White-Line Grid Paper: Dark-Field Practice Sheets for Lettering

Complete worked example / separate answer key

A hypothetical sheet has 5 mm grid spacing. You choose an x-height of two squares, a letter width of 5 mm, and a gap of 2 mm. Compute the run for five letters and state how you would check it.

Answer: X-height is 2 times 5 mm = 10 mm. Five letters at 5 mm each give 25 mm. Four gaps at 2 mm each give 8 mm. The computed run is 25 + 8 = 33 mm. Check by measuring the drawn run with a ruler in millimetres and comparing it with 33 mm. If the measured run is 35 mm, the difference is 2 mm, which equals one gap in this example. Record the difference and adjust the next run.

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Original tasks 1, 2, 3 / complete keys

Task 1

A hypothetical sheet has 4 mm grid spacing. You choose an x-height of three squares and a letter width of 4 mm with a 1 mm gap. Compute the run for six letters.

Answer: X-height is 3 times 4 mm = 12 mm. Six letters at 4 mm each give 24 mm. Five gaps at 1 mm each give 5 mm. The computed run is 24 + 5 = 29 mm.

Reason: Use the convention that x-height is baseline to midline, then apply run arithmetic: letters times width plus gaps times gap count, all in millimetres.

Check: Measure the drawn run with a ruler in millimetres and compare with 29 mm. State any difference in millimetres.

Task 2

A hypothetical sheet has 6 mm grid spacing. You want an x-height of 12 mm. How many grid squares is that, and what is the x-height in millimetres?

Answer: 12 mm divided by 6 mm per square equals 2 squares. The x-height is 12 mm.

Reason: X-height is baseline to midline. Convert the chosen x-height into grid squares by dividing by the measured spacing, keeping units consistent.

Check: Measure from baseline to midline on the sheet and confirm it equals two grid gaps of 6 mm each.

Task 3

A hypothetical run of four letters has a computed length of 22 mm. Your measured run is 25 mm. What is the difference, and how many 1 mm gaps does it equal?

Answer: The difference is 25 minus 22 = 3 mm. At 1 mm per gap, that equals three gaps.

Reason: Subtract the computed value from the measured value in the same unit, then divide by the gap size to express the difference in gap units.

Check: Re-measure the run once and confirm the difference is still 3 mm before adjusting spacing.

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Original tasks 4 / complete keys

Task 4

You are choosing a stroke colour for a dark-field sheet with pale grid lines. Name two contrast checks you would perform before a long practice session, and state what you would record.

Answer: First, check that the stroke is clearly visible against the dark field. Second, check that the stroke is distinguishable from the pale grid lines. Record the stroke colour, the lighting used, and whether both checks passed.

Reason: Contrast has two parts: stroke versus field and stroke versus grid. Recording the conditions makes the check repeatable and supports fair rubric judgements.

Check: Write a short test line under your usual lamp and confirm both contrasts by eye; note the result on the practice sheet.

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Worked example, Task 1, Task 2, Task 3, Task 4 / Answers and rubric notes

Separate answers page: computed runs, check methods, and rubric notes kept apart from the worksheet.

Worked example: x-height = 2 × 5 mm = 10 mm. Five letters at 5 mm = 25 mm. Four gaps at 2 mm = 8 mm. Computed run = 25 + 8 = 33 mm. Measure the drawn run in millimetres and compare with 33 mm. If measured is 35 mm, difference is 2 mm, equal to one gap in this example.

Exercise 1: x-height = 3 × 4 mm = 12 mm. Six letters at 4 mm = 24 mm. Five gaps at 1 mm = 5 mm. Computed run = 24 + 5 = 29 mm. Check: measure the drawn run in millimetres and compare with 29 mm; state any difference.

Exercise 2: 12 mm ÷ 6 mm per square = 2 squares. X-height is 12 mm. Check: measure baseline to midline and confirm two 6 mm gaps.

Exercise 3: difference = 25 − 22 = 3 mm. At 1 mm per gap, that equals three gaps. Check: re-measure once and confirm the difference is still 3 mm before adjusting spacing.

Exercise 4: check stroke is clearly visible against the dark field; check stroke is distinguishable from the pale grid lines. Record stroke colour, lighting used, and whether both checks passed.

Rubric: (1) x-height convention: lowercase x-height letters sit between baseline and midline. (2) Spacing arithmetic: computed and measured runs use the same unit and are compared. (3) Contrast: stroke colour separates from both the dark field and the pale grid lines. (4) Style allowance: letter style variations are accepted when the convention is met. (5) Record keeping: measured spacing, chosen values, and one fix are noted for the next sheet.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] X-height convention: lowercase x-height letters sit between baseline and midline.
- [ ] Spacing arithmetic: computed run and measured run use the same unit and are compared.
- [ ] Contrast: stroke colour separates from both the dark field and the pale grid lines.
- [ ] Style allowance: letter style variations are accepted when the convention is met.
- [ ] Record keeping: measured spacing, chosen values, and one fix are noted for the next sheet.

Reflection: What did you check, what did you change, and what will you try next?