Walter Kistler - Newrite - Intersteno Prague 2007.

What is it?

Newrite is an advanced way to put words on paper. It is faster to write, easier to read and requires less space. The written text looks neat, words are elegant and as easy to recognize as the faces of friends or relatives. It is phonetic and does away with the complex, often erratic English spelling rules. It is precise; a word is written as it is pronounced and it is pronounced exactly as it is written.

Where did it originate?

It all started in the mid 1930's when I learned a German steno system while attending high school in Switzerland where it was a requirement for all students. At university in Zurich, my knowledge of steno became even more valuable. While other students wrote furiously in longhand, I enjoyed the leisure of recording my notes in steno. In fact, I found steno so useful that I learned a French version of when I spent a year studying at a university in Geneva.

Several years later, after having moved to the U.S. and working for and aerospace company, I expected to repeat what I had done before, adopting my German steno to just another language. However, I soon found that a steno script that works well for German and French was not so readily able to handle the English language. English is so much more complex, based on German, Latin, French and Celtic, it makes use of so many more consonant sounds, vowels and diphthongs. However, I still found it more practical to make my notes in meetings using and awkward version of the German steno somewhat adapted to English than to use a longhand based on Roman letters and the strange and arbitrary English spelling rules.

It took more than ten years of effort, the exchange of many signs and the introduction of many new ones, and the development of many new rules with the help of many friends who were also interested in my project. Finally a completely new script evolved that was well suited for the intricacies of the English language.

Why is Newrite faster?

Newrite is faster to write but it is not a new system of shorthand. In shorthand, speed is gained at the sacrifice of information. Words are abbreviated and many important vowel sounds are eliminated. Newrite captures every sound of every word but is faster than today's writing for four reasons:

1. Consonant signs are basic and simple and use only a singe downstroke (in contrast, the cursive M has three downstrokes).
2. A single sign often stands for two or three consonants.
3. Vowels have no signs. They are displayed through the relative location and appearance of consonants.

4. Single signs are used to represent common words such as and, the, and this and prefixes and suffixes such as in-, -tion, and -ment.

Basic Principles of Newrite

While Newrite is faster than traditional longhand writing, it is not technically a shorthand writing system. Newrite does not omit or simplify any sounds. Each part of the word is accurately represented when written in Newrite. Newrite can more accurately be characterized as an alternative, phonetic alphabet for the English language. The following principles represent the priorities Mr. Kistler adhered to during the long development of Newrite.

1. Newrite is a phonetic script

2. Newrite uses topological notation

3. A vowel sound is determined by the location and appearance of the signs within a word

4. Each sign consists of a single downstroke.

5. A single sign can represent a consonant group, prefix, or suffix

6. Newrite uses, short forms, to represent many commonly used words

7. Words fit between the same lines as cursive writing

1. Newrite is a phonetic script

Because Newrite is a phonetic script, it eliminates the uncertainty of writing and reading English. Newrite, therefore, reflects how words sound, not how they are spelled. Applying this concept can be especially difficult for English speakers who have no experience with phonetic languages.

In most romance languages–including Italian, Spanish and French–each vowel is spelled only one way and represents only one sound. For instance, the vowel E is always pronounced with what we call a short *e* sound, as in the word “belle” in French or “bell” in English.

In contrast, English words are drawn from many languages, so spelling is erratic and illogical. A typical vowel sound can be spelled more than 20 different ways. The following words all contain the long u sound:

rule flue fruit group grew move fool two

Even more confusing, the same letter or letters can be pronounced in a variety of ways. For example, the vowel group EA is pronounced as a short *e* in "head," a long *e* in " heat," a long *a* in "break," or an open *a* in "heart." The consonant group GH is pronounced as an *f* in "cough," an *o* in "though," a *t* in "thought," and a *u* in "through."

To create consistency in pronunciation, the textbook presents a phonetic symbol for each vowel sound. This establishes a clear and reliable relationship between a vowel and its sound, no matter how it might be spelled using the roman alphabet.

The following table shows the phonetic symbols for the 14 vowel sounds

	Vowel	Sample Word	Vowel	Sample Word
2	*i*	pick, stick, fit	*e*	peck, ten, head, said
3	*y (ee)*	peek, peak, team, seed	*ei*	take, late, tame, raid
	o	pock, cot, lock, cost	*ou*	poke, tome, soul, toll
	ɔ(aw)	talk, tall, caught, hawk	*oi*	toil, boy, royal
6	*ʌ, ə*	luck, attend	*æ*	cat, Sam, back
	au	town, loud, pound	*ai*	time, light, kite, eye
	U	pull, hood, full, stood	*u*	pool, rule, fool, canoe
7	*a*	palm, spa	*yu*	cute, few, view
	yə	immediate		
	uə	jewel	*yuə*	fuel
8	*a*	car	*ɛ*	fur

2. Newrite uses topological notation

You are probably familiar with the roman numbering system, which is not a topological system and is still used occasionally to keep score in games or to number chapters in a book. Roman numerals used a few basic signs; a vertical bar for the number one, two converging bars for five, a pair of crossed bars for ten; and the signs L, C, D, and M.

To create larger numbers, the numerals were combined in a system of addition and subtraction. For example, the year of the American independence appears as:

MDCCLXXVI

As is obvious, roman numerals look cumbersome, are hard to read, and are even harder to write; and for large numbers, are almost impossible to handle.

In contrast, our modern arabic number system utilizes topological notation. It has ten sophisticated signs to indicate the digits 0 through 9. Notice the difference in your ability to read the year of American independence:

MDCCLXXVI 1776

The numbers look elegant and are much easier to read than the roman numerals.

The introduction of the topological method is the most decisive step in creating a new notation system. This consists of assigning a meaning to a number or sign and to its location relative to other numbers or signs within a sequence.

Newrite is based on an approach similar to modern numbers. It has a greater number of sophisticated signs than the roman alphabet. As with modern numbers, the relative placement of the signs within a word carries information. Topological notation has the advantage of displaying a lot of information with a small amount of writing:

Of course, these spatial relationships between the signs that compose a word create a unique challenge for computerizing Newrite.

3. A vowel sound is determined by the location and appearance of the signs within a word

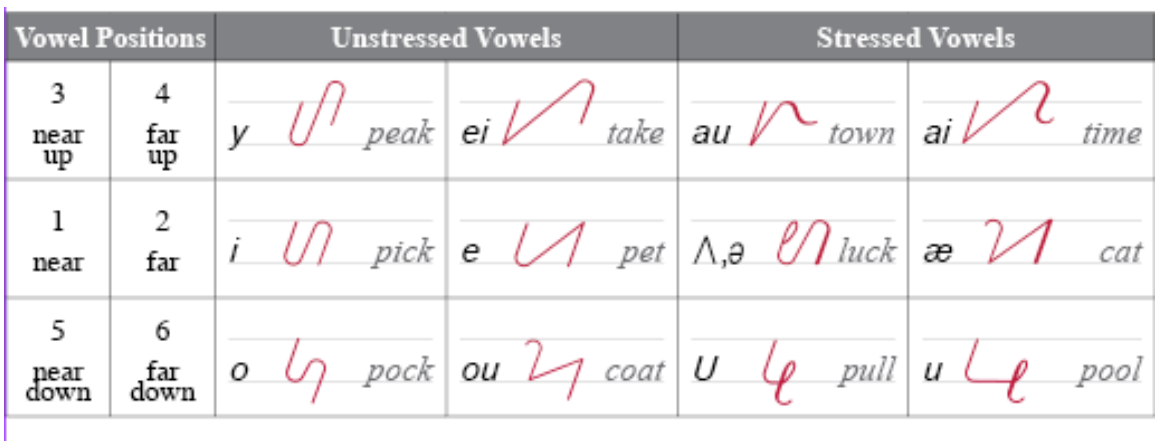
With Newrite, every part of the "word picture" carries information. Consonant signs are connected by upstrokes to form words. Generally, an upstroke indicates a vowel sound.

The location and appearance of the sign following an upstroke determines the specific vowel sound that precedes it. In Newrite, we use special words to identify the location and appearance of signs.

The location of the K sign at the end of "pick" is on **level 0** and **close** to the P sign that precedes it. A sign in this position designates the vowel sound *i*. In "peck," the K sign is also on **level 0**; however, it is **stretched**, or drawn further away, from the P sign. A consonant sign in this position designates the vowel sound *e*. In the word "peak," the K is kept **close** to the P, but is **raised** to indicate the vowel sound *y*.

The following table uses the K sign to demonstrate the six possible ‚Äúvowel positions,‚Äù that a sign can occupy: near, near up, near down, far, far up, far down.

Vowel Positions		Unstressed Vowels		Stressed Vowels	
3 near up	4 far up	y peak	ei take	au town	ai time
1 near	2 far	i pick	e pet	ʌ,ə luck	æ cat
5 near down	6 far down	o pock	ou coat	U pull	u pool



As you can see, emphasizing or **stressing** the downstroke of a sign creates twice as many vowel sounds. By using six positions, two stress levels, and two accent marks, Newrite displays virtually every vowel sound in the English language.

Identifying vowels accurately might seem difficult at first. However, the vowel positions make each word picture unique, and you will soon find that you can recognize them easily.

4. Each sign consists of a single downstroke

Many roman letters are comprised of several downstrokes and upstrokes. For instance, you would normally write the cursive letter M with five distinct hand motions: a downstroke, an upstroke, another downstroke, another upstroke, and yet a third downstroke.

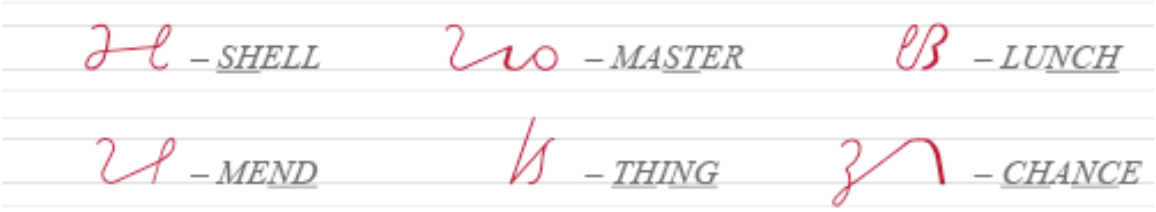
Imagine how much faster you could write the same letter if it had fewer strokes. Each Newrite sign consists of one downstroke, significantly increasing writing speed.

Here are some of the signs with their corresponding roman letters:

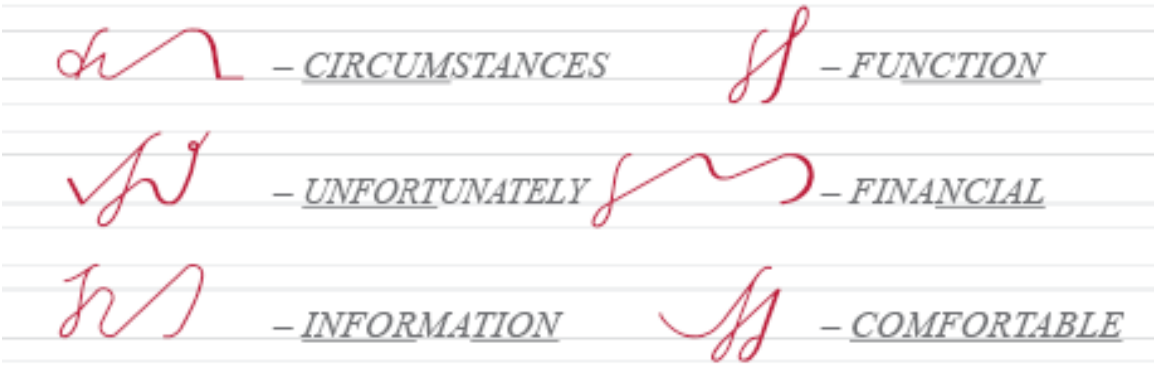
Each downstroke is simple, yet has a unique appearance making them both easy to write and to recognize

5. A single sign can represent a consonant group, prefix, or suffix

Newrite provides signs for the most common letter groups in the English language. One sign can replace three, four, or even more roman letters. For example, notice the consonant groups in the following words



Newrite also assigns signs to most prefixes and suffixes. In the following words, one steno sign replaces as many as six roman letters:



in the word “information,” the small upstroke representing the prefix “in” is followed by the sign representing the prefix “for.” The large sign at the end of the word represents the suffix “tion.” The word “comfortable” is composed entirely of prefix and suffix signs.

6. Newrite uses “short forms” to represent many commonly used words

Many simple signs are available to indicate the most frequently used words, such as:

7. Words fit between the same lines as cursive writing

Like words using the roman alphabet, Newrite words fit neatly between lines on a page. This is a significant improvement that Mr. Kistler made over the original shorthand system he learned.

Newrite and Technology

One of Newrite's greatest features is that it can be used with a computer. The Steno Trust has partnered with GoSoft e solutions to create a computer interface that allows a user to type in Newrite using an ordinary keyboard. The software can convert the Newrite typing to Roman characters and can convert a block of text typed in Roman text to Newrite signs.

(Demonstration)

Steno Trust Current Activities

The Steno Trust is currently pursuing activities in and around Chennai, India. The first Newrite classes were held in 2005 at the Stenographers' Guild in Chennai. After the original course we hired some of the top students to continue teaching Newrite courses. We have partnered with schools and universities to provide Newrite instruction to students as one facet of a well-rounded English and technology skills package.