Stacking

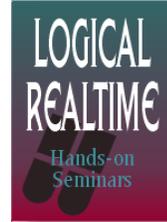**by Denis Thievin ©2003, 2004, 2005**

(Adapted from Fashionable Realtime for Steno Writers, 3rd edition)

Stacking (or "piling") shorthand strokes on a steno machine is an annoyance for almost every stenographic reporter, yet remedies are rare and seldom discussed. If a good servicing of your machine isn't the answer, it's time to look at some hands-on solutions:

Adding ~ed, ~ing, or ~es in a separate stroke is both a blessing and a curse. While it resolves about 200 conflicts, it can also create stacking problems founded on the slightest lack of writing discipline or a sluggish machine. The following "add", "ago", "that is", and "today" stacks clearly arise from inflected endings.

1.   ***~ed*** words followed by the article *a* often tempt the left thumb to move too quickly to stroke the A. Thus *add* or *ad* is translated. *Ordered a* becomes *order add* or *launched a* becomes *launch add.*

> ***Remedy*: Find another way to steno *ad* or *add* using such outlines as AGD, A*D, or A*GD. Then redefine AD as *~ed a*.**

Defining TOD for *today* can be a similar trap. It causes the translation of *want today* when you might have meant phrases such as *wanted to.*

> ***Remedy*: Why not just write *today* in full? It's only two strokes.   Many writers ignore the name Todd and steno TOD for *today* until they realize the necessity of an outline for Todd. Try writing Todd as TAUD or use the numeral bar with troublesome first names. Write *today* with an asterisk, or try TAOD or TOGD. But don't forget to redefine TOD as *~ed to*. After all, it's likely you're going to continue writing this stack for a long while.**

In writing past tenses, a similar problem exists where *is* or *the* follows the inflected –D. It can cause such translations as *order T-D* or *order S-D*, or whatever T-D and S-D may represent as briefs. Use the same type of remedy.

2.   ***~ing*** words followed by the article *a* also tempt the left thumb to move into position too quickly. Thus *ago* appears on your monitor — assuming AG is your brief for *ago.* In context, *seeing a* would result in *see ago*. A similar problem

where *is* or *the* are the following words would cause <u>see T-G</u> or <u>see S-G</u>, or whatever T-G and S-G may represent as briefs.

> ***Remedy*: Develop a better brief for <u>ago,</u> such as AEUG or A*G, and get rid of AG as the brief. Or simply steno the word in full: Al/GO. When these changes are complete, redefine AG as <u>*~ing a*</u>. If you have similar problems where *is* or *the* are the following words, parallel steps can be taken.**

3.   ***~s (or ~es)*** words followed by *is* also leave the door wide open for stacks. If you translate <u>*car that is*</u> when you mean to stroke KAR /S /THA, clearly the left hand is in position for THA before the right hand releases from the inflected -S.

> ***Remedy:* It might be better to get rid of *that is* as a phrase or revise it to include an E or an asterisk. Then THA-S should be redefined as another "relief" outline meaning <u>*~s that*</u>.**

If you use T-S for <u>*it is*</u>, then you almost certainly have an extra problem: Adding an S stroke with the right hand to pluralize any word wreaks havoc when *the* follows. Thus when stroking <u>*sometimes the*</u>, your writer could transmit STAOEUPL / T-S, hence <u>*sometime it is*</u>. Again, a remedy such as the one above will deal will this once and for all.

It is the elimination of stacking and hundreds of other seemingly innocent impediments that lead to the development of a truly great realtime writer.

Denis Thievin, author, lecturer
Wanderlust Publishing and Logical Seminars
P.O. Box 522
Quathiaski Cove, BC V0P 1N0

http://www.anderlust.net

email*: info1 @anderlust.net*