Graph Paper and Pencil Writing: Letter Placement Drills

Original tasks 1, 2, 3 / complete keys

Task 1

On a blank grid row, write five lowercase o letters. Use the baseline as the bottom of each o and the midline as the top. Leave one square between letters. Describe where each o touches the grid.

Answer: Each o body sits on the baseline and reaches the midline, with about one square between o bodies.

Reason: The o is a round letter body, so its bottom and top are easy to check against the baseline and midline. Consistent spacing is checked by counting squares between bodies.

Check: Look along the baseline: all five o bodies should touch it. Look along the midline: all five should reach it. Count the gaps: each should be about one square.

Task 2

Write the word cat on a grid row using the same convention. Place c and a between baseline and midline, and let t rise above the midline. Leave one square between letters. Check the baseline after writing.

Answer: The c and a bodies touch the baseline and reach the midline; the t rises above the midline; gaps are about one square; all letters sit on the same baseline.

Reason: The word combines two x-height letters and one tall letter. The baseline checkpoint applies to all three, while the midline checkpoint applies mainly to c and a.

Check: Trace the baseline with your eye: c, a, and t should all start at the same bottom line. Check that c and a reach the midline and that t extends above it. Count gaps between letters.

Task 3

Write a row of six lowercase letters: m, n, u, v, w, x. Keep each body between baseline and midline and leave one square between letters. Then circle any letter whose body does not touch the baseline.

Answer: All six letter bodies touch the baseline and reach the midline, with about one square between letters; no letters are circled if the convention is followed.

Reason: These letters have straight or angled strokes that make baseline contact easy to see. The exercise trains consistent body height and spacing across different shapes.

Check: Use a pencil to lightly mark the baseline. Check each letter body against the mark. Check the midline height. Count the five gaps between the six letters.

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Original tasks 4 / complete keys

Task 4

Write two short rows on blank grid paper. Row one: five lowercase e letters. Row two: five lowercase l letters. For e, keep the body between baseline and midline. For l, start at the baseline and rise above the midline. Leave one square between letters in both rows. Compare the baselines of the two rows.

Answer: The e bodies touch the baseline and reach the midline; the l letters start at the baseline and rise above the midline; both rows share the same baseline; gaps are about one square.

Reason: This exercise contrasts an x-height letter with a tall letter while keeping the same baseline. It teaches that different letter styles can share a baseline even when their heights differ.

Check: Place a straight edge along the baseline of row one and row two. All letters should start at the same line. Check e bodies against the midline and l heights above it. Count gaps in both rows.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] Letter bodies touch the baseline consistently.
- [ ] Letter bodies reach the midline without crossing it excessively.
- [ ] Gaps between letters are roughly equal, about one square.
- [ ] Descenders drop below the baseline without touching the next row.
- [ ] Tracing follows the model's grid contact points.
- [ ] Independent rows show consistent alignment across all letters.
- [ ] Self-correction is applied to individual letters, not whole rows.

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