

Avoiding Band-Aid Fixes

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There are logical solutions and illogical solutions to realtime writing. Logical solutions require little or no effort to remember. They fit a pattern.

Illogical solutions don't follow a pattern, and most require a specific memory to recall them as needed. It helps if they are novel. Otherwise, striving for quality realtime translations can be an exhausting exercise in excessive concentration.

If you originally learned a shorthand theory that led you to numerous conflicts in the realtime age, then possibly you've found a few remedies that proved to be so-called "Band-Aid" fixes. Band-aid fixes work for some problems and not for others. They usually create new problems. Functionally speaking, they require extensive memorization and often years of writing to become second nature. They constitute patchwork theory, and in the big picture, they add difficulty to our jobs.

Awkward as it may sound, it is better to strip away each of your band-aid fixes, one at a time, and slowly rebuild your theory from the ground up. If this sounds impossible, consider how fascinating your experience was when you first learned Stenographic shorthand. You undoubtedly learned a tremendous amount in a remarkably short time -- simply because you had an intense desire to learn (and not because you had younger brains at the time).

1. FIX YOUR BASIC VOWELS

Unorthodox solutions arise when resolutions are chosen by word frequency rather than by orthography (spelling).

Take annoying, routine vowel discrepancies. Choose one. Analyze it, decide on a solution, and begin applying it globally. This means use the solution for all words that fit the same description.

Example: Suppose you write *sight* as SAOEUT, *site* as SAO*EUT, and *cite* as KRAOEUT — or some other such combination. This is typical for many of us and the picture of a confused theory if other related groups don't match the shorthand outlines you've chosen for this one. The plot thickens with every word family for which you have an inconsistent set of solutions, such as WA*EUT for *weight*, SKAEUT for *skate*, PHAET for *mate*, and so on.

Solution:

- a. Choose a logical pattern. There is no better suggestion than using the included G for all English words with this anomalous spelling. In other words, from now on, you will write PHAOEUGT for *might*, SHRAOEUGT for *sleight*, and even RAOEUGT for *right*, even though there is no conflict. Make a conscious effort to identify and stroke *mite*, *site*, *kite*, et cetera, as PHAOEUT, SAOEUT, and KAOEUT.
- b. Work only on this problem. Take a full month — longer if necessary. Make an allotment of time each week to purge each related dictionary entry to reflect your newer, more logical method.
- c. Briefs rule. For example, if you've always used a brief for *write*, don't change it.
- d. Redefine as many words in your dictionary as you can that fit this concept. (*Fashionable Realtime for Steno Writers* lists all of them. If you're using such a list, change only words you recognize, because they're likely to be the ones you'll encounter in your standard diet.)
- e. If you watch your translations routinely, don't freak out if you find yourself mistranslating some words at first. This minor visual reminder is a splendid way to retrain your brain without undue humiliation. If you're completely uncomfortable with this, keep the old outlines for words that don't have a conflict, for example, *fight* will maintain its original outline as TPAOEUT, but you'll still try to write its newer, more logical TPAOEUGT.
- f. When you've fairly conquered this problem, move on — presumably to another vowel group, such as *scare*, *ware*, *fare*, *hair*, *lair*, and so forth.

2. SIMPLIFY WORD BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS

A tremendous amount of brain power is spent by steno writers in executing these word components. It's simply not necessary.

Example #1: Opening and closing vowels: Do you write words that begin or end in vowels in a myriad of ways? Do you write *affirm* as AEU /TPEURPL, but *irate* as KWRAOEU /RAEUT or another inconsistent method? If you use AEU, then shouldn't you also use AOE, AOEU, OE, and AOU for attaching e~, i~, o~, and u~?

Different outline, but ditto for the rear-attaching vowels! Thus *attest*, *erase*, *Oman*, *henna*, *Irani*, *menu*, and thousands of others require absolutely no band-aids, and they'll never conflict.

Solution:

1. Choose a "finger-spelling" or "flag-alphabet" method for vowels that has conformity but doesn't raise conflicts with other theory you employ. (See the hand-out, "Sensible Vowel Attachment".)
2. As always, take your time! Choose just one vowel attaching group and listen diligently each day for any words that fit. A good place to start might be with all e~ prefixes (*economy*, *ego*, *epoxy*, *erode*, etc.) Remember to use the new method even for non-conflicting words such as *economy*.
3. Most CAT software will auto-correct the spelling, as in *hena/henna*, but if not, redefine these for a few months until most problems have disappeared.

Example #2: Y-endings: Included in most repertoires of band-aid fixes are many versions of ~y, ~ey, ~i, or ~ie endings that cause good reporters to build numerous solutions and then struggle to remember them on a word-by-word basis. This isn't necessary, but cleansing your old entries, rebuilding your new ones, and retraining your brain can be difficult and time-consuming. Still it can and should be done if you want a trouble-free, simple method.

Perhaps you write *brainy* as PWRAEUPB /TPHEU or as PWRAEU /TPHEU or as PWRAEUPB /AOE. Aside from word-boundary problems posed by any of these (where TPHEU or AOE is either a brief or the first stroke of another word), there is the problem with non-conformity with other similar words.

Solution:

a. Find a unique way to write ALL y-sound endings using the same principle for each (see “Band-aids” hand-out). The beauty in this is that nothing will ever conflict, nor will you ever cross a word boundary as you might with “...*brain neoplasm ...*,” or “... *brain elapse ...*,” or “*bray any ...*”

b. Begin with only words you can complete with ~y. This means words such as *baby*, *flaky*, *skinny*, and *techie*. Some will recur in far greater numbers than others. Amend your dictionary spellings only as they present themselves. **If a word ends in ~ey, ~i, or ~ie, continue to write it as ~y. Only the “ee” sound matters. Globally define them.**

This is an ongoing project, but hundreds of words will automatically take care of themselves, that is, no dictionary entry will be necessary. All word-boundary problems will disappear — unless of course you use your ~y stroke for something else.

c. When you’re ready, move on to the consonant-included group needed for such words as *rugby*, *pygmy*, and ideally, *factory*. Choose a clear, related method for writing ~by, ~c(s)y, ~dy, ~fy, ~g(j)y, ~j(g)y, ~ky, ~ly, ~my, ~ny, ~py, ~ry, ~ty, ~vy, and ~zy. (See “Band-aid” hand-out for details).

d. Beginning with the highly troublesome ~by, spend time listening for such words and writing their new outlines. If you need lists to find all afflicted words, *Fashionable Realtime* has them.

e. When you feel you have mastered ~by, try the same treatment on the next most likely troublemakers: ~ly, ~ny, and ~ty.

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- For complete lists of words with these endings, refer to *Fashionable Realtime for Steno Writers*.
 - For print and audio exercises to build these principles, refer to *Fashionable Realtime Toolbox*

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