Handwriting Rules Checklist: Posture, Grip, Spacing, and Letter Formation

Original tasks 1, 2, 3 / complete keys

Task 1

A child writes 'cat hat' with the words touching. Check the spacing rule and state one fix.

Answer: The words touch, so the word-space rule is not met. Fix: place the index finger after 'cat' and start 'hat' after the finger.

Reason: The finger-space convention creates a clear word boundary. The rule is consistency and readability, not a fixed measurement.

Check: Re-read the sentence and confirm the two words are visually separate. Check that the gap is consistent with the finger-space convention.

Task 2

A writing sample shows lowercase 'a', 'c', 'e', 'm', 'n', 'o', 'r', 's', 'u', 'v', 'w', 'x', 'z' reaching different heights. Which letter rule applies, and what should the child check?

Answer: The x-height rule applies. The child should check that these lowercase letters reach the midline consistently from the baseline.

Reason: X-height is the height from baseline to midline for these letters. Consistent x-height supports readability and even letter formation.

Check: Compare each x-height letter to the midline. Mark any letter that is clearly above or below the midline and adjust.

Task 3

A child's descenders 'g', 'j', 'p', 'q', 'y' overlap the next line. State the rule and one fix.

Answer: Descenders should go below the baseline without overlapping the next line. Fix: increase line spacing or adjust paper position.

Reason: Overlapping descenders reduce readability and can cause confusion between lines. The rule is checkable by looking at the gap between lines.

Check: Check each descender against the line below. If any descender touches or crosses the next line, adjust spacing.

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Original tasks 4 / complete keys

Task 4

A child writes 'b' and 'd' so they look similar. State the structural rule for each letter and a check method.

Answer: b has a tall stem and a loop on the right; d has a loop on the left and a tall stem. Check method: compare each letter to the structural rule, not to a single model. Confirm the loop side and stem height are distinct.

Reason: Similar letters must be structurally distinct for readability. Letter styles vary, so the check focuses on the loop side and stem, not on a perfect match to one style.

Check: Point to the loop and stem of each letter. Confirm the loop side and stem height match the structural rule. Accept valid style alternatives that keep the distinction.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] Posture: feet flat, hips back, elbows near right angle, non-writing hand steadies paper, head upright.
- [ ] Grip: thumb and index finger pinch, middle finger supports, grip relaxed, pencil points back over shoulder.
- [ ] Spacing: finger space between words, small even gaps between letters, descenders do not overlap next line.
- [ ] Letter rules: letters sit on baseline, x-height letters reach midline consistently, tall letters rise above midline, descenders go below baseline, similar letters are distinct, capitals clearly larger than lowercase.
- [ ] Self-check: child can tick each rule after writing and name one fix if a rule is not met.
- [ ] Valid alternatives: letter styles may vary if structural rules are followed; do not penalize style differences.

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