Graph Paper Sentences: Grid Spacing Guides for Neat Handwriting

Complete worked example / separate answer key

On a grid with 5 mm squares, write the sentence 'we can sit' using a one-square x-height, a one-cell word gap, and a baseline on a marked horizontal line. Describe the cell placement for each word.

Answer: Mark the baseline. The word 'we' starts at cell 1: w spans about one cell and e about half a cell, so 'we' ends near cell 2. Leave cell 3 empty as the word gap. 'can' starts at cell 4: c, a, and n each span about half to one cell, so 'can' ends near cell 6. Leave cell 7 empty. 'sit' starts at cell 8: s and i are narrow and t is taller but not necessarily wider, so 'sit' ends near cell 10. All x-height letters touch the midline one square above the baseline; t rises above it. The gaps are one empty cell each, and the baseline stays fixed across the row.

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Original tasks 1, 2, 3 / complete keys

Task 1

On a grid with 4 mm squares, use this simplified exercise convention: each letter occupies one whole cell and each word gap is one empty cell. Plan 'a man sat', beginning at cell 1. State each word's starting cell.

Answer: 'a' occupies cell 1. Leave cell 2 empty. 'man' occupies cells 3-5. Leave cell 6 empty. 'sat' occupies cells 7-9. Starting cells: 1, 3 and 7.

Reason: Under the stated one-cell-per-letter convention, the word widths are 1, 3 and 3 cells. Add one empty cell between successive words.

Check: Verify the occupied spans 1, 3-5 and 7-9; cells 2 and 6 are the two one-cell gaps.

Task 2

A student writes 'we go' but the gap between the words is two empty cells while the rest of the sentence uses one-cell gaps. Describe the correction and the check.

Answer: Remove one empty cell so the gap becomes one cell, matching the sentence convention. Then check that the first letter of 'go' starts one cell after the last letter of 'we'.

Reason: Consistent gap width is the rule; a two-cell gap breaks the countable pattern. The correction restores one empty cell.

Check: Mark the end cell of 'we' and the start cell of 'go'; there should be exactly one empty cell between them (for example, end at cell 2, empty cell 3, start at cell 4).

Task 3

On a grid with 6 mm squares, a writer chooses a two-square x-height and a two-cell word gap. Write a three-word sentence and state the cell span of each word, beginning at cell 1.

Answer: Example: 'it is up.' 'it' starts at cell 1 and ends at cell 2. Leave cells 3 and 4 empty. 'is' starts at cell 5 and ends at cell 6. Leave cells 7 and 8 empty. 'up' starts at cell 9 and ends at cell 10. Place the period in cell 11, immediately after the final stroke of 'up'. Because the period is terminal, no trailing gap is needed.

Reason: The chosen x-height is two squares, so x-height letters reach the second midline. The chosen gap is two cells, applied consistently. The period follows the last letter before the gap.

Check: Verify that each gap is exactly two empty cells and that x-height letters touch the second midline above the baseline.

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Original tasks 4 / complete keys

Task 4

Copy the model sentence 'we can sit' onto a blank grid row. After copying, you find that 'sit' starts one cell later than in the model. Describe how to adjust the next copy and how to check it.

Answer: In the next copy, reduce the gap before 'sit' by one cell so it starts in the model's cell. Then compare the start cell of each word with the model.

Reason: A one-cell drift means the gap or a letter width was overestimated. Adjusting the gap restores alignment without changing letter shapes.

Check: List the start cell of each word in the model and in the copy; after adjustment, the start cell of 'sit' should match the model exactly (difference zero), and the other words should also match.

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Worked example, Task 1, Task 2, Task 3, Task 4 / Answer sheet: cell spans and gap checks

Reference answer sheet listing cell spans for the model sentence and sample original sentences; notes that valid alternatives may differ in letter width while meeting zone and gap rules.

Worked example 'we can sit' on 5 mm squares: 'we' starts at cell 1 and ends near cell 2; cell 3 is the one-cell gap; 'can' starts at cell 4 and ends near cell 6; cell 7 is the one-cell gap; 'sit' starts at cell 8 and ends near cell 10. All x-height letters touch the midline one square above the baseline; t rises above it. The baseline stays fixed across the row.

Exercise 1 'a man sat' on 4 mm squares under the one-cell-per-letter convention: 'a' occupies cell 1; cell 2 is empty; 'man' occupies cells 3-5; cell 6 is empty; 'sat' occupies cells 7-9. Starting cells: 1, 3 and 7.

Exercise 2 'we go' with a two-cell gap: remove one empty cell so the gap becomes one cell, matching the sentence convention. Check that the first letter of 'go' starts one cell after the last letter of 'we' (for example, end at cell 2, empty cell 3, start at cell 4).

Exercise 3 'it is up.' on 6 mm squares with two-square x-height and two-cell gaps: 'it' starts at cell 1 and ends at cell 2; cells 3 and 4 are empty; 'is' starts at cell 5 and ends at cell 6; cells 7 and 8 are empty; 'up' starts at cell 9 and ends at cell 10; the period is placed in cell 11 immediately after the final stroke of 'up'. No trailing gap is needed.

Exercise 4 copying 'we can sit': if 'sit' starts one cell later than in the model, reduce the gap before 'sit' by one cell in the next copy so it starts in the model's cell. Compare the start cell of each word with the model; after adjustment, the start cell of 'sit' should match the model exactly (difference zero), and the other words should also match.

Rubric: baseline contact; midline contact for x-height letters; countable and consistent word gaps with punctuation before the gap; letter widths may vary while the sentence remains readable and aligned; a copied sentence matches the model's word start and end cells within one cell. Valid alternatives may differ in letter width while meeting the zone and gap rules.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] Baseline contact: most letters rest on the marked baseline, with descenders dropping below it.
- [ ] Midline contact: x-height letters touch the midline without crossing it consistently.
- [ ] Word gaps: gaps are countable and consistent, with punctuation placed before the gap.
- [ ] Letter width: widths may vary, but the sentence remains readable and aligned to the grid.
- [ ] Copy accuracy: a copied sentence matches the model's word start and end cells within one cell.

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