writing is typically less complex and easier to learn for the average person. Many of the speed writing systems are also more modern. For example, BakerWrite is a speed writing system that was created by Heather Baker in 2004. BakerWrite, like many newer speed writing systems, skips the squiggly lines and cursive influences and instead sticks to letters of the alphabet and numbers.

This is an easier to learn system that is ideal for taking notes in meetings. You can learn to use the BakerWrite system in a matter of days, or even in one webinar. It is not quite as fast as using traditional shorthand systems like the Gregg and Pitman systems, but it can still save you a lot of time. The purpose of speed writing is to reduce the number of letters that you write rather than replace letters with other symbols.

This system will feel more natural to many people. This is because people already abbreviate or shorten many common words on the internet. For example, in speed writing to, two, or too would simply be written as “2”. Late could be “l8”. This style of abbreviation has been used in online chatrooms, forums, text messages, and social media for decades already, so it will feel somewhat familiar to most people.



When to Use Speed Writing

Speed writing shorthand is typically used for note-taking during meetings or when taking dictation. It is best for scenarios when you want to note down information quickly and accurately. It won't give you a polished first draft that is ready to be shared with others, but it will help you jot down everything you need quickly.

Some specific uses of speed writing include:

- When taking meeting minutes at a staff or board meeting.
- Documenting quotes and information during an interview.
- When a court reporter takes official notes during court hearings.
- Transcribers who need to take dictation from a recording and turn it into text.

These are just a few examples. Speed writing can be used in any scenario where you need to amp up your writing speed while note-taking.

How to Get Started With Speed Writing

Getting started with speed writing can seem intimidating, but it's fairly intuitive once you dive into it. Here's how to build your speed writing skills so that you can save time and take better notes:

1. Pick a System

If you want to start using speed writing to save time while taking notes at work or school, you'll need to start by picking a system or creating your own. Using a speed writing system, like BakerWrite, as a starting point can be helpful in guiding you on how to condense certain vowels, words, and phonetic sounds. Many shorthand and speed writing systems even have manuals on how to condense words or dictionaries of common words translated into the speed writing versions. If you want a more interactive learning experience, you can sign up for our upcoming [speed writing webinar](#).

2. Keep A Log of Your Words

You want to try to be as consistent as possible in how you abbreviate words while speed writing. This is because speed writing is typically used when taking notes that you will need to reference later. You don't want to look back at these notes and have difficulty interpreting what you wrote.

As such, it's a good idea to keep a notebook with a log of your most commonly used words and how you will be condensing them for speed writing. This will help you practice your speed writing, and keep track of what you're writing. It can help to look at the agenda before a meeting that you will be attending or taking minutes for beforehand, and decide on what abbreviations you'll use for the major terms that will be discussed. If there is no agenda, don't be afraid to ask what the meeting will be about. Include these new words in your notebook for reference.

3. Practice

Since speed writing typically doesn't take too much time to learn, you will be able to get the general system down fairly quickly. From there, you'll just need to continue to expand your word log and practice speed writing.

Doing it yourself is more effective than reading other people's speed writing, so devote most of your practice time to more hands-on practice rather than reviewing. You can try speed writing dictation while watching a YouTube video or podcast of your choice. Some people even like to record themselves talking and then play it back and take notes using their chosen speed writing system. Keep doing practice exercises like this until you feel comfortable using your new speed writing skills during work meetings or classes.

Don't worry if you still find yourself writing out some words fully at first. You are bound to encounter unexpected words during meetings that you may have trouble condensing quickly. During recording exercises, you can always pause to work out a tough word, but in a meeting you may need to write it out and revisit it later to decide on an abbreviated version. Just keep practicing, and it will start to flow more easily.