

Short Cuts: A Guide to Oaths, Ring Tones, Ransom Notes, Famous Last Words, and Other Forms of Minimalist Communication



Our everyday lives are inevitably touched--and immeasurably enriched--by an extraordinary variety of miniature forms of verbal communication, from classified ads to street signs, and from yesterdays graffiti to tomorrows headline. Celebrating our long history of compact speech, Short Cuts offers a well-researched and vibrantly written account of this unsung corner of the linguistic world, inspiring a new appreciation of the wondrously varied forms of our briefest exchanges. Alexander Humez, Nicholas Humez, and Rob Flynn shed light here on an ever-growing field of minimalist genres, ranging from the bank robbery note to the billboard, from the curse hurled from a car window (or the Senate floor) to the suicide note, and from the ghost-word to the ring tone. The book is divided into ten thematic sections, as varied as In the Dictionary (discussing such topics as Sniglets, Mountweazels, and the Wiktionary), In and Out of Trouble (error messages, weasel words, the pre-nup), and On the Lam (ransom notes, wanted posters, portraits paroles). The authors look at the comic strips maladicta balloon and the dinner-interrupters robocalls, the advice column and the obit, and the many ways your personal appearance tells us who you are, from the message on your gimme cap to the tattoo with your S.O.s name on your ankle. Uncovering the elegance, the humor, and the unspoken implications in these fleeting communications, this book provides a satisfying thoroughness and an abundance of connections that unravel how the oath became the swearword and the calling card salver turned into the Facebook wall. For readers who love language and enjoy rummaging through the cultural baggage that comes with it, Short Cuts gathers an engaging sampler of the most delightful and cogent--and above all brief--forms of contemporary English.

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