

Australian Standard™

**Shorthand speed tests**



**S t a n d a r d s** Australia

This Australian Standard was prepared by Committee MS-016, Keyboarding and Shorthand Speed Tests. It was approved on behalf of the Council of Standards Australia on 2 March 2001 and published on 21 March 2001.

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## Shorthand speed tests

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## PREFACE

This Standard was prepared by the Standards Australia Committee MS-016, Keyboarding and Shorthand Speed Tests.

The objective of the Standard is to provide a uniform method for use by bodies that conduct, assess and certify shorthand speed tests for speed and accuracy.

The Standard provides a method that facilitates the comparison of individual shorthand speeds. Previously, tests to determine Shorthand speed varied widely, producing results that were not comparable. This Standard will eliminate the need, to some extent, for employers to conduct their own shorthand speed tests.

The major problem in developing this Standard was the standardization of difficulty levels of test passages. For passages to provide a valid measure of shorthand skill, variations in candidates' performances must, as far as possible, reflect changes in skill rather than changes in passage difficulty. However, there are a large number of variables associated with passage difficulty, some of them, such as flow, indefinable. The committee was acutely aware that the test method had to be useable as well as accurate. After an examination of existing test methods, characteristics of Australian business language, and reports of overseas studies, four specific requirements regulating difficulty were included—test duration, passage length, syllabic intensity, and percentage of common words. These are accompanied by general requirements for style and content.

One of the deciding factors in including the two latter difficulty measures was the ease with which the syllabic intensity and percentage of common words in a passage could be determined by computer.

There are several commercially available programs that will measure syllabic intensity.

Percentage of common words may be determined using any spelling verification program in which it is possible to insert a separate dictionary, i.e. the list of 500 commonly used words. Further information on the study of Australian business documents from which the 500 word list was derived is also available in SAI MP 51, *A study of language in Australian business documents*, published by Standards Australia.

The terms 'normative' and 'informative' have been used in this Standard to define the application of the appendix to which they apply. A 'normative' appendix is an integral part of a Standard, whereas an 'informative' appendix is only for information and guidance.

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## STANDARDS AUSTRALIA

**Australian Standard**  
**Shorthand speed tests**

## SECTION 1 SCOPE AND GENERAL

**1.1 SCOPE**

This Standard sets out a method for the design, conduct, assessment, and certification of shorthand speed tests of 60 wpm or greater, conducted in the English language.

This Standard does not deal with tests in shorthand theory.

**1.2 APPLICATION**

This Standard is intended for use by all bodies that conduct tests to measure shorthand speed.

**1.3 REFERENCED DOCUMENTS**

The following documents are referred to in this Standard:

SAI

HB 59 Ergonomics—The human factor—A practical approach to work systems design  
Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers, AGPS Press, Canberra

**1.4 DEFINITIONS**

For the purpose of this Standard, the definitions below apply.

**1.4.1 Dictionary word**

A meaningful unit of speech which when written or printed is shown with space on either side of it.

**1.4.2 Examining body**

An institution or group that devises, administers, assesses, and certifies shorthand speed tests in accordance with this Standard.

**1.4.3 Font**

A printing typeface of a particular style and size.

**1.4.4 Shall**

Indicates that a statement is mandatory.

**1.4.5 Shorthand**

Any system of speed writing by means of substituting contractions or signs for letters or words and including that which may be written by shorthand machine.

**1.4.6 Should**

Indicates a recommendation.