Spencerian Slant-Ruled Calligraphy Practice Sheet: A Complete Guide

Original tasks 1, 2 / complete keys

Task 1

On a sheet with baseline at 0 mm, x-height midline at 4 mm, ascender line at 12 mm, and descender line at -4 mm, a learner writes the lowercase letter m. The top of m reaches 4 mm, the bottom sits at 0 mm, and the main strokes are parallel to the slant lines. Which checks does the letter pass?

Answer: It passes the slant check, the x-height check, and the baseline placement. It does not involve an ascender or descender, so those checks do not apply.

Reason: The top equals the 4 mm midline and the bottom equals the 0 mm baseline. The strokes are parallel to the slant lines, so the slant check passes.

Check: Compare the top of m to the midline value and the bottom to the baseline value. Place a straight edge along a slant line and compare it to the main strokes.

Task 2

A learner writes the lowercase letter d on the same sheet. The top of d reaches 10 mm, the bottom sits at 0 mm, and the main strokes are parallel to the slant lines. The ascender line is at 12 mm. Does the letter meet the ascender check?

Answer: No. The top of d is 2 mm below the 12 mm ascender line, so the ascender check fails even though the slant and baseline placement are correct.

Reason: An ascender letter should reach the ascender line. The measured top is 10 mm, which is less than 12 mm.

Check: Subtract the measured top from the ascender line value: 12 minus 10 equals 2 mm short. Check the slant separately with a straight edge.

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Original tasks 3, 4 / complete keys

Task 3

A learner writes the lowercase letter g on a sheet with baseline at 0 mm, x-height midline at 5 mm, and descender line at -5 mm. The top of g reaches 5 mm, the bottom reaches -3 mm, and the main strokes are parallel to the slant lines. Which check fails?

Answer: The descender check fails. The bottom of g is 2 mm above the -5 mm descender line. The x-height and slant checks pass.

Reason: The top equals the 5 mm midline, so x-height passes. The bottom is -3 mm, which is short of -5 mm by 2 mm, so the descender check fails.

Check: Compare the bottom value to the descender line value: -5 minus -3 equals -2 mm, meaning the letter stops 2 mm above the line. Check the top against the midline.

Task 4

A learner traces the word sun on a tracing row, then writes sun on a blank slant-ruled row. On the blank row, the s and u touch the midline and baseline, but the n top reaches 6 mm while the midline is 5 mm. All main strokes are parallel to the slant lines. Using the self-check convention, how many letters in the blank row meet all applicable checks?

Answer: Two letters meet all applicable checks: s and u. The n fails the x-height check because its top is 1 mm above the midline.

Reason: s and u are x-height letters that touch the midline and baseline and have correct slant. n has correct slant and baseline placement but exceeds the midline by 1 mm.

Check: Check each letter separately for slant, midline contact, and baseline contact. Count only letters that pass every applicable check.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] Slant: main strokes are parallel to the slant lines within about one stroke width.
- [ ] X-height: short letters touch the x-height midline and the baseline.
- [ ] Ascenders: tall letters reach the ascender line.
- [ ] Descenders: descending letters reach the descender line.
- [ ] Consistency: the same letter keeps similar slant and height across a row.
- [ ] Alternative styles: valid letter variations are accepted if they meet the four placement checks.

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