

INTRODUCTORY.

(1) Phonography, or Shorthand, as it is popularly called, is a method of representing the sounds of a language without reference to the ordinary spelling. Sounds form the ultimate analysis of spoken language and the basis of modern shorthand writing. While it is true theoretically that we have to deal with sounds in shorthand, yet practically it is true only to a limited degree. Both the reporter and the amanuensis rely almost solely on the consonant outlines of words, vowels being only occasionally inserted for the sake of greater legibility.

(2) In phonography, consonants are represented by symbols, called stems. These stems are formed from the simplest of geometrical signs—straight and curved lines. While certain stems represent single consonants only, the greater number of them are designed to represent frequently recurring groups of consonants. In other words, generally speaking, phonographic stems represent common syllables, the vowels and silent letters being purposely omitted.

(3) Obviously, therefore, the most sensible way to proceed to learn the art is to thoroughly memorize the stems and the syllables they represent. To facilitate their acquisition, the stems have been arranged in regular series, the initial stems of each series consisting of simple lines from which other stems are developed merely by the addition of a hook or hooks. With comparatively few exceptions, the stems follow a definite and systematic plan of formation. They are, therefore, easily learned and readily retained in the memory.

(4) The stems should be made rather slowly and precisely at first but as soon as learned they should be written with a free and easy movement and as rapidly as they can be made well. Make the characters small, neat and uniform in size. The shortened stems should be made a little less than half as long as the full length stems, in order that there may be no possible conflict. Make the light stems like hairs, and the shaded stems just heavy enough to readily distinguish them.

(5) Probably the best method of memorizing the stems is to repeatedly write them, naming each stem mentally as it is written; thus:

Koy Ket — — — — —

Kel Kelt — — — — —

Ker Kert — — — — —

Continue to practice the stems in this manner until their appearance is photographed on the memory, and until the hand is trained to make them easily, rapidly and faultlessly.