

Lesson 4- Ligatures

Hieratic was written quickly with a brush. This resulted in a tendency to not lift the brush entirely between signs. Therefore the signs tend to be more or less connected. Some scribes tended to run signs together more than others, leading to variations in the writing even within the same period of history. This is very much like the case with our own cursive writing.

Since Hieratic signs were drawn generally from top left to bottom right, connections were generally from the bottom right of one sign to the top left of the sign below.


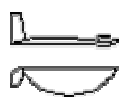


When signs are joined together, we call this a *ligature*. We can distinguish two classes of ligature:
















- A simple connection, which leaves the basic shapes of the connected signs the same
- A true ligature, where the shape one or more of the signs is considerably modified. The signs essentially are blended together to form a new, compound sign.

In this lesson we shall pay particular attention to the true ligatures. The simple connections are easier to recognize because the shapes of the individual signs are still quite recognizable. A number of the most common ligatures are given in the following table. You will notice that many of them involve the signs for *k*, *n*, *a*, and *t*.

Most ligatures also involve only two signs, and this is especially the case in horizontal lines of text. Text written in columns tends to have more ligatures, and may have ligatures involving several signs.

As in the preceding lessons, you can use the Exercises ([4A](#), [4B](#)) to practice your ability to recognise these signs.

Hieratic	Value	Hieroglyph	Hieratic	Value	Hieroglyph
	<i>a-k</i>			<i>n-k</i>	

	<i>r-k</i>			<i>r-x</i>	
	<i>n-t</i>			<i>w-t</i>	
	<i>d-t</i>			<i>n-t-t</i>	
	<i>p-t</i>			<i>m-t</i>	
	<i>n-f</i>			<i>m-r</i>	
	<i>D-d</i>				

Here is an example of a sentence written horizontally with a number of ligatures, which should give you a little idea of the sort of thing you can expect to see.

