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.

ADKR 257

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.

acemorsuvwz

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.

bdhkl ti

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.

gjpqy f

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.