

Kids
Handwrite™



RESOURCE MATERIAL



Lines and Spacing



COPYRIGHT NOTICE

© 2024 Calgary, Alberta

Canadian copyright laws protect this Resource. Kids Handwrite™ Calgary, Alberta, owns the copyright in Parts II and III of this Resource.

The images in Parts II and III were sourced from **Pixabay** (<https://pixabay.com>) and **Vecteezy** (<https://www.vecteezy.com>). Other colouring pages in Section 1 are Procreate Stamps from Tattoo Worker Studio, available on Design Cuts . All images are subject to their applicable copyright licenses. The links to the images used in the Resource Material can be found in Section 15 Image Attribution.

This work is licensed under **CC BY-NC-ND 4.0**. Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International. Under this Creative Commons license, you are free to copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format, and the copyright owners, as licensors, cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms. The terms are as follows:

- **Attribution** - You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use.
- **Non-Commercial** - You may not use the material for commercial purposes.
- **No Derivatives** - If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you may not distribute the modified material.
- **No additional restrictions** - You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits.
- **Notices** - You do not have to comply with the license for elements of the material in the public domain or where your use is permitted by an applicable exception or limitation.
- **No warranties are given** - The license may not give you all the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material.

Section 3 – LINES AND SPACING

1. Lined Paper and Line Spacing

The following line spacings are suggested in the literature:

- **Kindergarten** students – can practice without lines.
- **Grade 1** students - use $\frac{3}{4}$ inch or 20 mm lined paper with a faint mid-horizontal line and a skip space. The mid-line sets the height of the body of the lowercase letters and guides the connecting lines forming the uppercase letters.
- **Grade 2** students start with the Grade 1 paper, and by the end of the year should print and write on $\frac{3}{8}$ inch or 10 mm lined paper without a mid-line or skip line.
- **Grade 3** students start with the Grade 2 paper, and by mid to end of the year, should write on $\frac{1}{4}$ inch or 7 mm lined paper with no guidelines.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
Line Spacing	$\frac{3}{4}$ inch (20 mm) gradually reducing to $\frac{3}{8}$ inch (10 mm)	$\frac{3}{8}$ inch (10 mm)	$\frac{3}{8}$ inch (10 mm), gradually reducing to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (7 mm)
Mid-Guideline Waist Line	Yes	Students can start with a mid-guideline but end the year without them.	No
Skip Space below Baseline	Yes		No

2. The Letter Lines

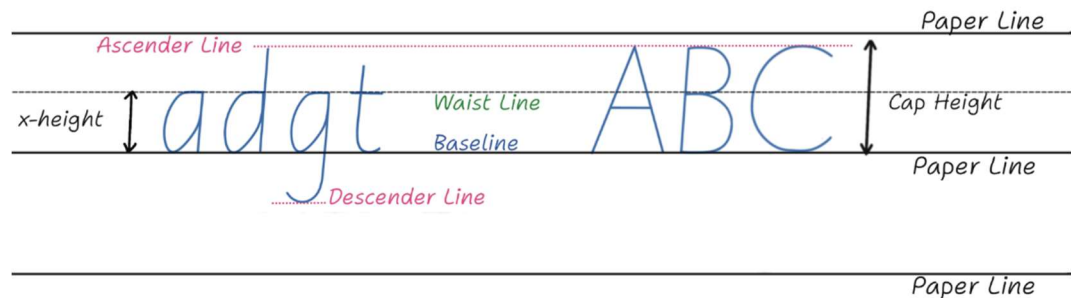
To properly print and write lowercase and uppercase letters, the following terms must be understood and conveyed to the students in a way they can understand.

Term	Meaning
Ascender:	The ascender is the part of the letter that extends above the x-height. The ascender is $\frac{4}{5}$ ths of the x-height.
Ascender Line:	The imaginary horizontal line where the ascenders on lowercase letters stop and the uppercase letters stop. All ascenders, except the “ t ,” are the same height and all stop at the ascender line. The “ t ” is half as tall as the other ascenders.
Baseline:	The baseline is where the body of all lowercase and uppercase letters sit. If the student is not using lined paper, the baseline would also be an imaginary line.

Term	Meaning
Branching Line:	An imaginary line where the curved part of the lowercase letter leaves or joins the stem. The lowercase letters branch in the centre of the x-height.
Cap Height:	The height of the uppercase letters (the space between the baseline and the ascender line).
Descender:	The descender is the part of lowercase letters that extends below the baseline. The descender is 4/5ths of the x-height.
Descender Line:	The imaginary horizontal line where the descenders on lowercase letters stop.
Waist Line:	The imaginary horizontal line where the body of the lowercase letters stops. This line defines the x-height of the lowercase letters and is the middle of the uppercase letters.
x-height:	The x-height is the height of the lowercase letters without any ascenders and descenders (the space between the baseline and the waistline).

The above lines are shown in the diagram below.

With the Baseline and Waist Line visible, these lines are:



3. Similes for Students

The lines for letters can be compared to objects familiar to children.

- One option is to compare the lines to a house, with the baseline being the main floor, the waist line being the kitchen countertops, the ascender line being the upstairs, and the descender line being the basement.
- A second option is to compare the lines to the outside, with the baseline being the grass, the waist line being the bushes, the ascender line being the trees, and the descender line being the tree roots.

There are likely other similes that will convey the meaning of these lines to young students.

4. Worksheets

The Lowercase and Uppercase Worksheets in the Resource (Sections 5, 6 and 7) have $\frac{3}{4}$ inch (20 mm) line spacing with a visible Waist Line and a Skip Space.



The Word Practice sheets in the Resource (Section 8) have $\frac{3}{8}$ inch (10 mm) with a visible Waist Line and a Skip Space.



5. Blank Lined Practice Pages

Blank-lined practice pages for Grades 1, 2 and 3 are included in Section 12 of the Resource and are as follows (the images are not to scale):

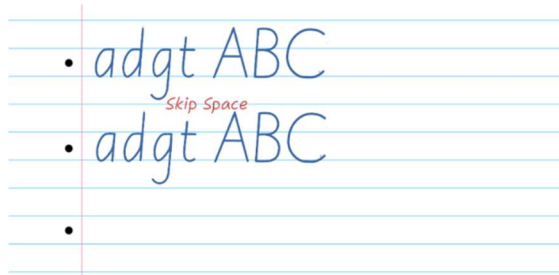
		Grade 1
Line Spacing between Baselines		$\frac{3}{4}$ inch (20 mm), gradually reducing to $\frac{3}{8}$ inch (10 mm)
Waist Line		Yes
Skip Base below Baseline		Yes

		Grade 2
Line Spacing between Baselines		$\frac{3}{8}$ inch (10 mm)
Waist Line		Students can start with an x-height line and skip space but end the year without them
Skip Base below Baseline		

		Grade 3
Line Spacing between Baselines		$\frac{3}{8}$ inch (10 mm), gradually reducing to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (7 mm)
Waist Line		No
Skip Base below Baseline		No

6. *Using Looseleaf Paper or Exercise Books*

Commercially available looseleaf paper and exercise books can be adapted to create a “Skip Space” for Grade 1 and early Grade 2 students by having them put a dot between the lines that will serve Baseline and the Waist Line. The Skip Space allows the students room to print their ascenders and descenders without having them run into each other.



7. *Letter and Word Spacing*

The spacing between letters, between words and between lines is key to legible handwriting, and it is never too early to learn. Students should be taught and practice proper spacing between letters, words and lines from the beginning and throughout their handwriting journey. Like proper letter forms, consistency and even spacing only come from practice.

a) *Letter Spacing*

Generally speaking, less space between letters is better than more because the eye sees groups of letters when reading. Letters are spaced close together (but not too tight) but not spaced equally apart. The spacing depends on the shape of the letters next to each other. The goal is for the letters to appear evenly spaced, even though they are not.



Think of the spaces between the letters as containers of different shapes, that hold the same amount of “water”.

Spaces are optically equal, and for this to happen:

- two straight letters are the furthest apart – the turquoise space in the above image;
- a straight and curved letter together are closer to each other – the green space in the above image; and
- two curved letters beside each other are the closest – the pink space in the above image.

The spacing of **c, r, s, w, w**, and **x** and the right side of **k** are the same as two curved letters.

More attention must be paid to the spacing between printed letters than cursive letters since the joins are natural spacers. For the same reason, one must watch the spacing between letters involving a pen lift (before **f** and **x** and after **g, j, q, r** and **y**) to avoid a gap in the word.

b) Word Spacing

The spacing between words is a function of the letters' size and width.

The space between words should be the width of the student's lowercase letter "n".

Although suggested by some, students should avoid using their fingers to measure the space between words as that action interrupts the writing process.

c) Interlinear Spacing (Line Spacing)

Line spacing is correct when the descenders from the line above do not clash and get tangled in the ascenders in the writing line.

d) Importance of Consistent and Even Spacing

Apart from the above rules for letter spacing, there is no rule or guideline for the distance between letters and words. It is all about what looks good and is readable.

It is essential, however, for the spacing between the types of letter shapes and between the words to be consistent throughout the handwritten text. The spacing should not vary from word to word, sentence to sentence or between paragraphs.

8. Practice Opportunities

Every Worksheet in the Resource will allow students to practice their letter spacing, starting with the individual letter practice pages.