

Lesson - 2

Consonants

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the last lesson you have learnt about the origin of Shorthand, its definition, usefulness of this art, as well as the job opportunities available for a shorthand writer. You have also read about the qualities of a stenographer, sitting posture, techniques for writing shorthand, material required for writing shorthand and the techniques of transcription. Not only in India but in many countries of the world, Pitman system of shorthand writing is most popular. Therefore, in these lessons you will be taught the Pitman's System of Shorthand.

Pitman's system of shorthand consists of 24 consonants, 12 vowels and 4 diphthongs. We will restrict this lesson to the consonants only. The vowels and diphthongs will be explained to you in the subsequent lessons.

The first essential principle of Pitman Shorthand system, is that it is a Phonetic system, which means that the shorthand is written according to the sound heard and not as per the ordinary spellings, for example see the following words and their sounds :

Knife Bridge Knot Knowledge

2.2 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this lesson you will be able to :

- define consonant;
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- explain the Phonetic system;
- classify the consonants;
- to join the consonants;
- know the position of strokes while joining;
- know the rules of joining of strokes.

2.3 MEANING OF CONSONANTS

Consonant is a term derived from two Latin words, CON means together and SONANS means sounding. Prof. Sweet has defined a Consonant as, "Consonants are the result of audible friction or stopping of the breath in some part of the mouth or throat."

In simple terms a consonant is defined as a sound which cannot be produced clearly without the aid of a vowel. The shorthand sign made for a consonant is called a character or a stroke.

All the consonant sounds (except W, Y & H) are represented by the simple geometrical forms viz. the straight lines and the shallow curves as shown below in the table:

CONSONANT TABLE

Character	Name	Letter	as may be heard in
.....	pee	P	play, ripe, peep
.....	bee	B	boy, boat, bribe
.....	tee	T	toy, tale, late
.....	dee	D	dig, drum, deed
.....	chay	CH	chin, chest, peach
.....	jay	J	just, jet, judge
.....	kay	K	coal, joke, coke

.....	gay	G	God, good, flag
.....	ef	F	fine, fair, roof
.....	vee	V	very, live, love
.....	ith	TH	three, author, kith
.....	thee	Th	them, that, breathe
.....	es	S	safe, same, strokes
.....	zee	Z	zeal, lease, excuse
.....	ish	SH	shame, shell, brush
.....	zhee	ZH	television, measure
.....	em	M	mile, milk, Bombay
.....	en	N	nice, news, queen
.....	ing	NG	ling, king, belong
.....	el	L	love, light, claim
.....	aar, ray	R	arm, bore, row, raw
.....	way	W	wet, were, weight
.....	yay	Y	yak, yoke, yellow
.....	hay	H	here, hot, adhere

Note: Now you should memorise these consonants, their sounds, the phonetic names and the characters.

2.4 CLASSIFICATION

The consonants may be classified as under:

1. **Explodents:** The first eight consonants viz. P, B, T, D, CH, J, K & G are
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called as explodents because while pronouncing them the outgoing breath is forced through barriers already closed.

2. **Continuants** : Consonants F, V, TH, TH, S, Z SH & ZH are called as continuants, because while pronouncing them the outgoing breath goes in a continuous stream.
3. **Nasals**: Consonants M, N, NG are called as nasals because the outgoing breath goes out through nose.
4. **Liquids**: Consonants L & R are called as liquids, because liquids flow into union with other consonants preceding these two i.e. L & R.
5. **Coalescents** : Consonants W & Y are known as coalescents because these precede vowels & unite with them.
6. **Aspirate** : Consonant H is classified as an aspirate because these follow vowels.

2.5 TYPES OF CONSONANTS

Types of Consonants are given below:-

1. **Straight downward strokes** : P B T D CH & J - as they are formed by straight lines in a downward motion. P & B are written with 120° degree angle, T & D with 90° degree angle and Ch & J with 30° degree angle, from the perpendicular.
2. **Curved downward strokes**: F V tH TH S Z SH & ZH - as they are the shallow curves with downward motion, the angle should be approx. 95°.
3. **Horizontal strokes**: K G M N & NG - as they are formed by lines and curves drawn horizontally, thus these are written at an angle of 180°.
4. **Up strokes** : L W & Y are written with upward motion, starting from the line. L is a shallow curve while W & Y are written straight with 30° degree angle.

Strokes R & H are written in both upward and downward forms. R downward is a shallow curve. R upward is written with a straight line with upward motion and with 30° degree angle from the horizontal.

Another division of strokes is according to the thinness and thickness of the strokes, thin which are represented by light characters and thick which are represented by heavy or thick characters. The light strokes may be written downward, upward and horizontally, while thick strokes are written downward and horizontally. A thick stroke is never written upward.

2.6 SIZE OF STROKES

The size or length of the stroke should be approx. 5 mm as shown in the table. Remember that while practising the consonants you should be very careful about the accuracy and uniformity of the size of the stroke. If the size of the stroke varies, it may put you in a great difficulty later on, when the size of the stroke is reduced to its half and doubled length. Therefore you are advised to write the strokes with great accuracy, neatness and uniformity in size. A stroke is written with one impression, no correction is done afterwards. In case you have formed a wrong outline, cross it and write again.

2.7 THINNESS/THICKNESS OF THE STROKES

For shorthand writing you should use a shorthand pen with flexible nib. If it is not possible you may use a pencil specially made for shorthand writing. The pencil should be sharply pointed and lightly held in the fingers of the writer. The heavy/thick strokes should be written with your normal pressure of writing and the light/thin strokes be written with light touch/pressure. You might have observed in the consonant table that -P T CH F tH S Sh K M N L R W Y & H are the light strokes and B D J V TH Z ZH G & NG are the heavy strokes.

Now you may identify that the consonants which are lightly pronounced are written by thin/light strokes and the consonants which are pronounced with a heavy sound are represented by thick/heavy strokes.

You can now start your practice of shorthand observing all the instructions imparted to you in this lesson. Be sure that your shorthand pencil is sharply pointed, and you have a proper shorthand note-book/ copy.

Exercise 1

Practise each consonant of the consonant table given earlier in this lesson. Write two pages for each consonant and name aloud each shorthand stroke as you write it. The strokes must always be called by their phonetic names.

Exercise 2

Read and copy each of the following line in your shorthand note-book, speak aloud and practise on the whole page:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.

Exercise 3

Write each of the following pairs and practise the same on the whole page :

P B, T D, CH J, K G, F V, tH TH, S Z, SH ZH, M N NG, L R (dn) R (up) W Y, H (dn) H (up).

Exercise 4

Read out the following and copy the whole exercise 15 times:

1.
 2.
 3.
 4.
 5.
-

- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.

2.8 JOINING OF STROKES

Now you have practised all the consonants of the Pitman's system of shorthand. Like other systems of writing, the next step of learning shorthand is the joining of consonant strokes. Joining of consonant is necessary for making the words. Joining of strokes means to write two or more consonant strokes together without lifting the pen or pencil.

RULES FOR JOINING OF STROKES

The rules for joining strokes are given below:

- i) While joining the strokes, the pen/pencil should not be lifted. The second stroke should be written at the end of the first stroke, the third stroke should be written at the end of the second stroke and so on.
 - ii) When strokes are joined to each other, they must be written in the same direction as when standing alone, downstrokes being always written in downward direction i.e from top to bottom, horizontal strokes being always written from left to right and upstrokes being always written from bottom to top.
 - iii) The size of the stroke will remain the same i.e. 1/6th (5mm approximately) of an inch.
 - iv) The thinness/thickness of the strokes will remain unchanged.
 - v) The angles and the shallow curves will remain the same.
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2.9 POSITION OF STROKES

- i) When the first stroke in an outline is a down stroke, it should rest on the line and the second down stroke will be written below the line e.g.

P+T..... F+ch T+ ch.....

Th +D..... Sh+P.....

- ii) When a horizontal stroke is followed by a down stroke, the horizontal stroke should commence sufficiently high above the line to allow the down stroke to rest upon the line e.g.

K+P K+F

G+P..... K+SH

M+F..... N+V

- iii) When a horizontal stroke is followed by either a horizontal stroke or by an upstroke, the horizontal stroke must be written on the line e.g.

K+N K+M..... M+N.....

K+R K+L M+M.....

N+R

- iv) When an upstroke is the first stroke in an outline, it should begin on the line e.g.

L+P L+K L+R.....

R+K R+P..... R+R.....

Now carefully observe the joining in the following exercises, recall the phonetic names of the consonants and practise thoroughly.

Exercise 1

Read and practise each line on whole page:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.

Exercise 2

Read and practise each line on full page:

1.
 2.
 3.
 4.
 5.
 6.
 7.
 8.
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INTEXT QUESTIONS 2.1

Answer the following questions :

1. What is the base of Pitman's Shorthand system?
 2. How many consonants are there in Pitman's system?
 3. How many strokes are there in Pitman's Shorthand?
 4. In how many groups the consonants are divided according to their classifications?
 5. In what direction, strokes P B T D CH & J are written?
 6. In what direction strokes L W & Y are written?
 7. What are horizontal strokes?
 8. If in an outline the first stroke is a down stroke, where it should be written while joining of strokes.
 9. Where the second stroke should be written while joining of strokes?
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2.10 WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

Pitman's system of shorthand writing is a phonetic system - a system which is based on sound and not on the ordinary spellings of the words. The system consists of 24 consonants, 12 vowels and 4 diphthongs. The consonants are represented by straight lines and curves; with downward, upward and horizontal direction. Consonants which are pronounced heavily are represented by thick strokes and which are pronounced lightly are represented by thin or light strokes. Each stroke represents only one sound. The length of the stroke should be 1/6 of an inch, and uniformity in length must be maintained.

In joining the strokes, the pen or pencil should not be lifted and are written with one impression. While joining, the strokes must be written with the same angle, thinness/thickness, motion and the length as when standing alone. The first downward stroke rests on the line. A horizontal stroke is written above the line when joined to a downward stroke and is written on the line when joined to an upward stroke.

2.11 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. What are the various divisions of consonants according to classification? Group the consonants accordingly.
2. What do you understand by joining of consonants? Explain the rules for joining of strokes by giving suitable examples.
3. Explain by giving suitable examples the rules relating to position of strokes.

2.12 ANSWERS TO THE INTEXT QUESTIONS

2.1

1. Sound
2. Twenty-four
3. Twenty-six
4. Six
5. Downward
6. Upward
7. K G M N & NG
8. on the line
9. At the end of the first stroke.

2.13 MATERIAL FOR ENRICHMENT

For extended learning you may consult the following books:

1. Pitman Shorthand Instructor - Sir Isaac Pitman
 2. Pitman Shorthand New Course - Sir Isaac Pitman
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