

## SHORTHAND AND MOTOR COORDINATION.

A question about the motor coordination in the use of shorthand and the answer provided by Professor Waldir Cury.

(Note: the full e-mail, as well as the name of the sender, is published under the consent of the sender himself).

### **Inquiry:**

Dear Professor,

My doubt is about if the shorthand learning process requires the ability of motor coordination. The reason for the question is: after having worked for more than fifty years with typing, I got an atrophic nerve in the right arm, which hinders me from writing - unless it is in block letters - and even so with great slowness. Since I need to use manual writing a lot, taking notes of books I read in libraries as well as on researches I normally do (I'm a lawyer and professor, besides being a person who continuously studies Law), I experience huge difficulties in my daily routine. It is not always possible to have a notebook in hands. Therefore, I thought on using shorthand. However, when reading one of the questions, it mentioned the need of coordination. So, I would like to know if such requirement is related to the need of motor coordination to write. If so, unfortunately I won't be able to use this resource. Thanks in advance for your reply.

Arnaldo A. S. Oliveira

### **Reply:**

Dear Arnaldo,

Undoubtedly, shorthand requires a motor coordination from those who practice it, in much the same way as it is necessary for common writing. In both cases, it is what we used to call "fine motor coordination", which is the ability to use the small muscles in an efficient and accurate manner, producing delicate and specific movements. This "fine

motor coordination”, which we use to sew, write, type etc, is different from the “gross or general motor coordination”, which enables the child or adult to dominate the body in space, controlling movements more related to instinct, such as walking, jumping, crawling and so on.

When we say **Motor Coordination**, we mean the ability to coordinate movements deriving from the integration between the central command (brain) and motor units of muscles and articulations. Thus, it is a joint work between the brain, muscles and articulations, in an efficient and organized manner.

When we say that to be a good stenographer it is necessary to have good motor coordination, we mean that people with motor deficiency, with some type of mental disease or serious neurological problem (neuropsychomotor), would face great difficulty to write in shorthand. By the same token, people with visual or auditory impairments would also experience great difficulty (and even impossibility).

But note that the need of motor coordination also occurs in the common spelling. The most complete mystery stories writer, Agatha Christie (The Guinness Book recognized her as the greatest best seller fiction writer of all times) had a rare disease called “dysgraphia”, which hindered her from writing in a legible manner. All of her stories were dictated to her secretary-typist.

When we talk about “motor coordination” as to high speed shorthand, we speak specifically about the following type of joint work: hearing from the stenographer what was said by the speaker; transformation in the brain of the sound that was heard into shorthand signs; writing on paper the shorthand signs - all this performed in fractions of seconds, in a synchronized, simultaneous and instant manner.

In case of using shorthand for simple notes, as it seems to be your case, the motor coordination is equivalent (*mutatis mutandis*) to that used in the common writing. As you mentioned that you take notes in “block letters, and even so with great slowness”, it seems that in your case the shorthand study would be highly recommended, because it would reduce the time and effort of writing. There would only be the exchange from a long, slow, tedious, laborious way of writing/ spelling (common writing) to another much more succinct, less tiring and less laborious writing/spelling: shorthand.

I personally use shorthand in a daily basis. I use it to take notes in everything I read, study and write. And, to be honest, I feel very, very sorry for the people who do not know shorthand.

Moreover, dear Arnaldo, I am here to analyze and settle any other doubts you may have.

Best regards,

Prof. Waldir Cury