2-1-2 Calligraphy Guideline Practice Sheet: Design, Use, and Check

Original tasks 1, 2, 3 / complete keys

Task 1

A sheet uses x-height = 6 mm. Calculate the upper zone height and the lower zone depth in millimetres, and state the total vertical span from ascender line to descender line.

Answer: Upper zone = 2 × 6 = 12 mm. Lower zone = 2 × 6 = 12 mm. Total span = 12 + 6 + 12 = 30 mm.

Reason: The 2-1-2 ratio means the upper and lower zones are each twice the x-height, and the middle zone is the x-height. Adding the three bands gives the total span.

Check: Measure the three gaps on the sheet in millimetres and confirm they are 12 mm, 6 mm, and 12 mm within your chosen tolerance.

Task 2

A learner draws slant lines at 10 degrees from vertical on the left half of a sheet and 15 degrees on the right half. Describe the problem and give one correction.

Answer: The slant is inconsistent across the sheet, so stroke alignment cannot be practiced reliably. Correction: choose one angle, state it at the top of the sheet, and redraw all slant lines at that same angle using a straightedge.

Reason: Slant lines are guides for consistent stroke direction. Two different angles create conflicting guides and make slant checks ambiguous.

Check: Compare several slant lines across the sheet to a single reference angle and confirm they match within a visual tolerance.

Task 3

On a 2-1-2 sheet with x-height = 8 mm, a lowercase 'b' is written so that its ascender reaches 12 mm above the midline. Is the ascender within the upper zone? Explain using the zone height.

Answer: No. The upper zone is 2 × 8 = 16 mm above the midline. An ascender reaching only 12 mm is short of the ascender line by 4 mm, so it does not fully use the upper zone.

Reason: The upper zone height is twice the x-height. Comparing the actual ascender height to the zone height shows whether the letter uses the zone as intended.

Check: Measure the ascender height above the midline and compare it to the calculated upper zone height of 16 mm.

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Original tasks 4 / complete keys

Task 4

A practice row contains five copies of a lowercase 'g'. The first copy has its descender 10 mm below the baseline; the others have descenders of 14, 15, 16, and 16 mm. The sheet uses x-height = 8 mm. Identify which copies are consistent with the lower zone and state one check method.

Answer: The lower zone is 2 × 8 = 16 mm below the baseline. The copies with 14, 15, 16, and 16 mm descenders are within or at the lower zone boundary; the 10 mm copy is short of the zone. Check by measuring each descender depth against the 16 mm lower zone.

Reason: The lower zone depth is twice the x-height. Descenders should reach the lower zone boundary or stay within it, depending on the letter style; the 10 mm copy does not use the zone fully.

Check: Measure each descender from baseline to its lowest point and compare to the calculated 16 mm lower zone depth.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] Zone use: letters occupy the correct 2-1-2 zones, with ascenders in the upper zone and descenders in the lower zone.
- [ ] Slant consistency: main stems align with the stated slant angle within a reasonable visual tolerance.
- [ ] Stroke clarity: strokes are distinct, with no unintended overlaps or gaps.
- [ ] Baseline discipline: letters sit on the baseline unless a descender requires crossing it.
- [ ] Alternative styles accepted: valid letterform variations are allowed if zone use, slant, and clarity are met.

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