SHORTHAND MARKING GUIDE
SHORTHAND ADMINISTRATION PACK 2026-27

Shorthand examinations must start at **10.00am** and **11.30am** as specified on the shorthand exam schedule.

Exam dictation is to be transcribed verbatim using a computer. A transcript is produced from dictated material with no more than three per cent error tolerance.

Shorthand transcriptions are marked for accuracy and the shorthand note is checked but not marked. Learners who achieve 100 per cent accuracy will have this shown in their results area.

The following marking criteria are applied and provide guidance for the learner:

- The error margin is three per cent.
    - One mark is deducted for a word wrongly transcribed.
    - One mark is deducted for a word missing from the transcript.
    - One mark is deducted for a word added which was not dictated.

- One mark is deducted for transpositions provided all the words are there and the sentence still makes sense.

- Spelling, typing errors and punctuation will be penalised if an error changes the sense of the piece. An accumulation of misspellings – together with the overall standard of punctuation, presentation, quality of shorthand note etc. – will be considered in borderline cases and the marker will use his/her professional judgement to consider awarding a 'pass'.

- Contractions will not be used in dictated passages. Therefore, words should be transcribed in full i.e. 'cannot' – not 'can't', 'it is' – not 'it's'. One mark will be deducted for the use of a contraction.

- To ensure this is a robust and credible assessment process, the shorthand note is checked. Longhand, other than the candidate's name, should not appear anywhere on the shorthand note page(s). Any longhand appearing within the shorthand notes, or in the margins, may lead to the deduction of one mark per word. In line with industry practice, any of the following, which could lead to the shorthand note losing credibility, may also lead to the deduction of marks:

    - Shorthand outlines not matching the transcript
    - The alteration, deletion and/or insertion of outlines in the shorthand note after dictation has taken place
    - Outlines that are not legible to the marker, even with the aid of the examination script
    - Gaps in the shorthand

    Any of the above may invalidate the transcript.

- All shorthand must conform to a recognised system of shorthand. If a candidate is unable to use a recognised system of shorthand for their exam this may be notified to the NCTJ via a reasonable adjustment request. If, in the opinion of the marker(s), a shorthand note does not conform to a recognised system of shorthand, and no reasonable adjustment has been requested, a candidate may be failed.

- Shorthand notes must not be altered; incorrect outlines may be ringed and the correct shorthand outline written in the margin. Journalists' notebooks may be used as evidence in court; it is therefore in the learners' own interest to use recognisable outlines.

- Figures are permissible, as are signs such as £ or %.

- If an abbreviation is dictated that is how it should be transcribed; i.e. the transcription should be an exact account of what was said.

- Hyphenated words should be counted as two words. Learners who like to check the number of words they have transcribed need to remember that e.g. £120 counts as one word in your word count but is actually five words (one hundred and twenty pounds). Please remember to write abbreviations in full.

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- If a learner uses a shorthand abbreviation for words that were dictated in full, they should transcribe the words in full, otherwise marks will be lost i.e. TV/television or MP/Member of Parliament.
- A correctly identified quote in the final minute of dictation in exams of 100-120wpm is marked for accuracy. The words before and after the quote in the final minute of dictation are not marked.
- Only the identified quote should be transcribed in the answer box provided on the relevant transcription page. Any other words transcribed in the quote box will result in a fail.
- The quote will always be a minimum of 25 words up to a maximum of 35 words and will always appear in the final minute.
- In exams of 100-120 wpm learners must transcribe the quote accurately, along with no more than 3% error in the first three minutes' dictation, in order to achieve a pass.

Error tolerances

Marking guide for 2 x 2 minutes
4 minutes with no more than 3% error

60 wpm	**80 wpm**
240 words	320 words
7 or fewer errors	9 or fewer errors
25 minutes transcription time	35 minutes transcription time

Marking guide for 2 minutes + 1 minute
First 3 minutes with no more than 3% error + the quote must be accurate

100 wpm	**110 wpm**	**120 wpm**
300 words	330 words	360 words
9 or fewer errors	10 or fewer errors	11 or fewer errors
45 minutes transcription time	55 minutes transcription time	65 minutes transcription time

In exams of 100-120 wpm learners must transcribe the quote accurately, along with no more than 3% error in the first three minutes' dictation, in order to achieve a pass.

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