How four-line writing works

A one-page guide for parents and teachers: what each line is for, and where every letter sits.



Capitals and numbers: the top two spaces

From line 1 down to the baseline. Nothing drops below.



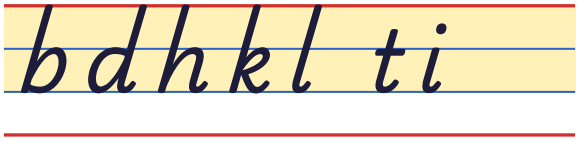
Small letters: the middle space only

a c e m n o r s u v w x z sit between the two blue lines.



Tall small letters: the top two spaces

b d h k l reach line 1. t stops halfway up; the dot of i and j sits in the top space.



Tails: the middle and bottom spaces

g j p q y drop to line 4. In our print and cursive styles f uses all three spaces.



Four rules to say out loud

1. Every letter sits on line 3, the baseline. Tails are the only parts below it.
2. Small letters touch line 2 and line 3 exactly: not floating, not sinking.
3. Capitals and tall letters touch line 1; numbers are as tall as capitals.
4. Leave a gap about one small o wide between words.

Teaching four-line writing: notes

For parents and teachers. Print at 100% (actual size).

Teach it in this order

- Before four lines: big letters in sand, on a board or in a box, until the child knows where each letter starts.
- Capitals first on four lines: they all use the same two spaces, so they are the easiest to place.
- Then small letters by family, not A to Z: the middle-space letters (c, o, a, e …), then the tall letters, then the tails.
- Then words, then short sentences with a capital letter and a full stop.
- Cursive (joined) writing comes later, usually from Class 3, on narrower lines.

Which line height?

- 10 mm spaces: nursery, LKG and children who still write big.
- 8 mm: UKG, kindergarten and Class 1.
- 6 mm: Class 1 and 2; most printed four-line notebooks are close to this.
- 5 mm: Class 3 and up, and for cursive.

Your school may differ

- Schools and copybooks differ on two letters. Some teach print f with no tail, sitting on the baseline like t; ours drops a tail into the bottom space. Some teach t up to line 1; ours stops halfway, as in most copybooks. Follow the book your child brings home.
- In cursive, capitals J, Y and Z and small z have loops below the baseline, and S, V and W start a little above line 1. That is how the traditional joined style is drawn.

What to say while they write

- "Where does this letter start? Which line does it touch?" Ask before the pencil moves, not after.
- "Is it sitting on the baseline?" is the one question that fixes most untidy rows.
- Cover the model letter and ask the child to point to the space it uses before writing it.

Little and often

- Ten minutes a day beats an hour on Sunday. Stop while the writing is still neat.
- Check grip and posture first: feet flat, paper slightly tilted, pencil held near the point.
- Praise one thing that is right on the lines before you point at one thing to fix.