Lowercase Handwriting Trace-and-Copy Rows: A Practical Guide

Original tasks 1, 2, 3 / complete keys

Task 1

On paper with a baseline and a midline 8 mm apart, trace the letter o once and copy it twice. The first copy is 8 mm tall and touches both lines; the second copy is 7 mm tall. Which copy meets the height convention, and by how many millimetres does the other fall short?

Answer: The first copy meets the convention. The second copy falls short by 1 mm.

Reason: X-height is baseline to midline, so a full-height o should span 8 mm. The second copy spans 7 mm, and 8 minus 7 equals 1 mm.

Check: Measure each copy from baseline to its highest point with a ruler and compare with the 8 mm midline distance.

Task 2

A row has three letters: m, n, and u. The gaps between letters are 4 mm, 4 mm, and 7 mm. Using the spacing check, describe the issue and state one correction for the next row.

Answer: The third gap is 3 mm wider than the first two, so spacing is uneven. Correction: aim for equal gaps, for example 4 mm between each pair, and check with a ruler.

Reason: Even spacing means the gaps are consistent. The first two gaps are 4 mm; the third is 7 mm, a difference of 3 mm.

Check: Measure each gap between adjacent letters and subtract the smallest gap from the largest to confirm the difference.

Task 3

A learner traces d once, then copies it. The copy's body is 8 mm tall and touches baseline and midline, but the ascender rises only 2 mm above the midline. The model's ascender rises 4 mm above the midline. What is the height issue, and what should the learner check next?

Answer: The body height is correct, but the ascender is 2 mm shorter than the model's. The learner should check the ascender's top against the model and aim for 4 mm above the midline.

Reason: The body meets the 8 mm x-height convention. The ascender difference is 4 minus 2 equals 2 mm.

Check: Measure from midline to the ascender top on both model and copy, then compare the two measurements.

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Original tasks 4 / complete keys

Task 4

A learner writes a single-storey a in the trace and a double-storey a in the copy. Both are legible, both sit between baseline and midline, and both start at the same dot. Using the rubric, is this automatically a mistake? Give a reason and one check.

Answer: No, it is not automatically a mistake because letter styles vary and both forms are legible and correctly placed. Check consistency across the row and confirm both forms meet the height and start-dot checks.

Reason: The rubric rewards shape consistency and valid alternatives, not one universal letter shape. The key checks are legibility, height, and start point.

Check: Compare the two forms against the rubric items for shape, height, and start direction, and note whether the style stays consistent within each row.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] Shape: the letter follows the model's main curves and joins, or a consistent valid alternative style.
- [ ] Height: the letter body sits between baseline and midline; ascenders rise above midline and descenders drop below baseline.
- [ ] Start and direction: the pencil begins at the start dot and follows the indicated direction.
- [ ] Spacing: gaps between letters in a row are even and letters do not collide.
- [ ] Transfer: the blank copy resembles the traced letter without dotted guidance.
- [ ] Self-check: the learner names one strength and one fix using the three checks.

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