

THE
[PLAY]
PROJECT
by Kait Cummins

Letter Formation



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Welcome to The Play Project Letter Formation Booklet. This booklet is full of downloadable activity sheets to help your child develop correct letter formation and handwriting skills. Over the next few pages I have outlined the basics of handwriting development to ensure that you are giving your child all of the skills they need to experience success in this area. If you require further information or support please email me at info@kaitcummins.com or check out the video modules on our website www.theplayprojects.com

WHAT ARE PRE-WRITING SKILLS?

Pre-writing skills are the fundamental skills children need to develop before they are able to write. These skills contribute to the child's ability to hold and use a pencil, and the ability to draw, write, copy, and colour.

Our body's develop from the inside out so its important that we ensure our children have the strength they need throughout their body before we focus too much on writing practice. Otherwise writing will be hard and they may be a lot slower and messier than their peers. The fundamental motor skills children need to be ready for writing include:

- good core strength
- upper body and shoulder strength
- hand and finger strength
- hand-eye coordination
- bilateral coordination – ability to use both hands together.

For more information about these skills, refer to our online handwriting or ready for school programs.

A major component of pre-writing skills are the pre-writing shapes. These are the pencil strokes that most letters, numbers and early drawings are comprised of. They are typically mastered in sequential order, and to an age specific level. These strokes include the following:

	—	○	+	/	□	\	x	△
--	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

WHY ARE PRE-WRITING SKILLS IMPORTANT?

Pre-writing skills are essential for the child to be able to develop the ability to hold and move a pencil fluently and effectively and therefore produce legible writing. When these skills are underdeveloped it can lead to frustration and resistance due to the child not being able to produce legible writing or to 'keep up' in class due to fatigue. This can then result in poor self esteem and academic performance.

HOW DO I KNOW IF MY CHILD IS HAVING DIFFICULTY WITH THEIR PRE-WRITING SKILLS?

Check out the table below to see if your child's skills are consistent with their age.

Age in Years	Pre-writing Expectation				
1 - 2	Randomly scribbles				
	Spontaneously scribbles in vertical, horizontal and/or circular direction				
	Imitates a horizontal, vertical and/or circular direction				
2 - 3	Imitates	—		○	
3 - 4	Copies	—			
	Copies	○			
	Imitates	+	/	\	□
4 - 5	Copies	+	/	\	□
	Imitates	X	△		
	Traces a line				
	Grasps pencil in writing position				
5 - 6	Copies	X	△		
	Recognises between a big and small line or curve				

When a child has pre-writing difficulties, they might also have difficulties with:

- Behaviour – they may avoid or refuse to participate in pencil and other fine motor tasks.
- Self esteem – when they compare their work against that of their peers.
- Academic performance – they find it more difficult and are slower completing these tasks, contributing to slower skills acquisition (e.g. learning to write their name, or draw a person)
- Self care – the ability to (age appropriately) master independence in everyday life activities (such as dressing, eating, cleaning teeth, brushing hair).
- Avoidance – preferring to get others to perform fine motor tasks for them under their direction, rather than actually doing it themselves (e.g. “Daddy, draw me a house”, or “build me a rocket”, with refusal to do it themselves).

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO IMPROVE PRE-WRITING SKILLS?

- Core strength – practice activities like army crawls, laying on their tummy, superman. See our core strength videos for more ideas.
- Upper limb strength – encourage play activities that develop upper limb strength (e.g. climbing ladders, wheelbarrow walking).
- Hand-eye coordination – practice activities that involve hand-eye coordination (e.g. throwing and catching) and crossing the mid-line (e.g. reaching across the body to pick up items).
- Hand dominance – notice what hand your child uses when they start a task e.g. brushing their teeth or colouring in. Then encourage them to finish that task with the same hand. Some children don't develop hand dominance until they are 6 or 7 and it's best not to force them to choose. Using the same hand for the whole task ensures they are developing their hand strength and endurance and that they can use that hand on both sides of their body (cross their mid-line).
- Hand and finger strength (e.g. scrunching, paper, using tweezers, play dough, pegs).
- Experience – encourage participation in activities that involve grasping and manipulating small objects, such as drawing, puzzles, opening containers, threading or other related tasks.
- Poking and pointing – practice tasks that use just one or two fingers (not all at once) e.g. poking games
- Praise and encouragement when your child engages in fine motor activities, especially if they are persistent when finding an activity difficult.
- Sensory play activities (e.g. rice play, finger painting) to assist the development of tactile awareness.

Check out the fine motor activities and pencil aerobics handouts at the end of this booklet. You can watch our pencil aerobics video at https://youtu.be/V7g_1vGLtI

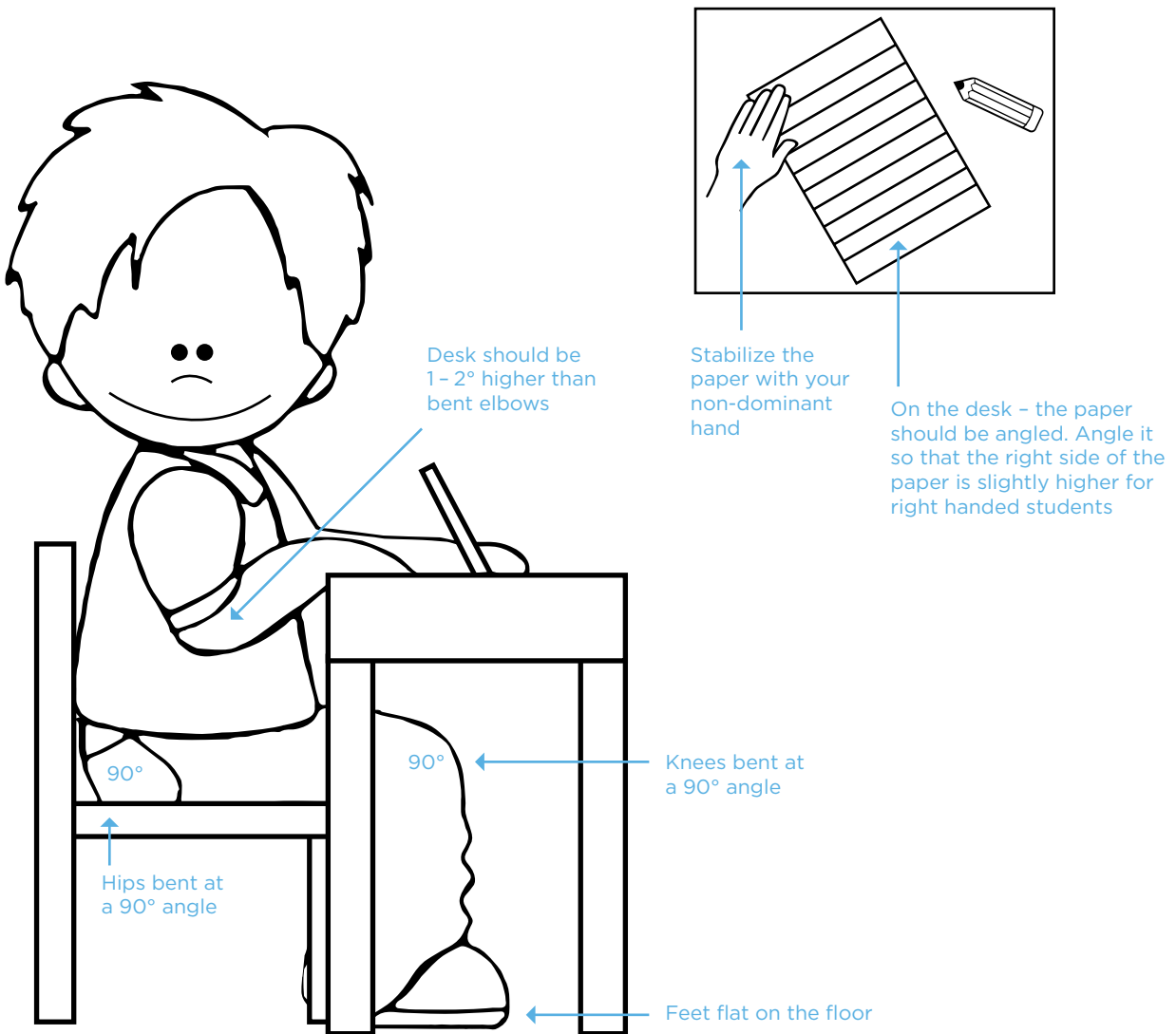
GETTING STARTED

Warm-ups for writing – check out our 1 minute video at <https://youtu.be/CbV9A-S6Fik> to help you prepare your child’s hands and body for writing practice.

When sitting down to start writing practice with your child there are a few things to check, to ensure they are creating healthy writing habits.

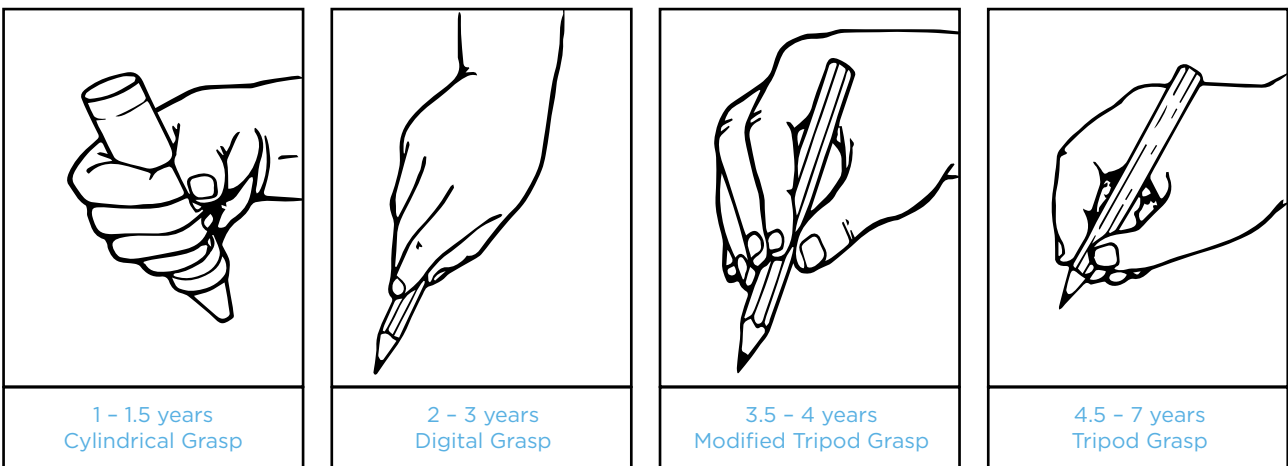
1. Posture

If you are working at your kitchen table and your child’s feet do not touch the floor, you can try placing a box under their feet. If your child also finds using a knife and fork at meal times difficult then it may be worth investing in a grow chair. You can check these out on our website www.theplayprojects/chairs



2. Pencil grasp

By the time your child is ready to practice handwriting they should be using a tripod grasp. If your child is older than 7 and not using a tripod grasp, it will be very difficult to change their grip, so improving their hand strength is a more practical solution. However, if your child is under 7 it is recommended that you help them establish a tripod pencil grip. You can find out more about aids to help with pencil grips on our website www.theplayprojects.com/handwriting

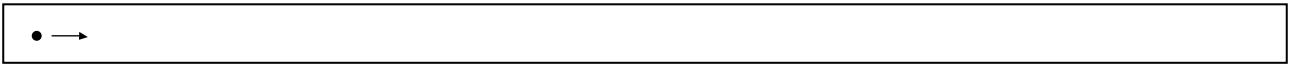
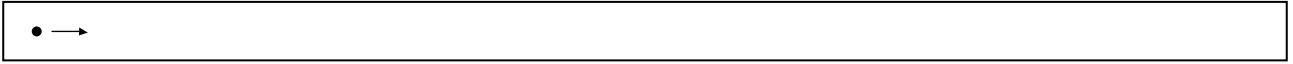
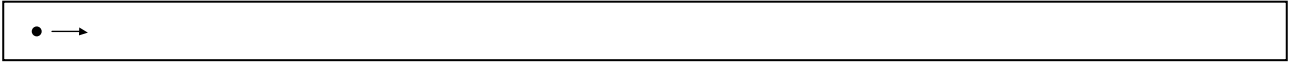


When completing the handwriting booklet it is important that you begin at the start and ensure that your child can master each of the pre-writing skills before moving on to the next section. If your child is finding any of the tasks in the booklet difficult, check out the getting it write and fine motor ideas sections at the end of the booklet for handy hints and tips to improve mastery.

For more information or to check out our online handwriting videos, visit www.theplayprojects.com or email us at info@kaitcummins.com.au

Happy Handwriting!

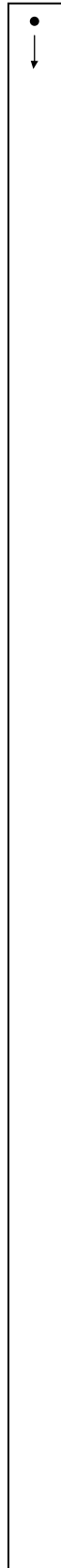
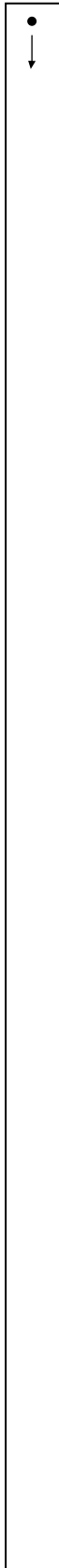
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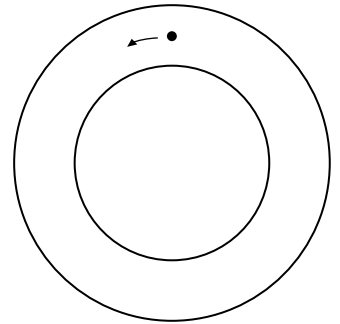
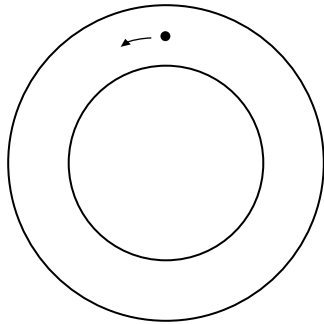
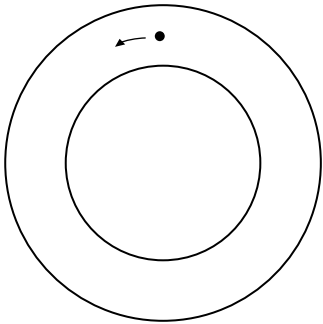
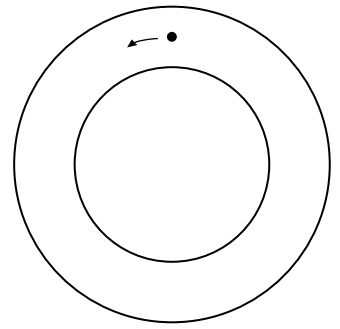
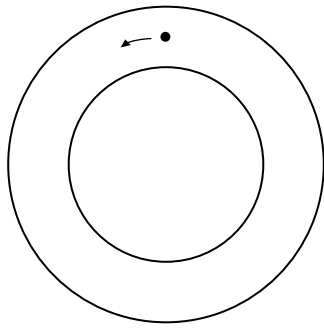
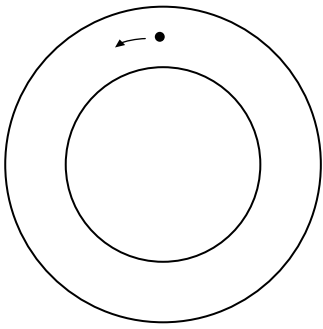
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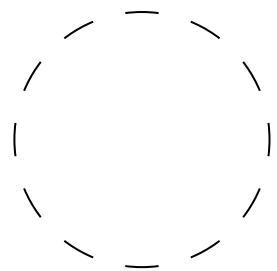
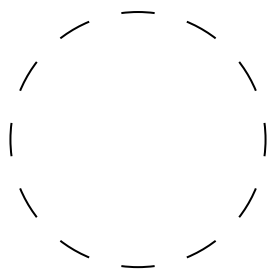
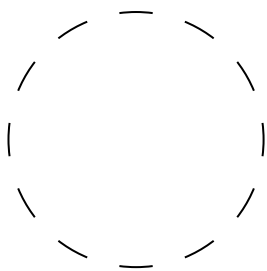
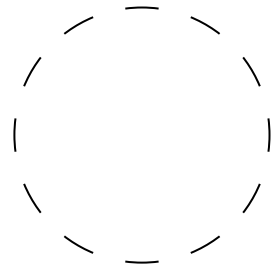
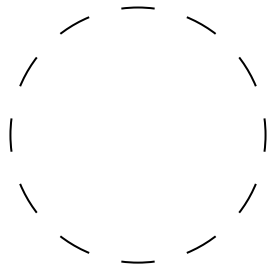
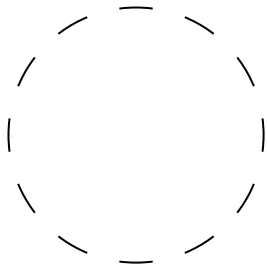
Draw a line in the centre of the shape. Then trace along the dotted line



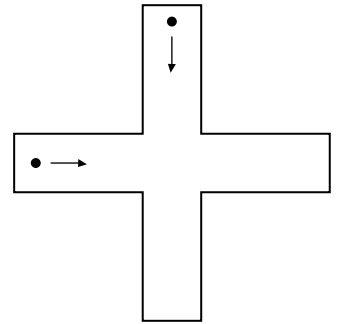
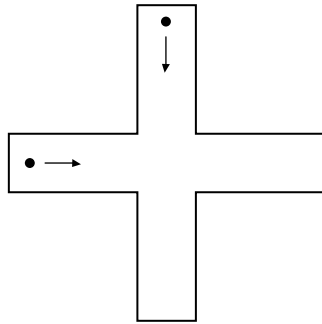
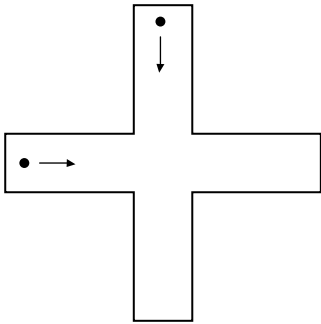
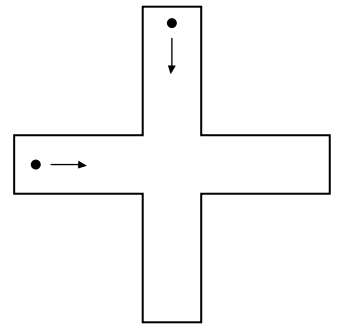
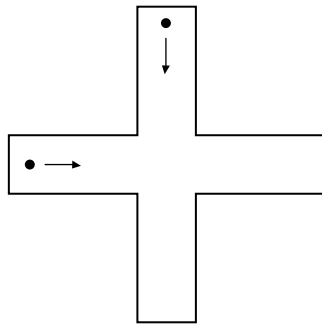
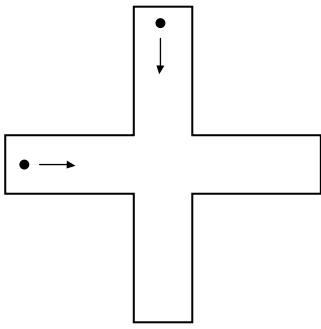
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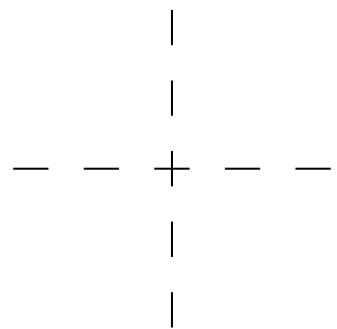
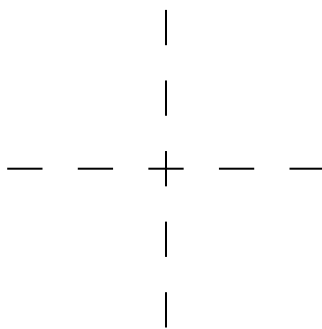
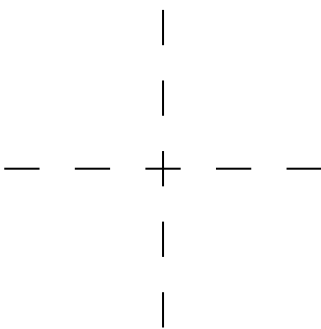
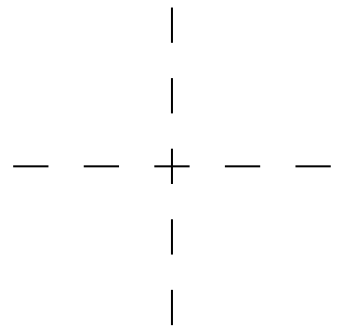
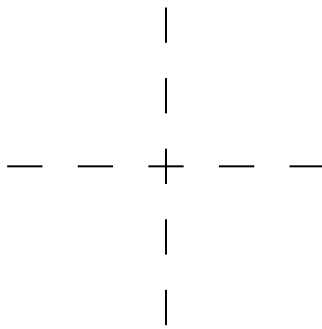
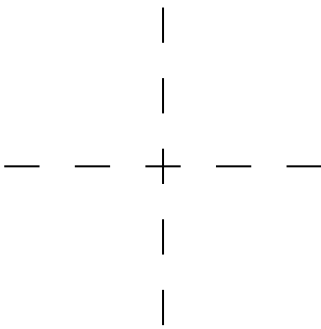
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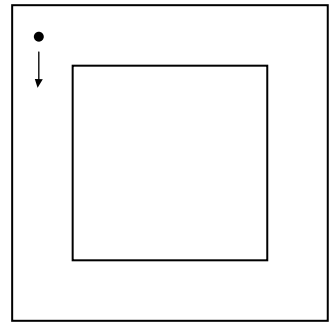
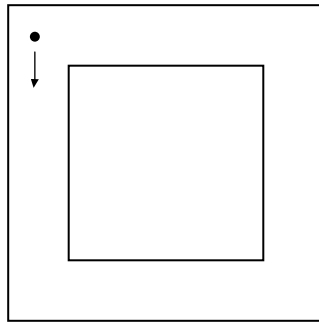
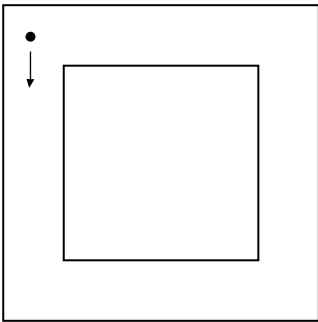
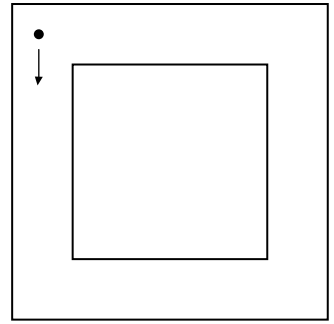
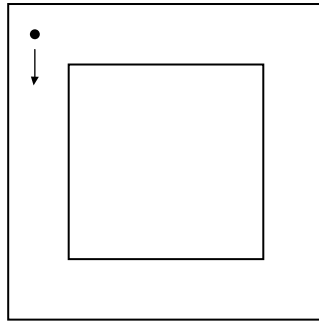
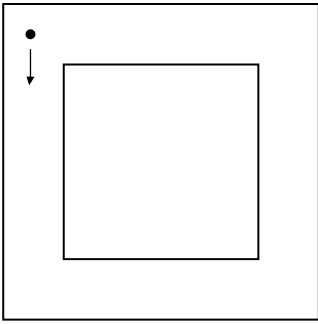
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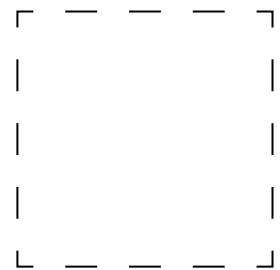
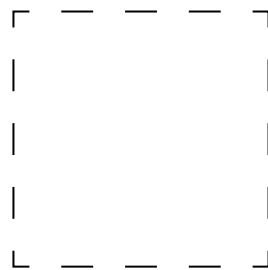
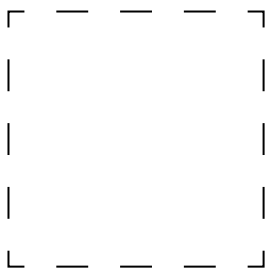
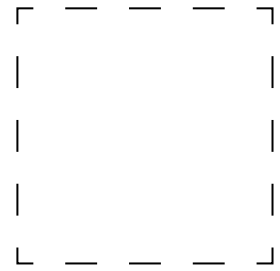
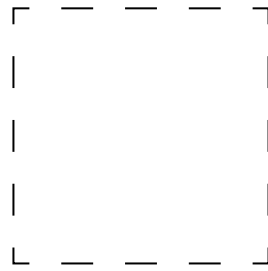
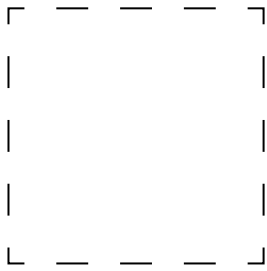
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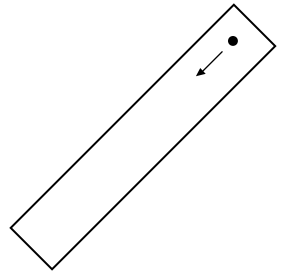
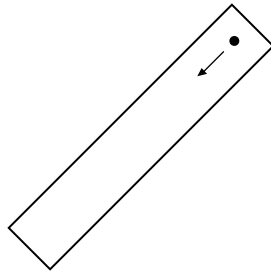
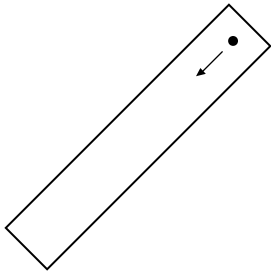
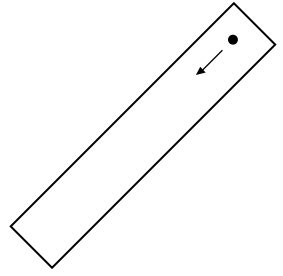
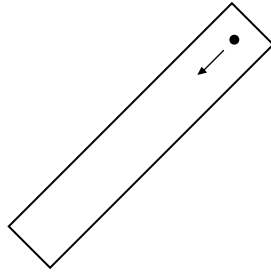
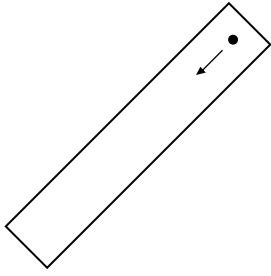
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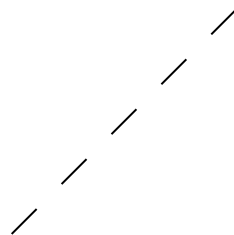
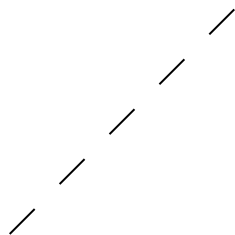
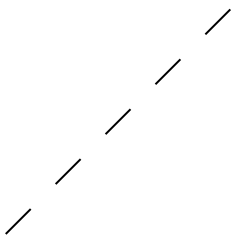
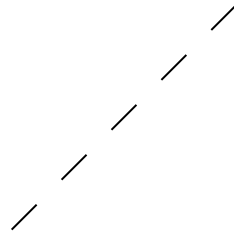
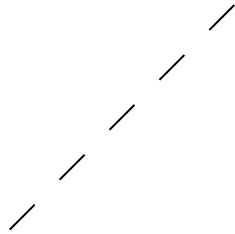
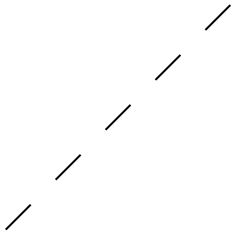
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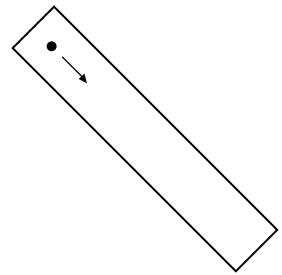
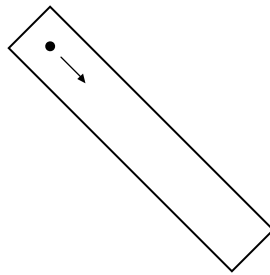
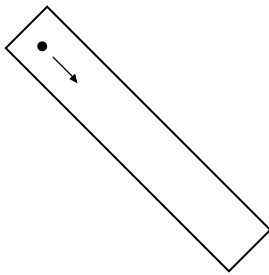
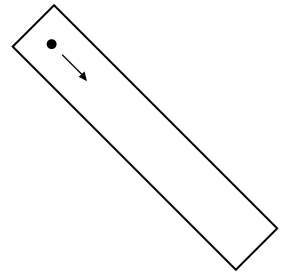
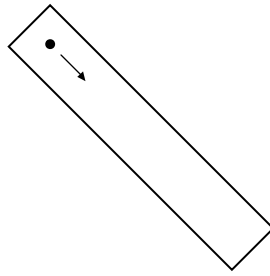
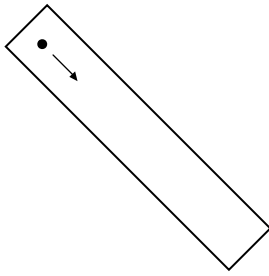
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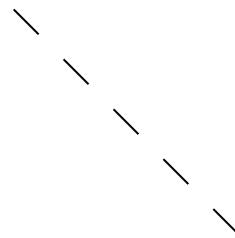
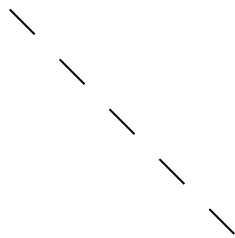
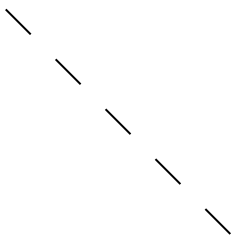
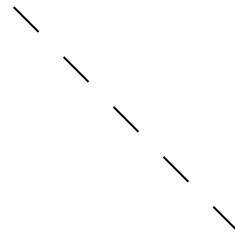
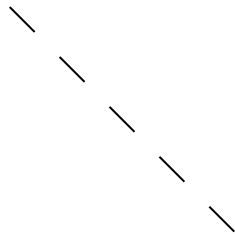
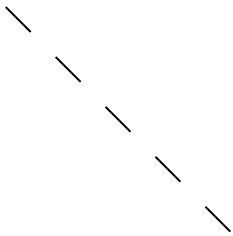
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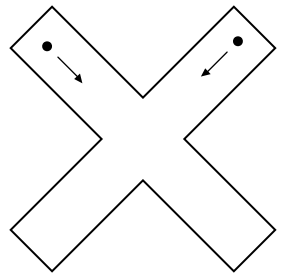
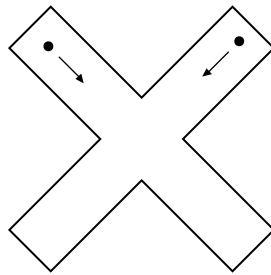
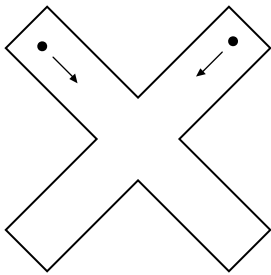
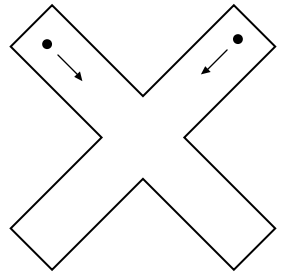
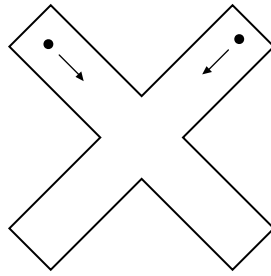
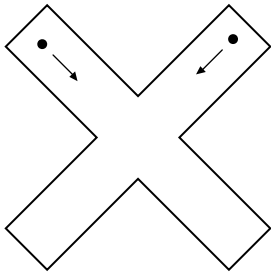
Draw a line in the centre of the shape



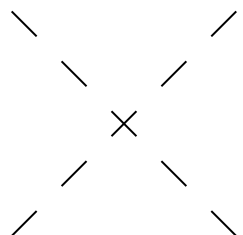
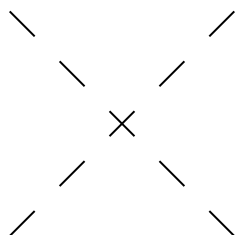
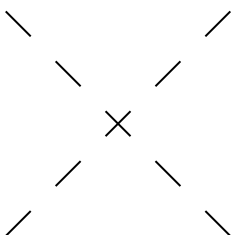
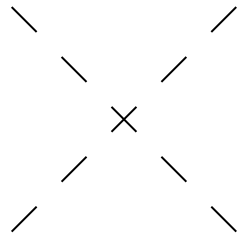
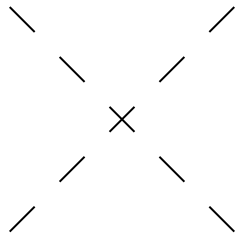
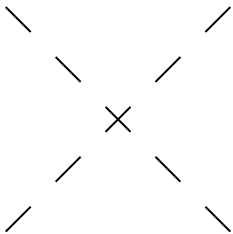
Trace along the dotted line



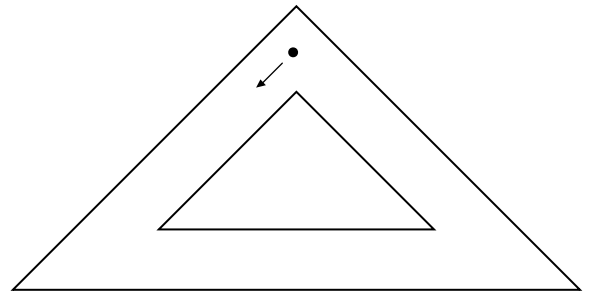
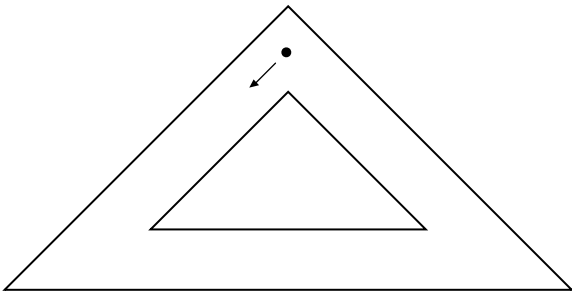
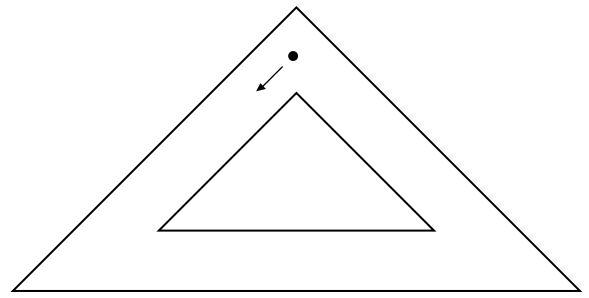
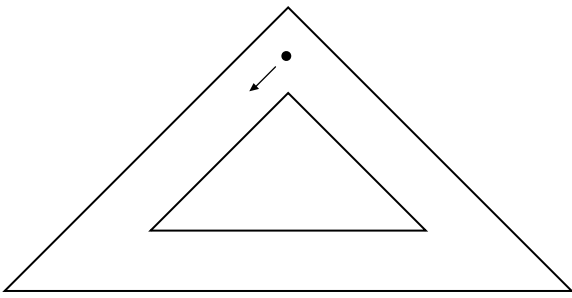
Draw a line in the centre of the shape



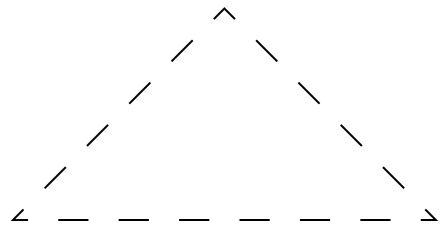
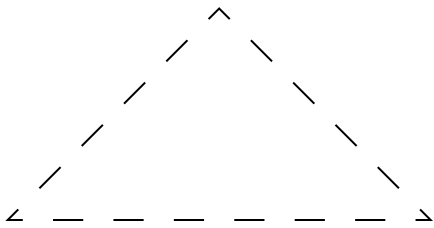
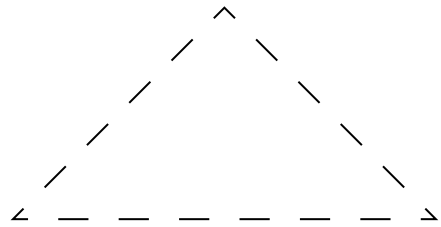
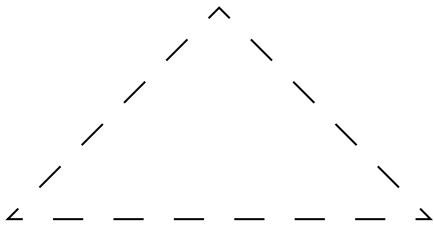
Trace along the dotted line



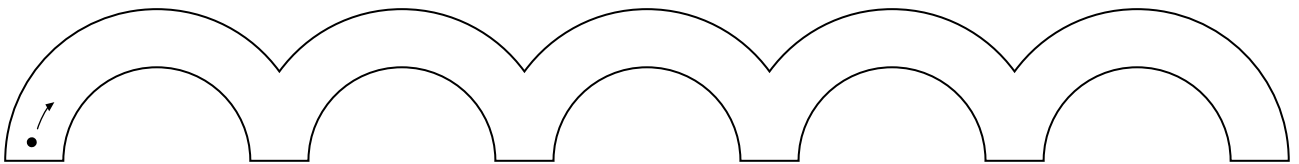
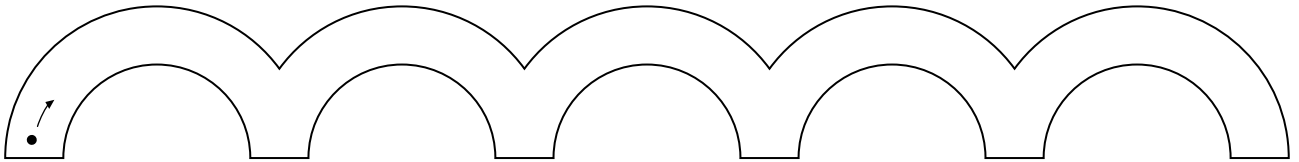
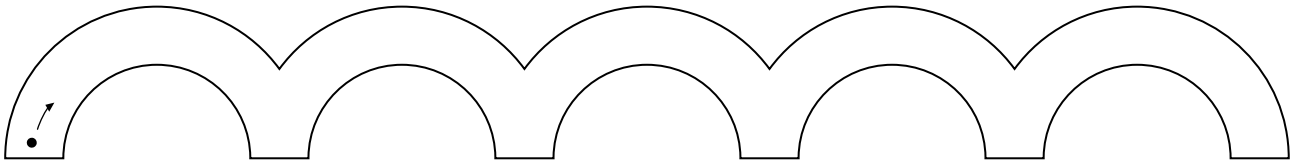
Draw a line in the centre of the shape



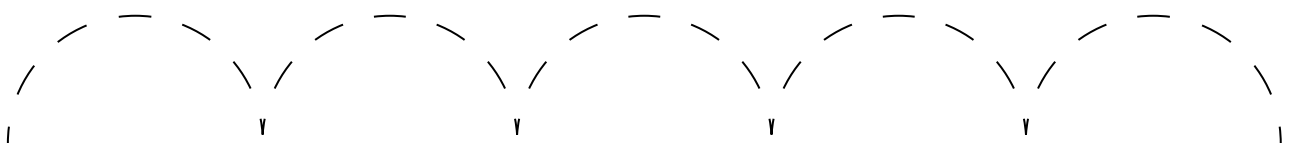
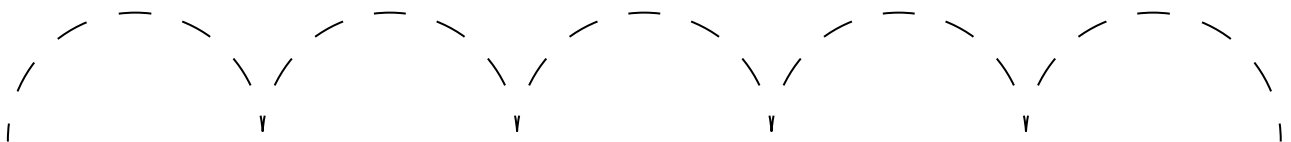
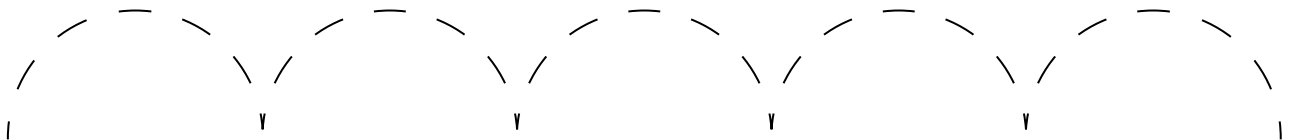
Trace along the dotted line



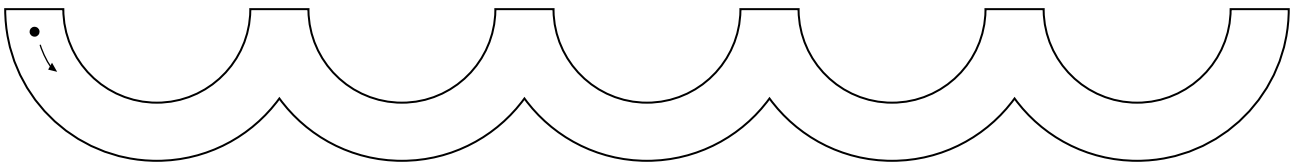
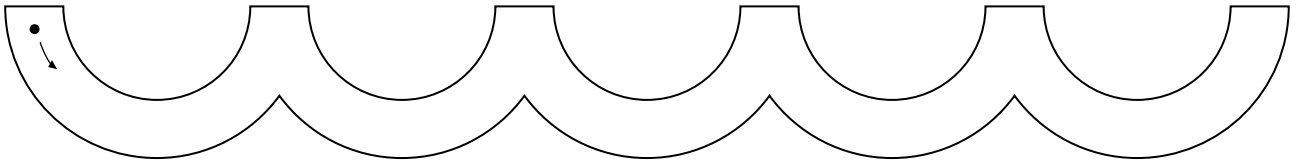
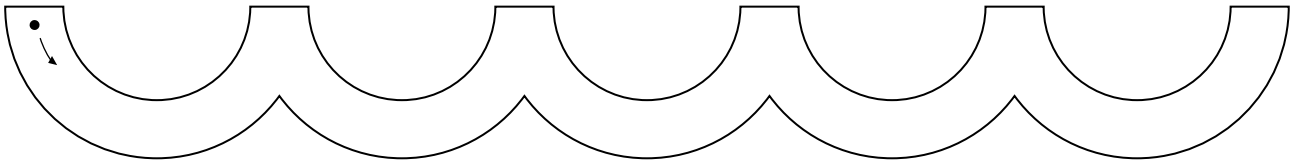
Draw a line in the centre of the shape



Trace along the dotted line



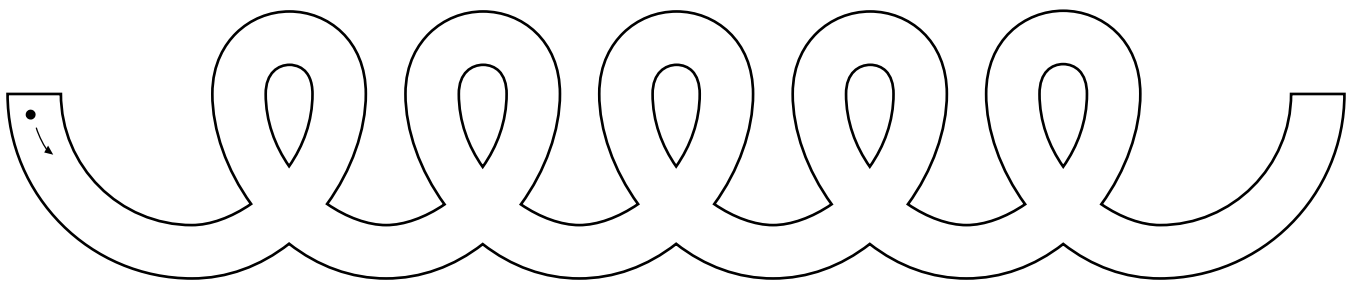
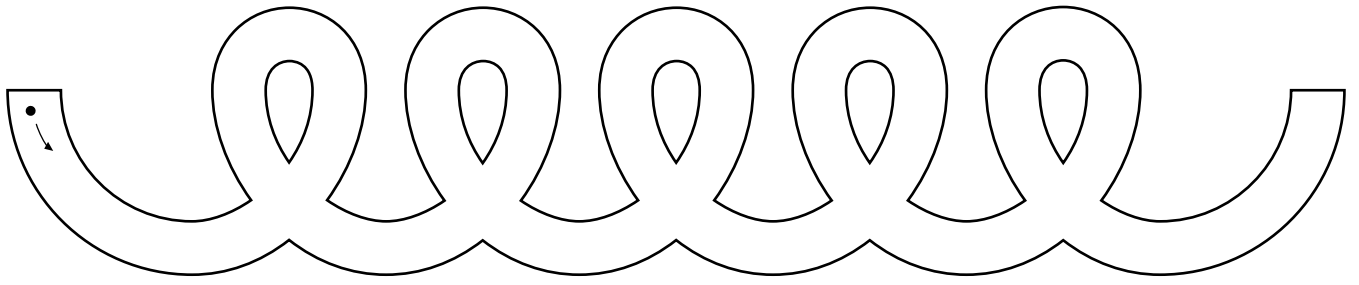
Draw a line in the centre of the shape



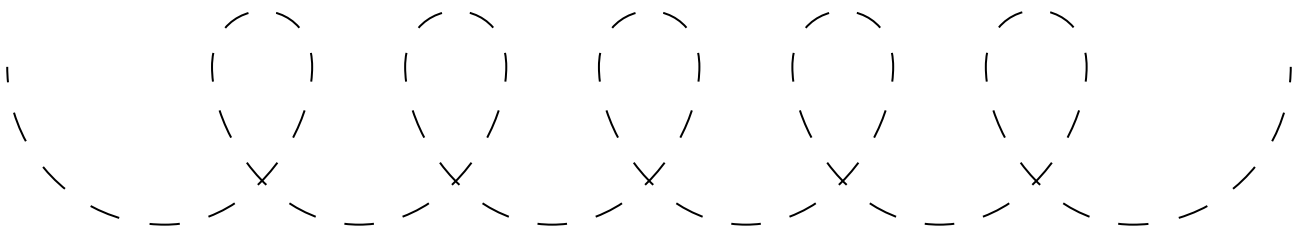
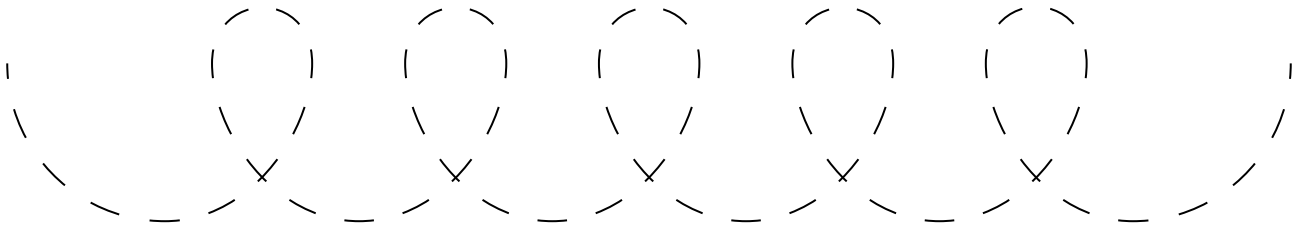
Trace along the dotted line



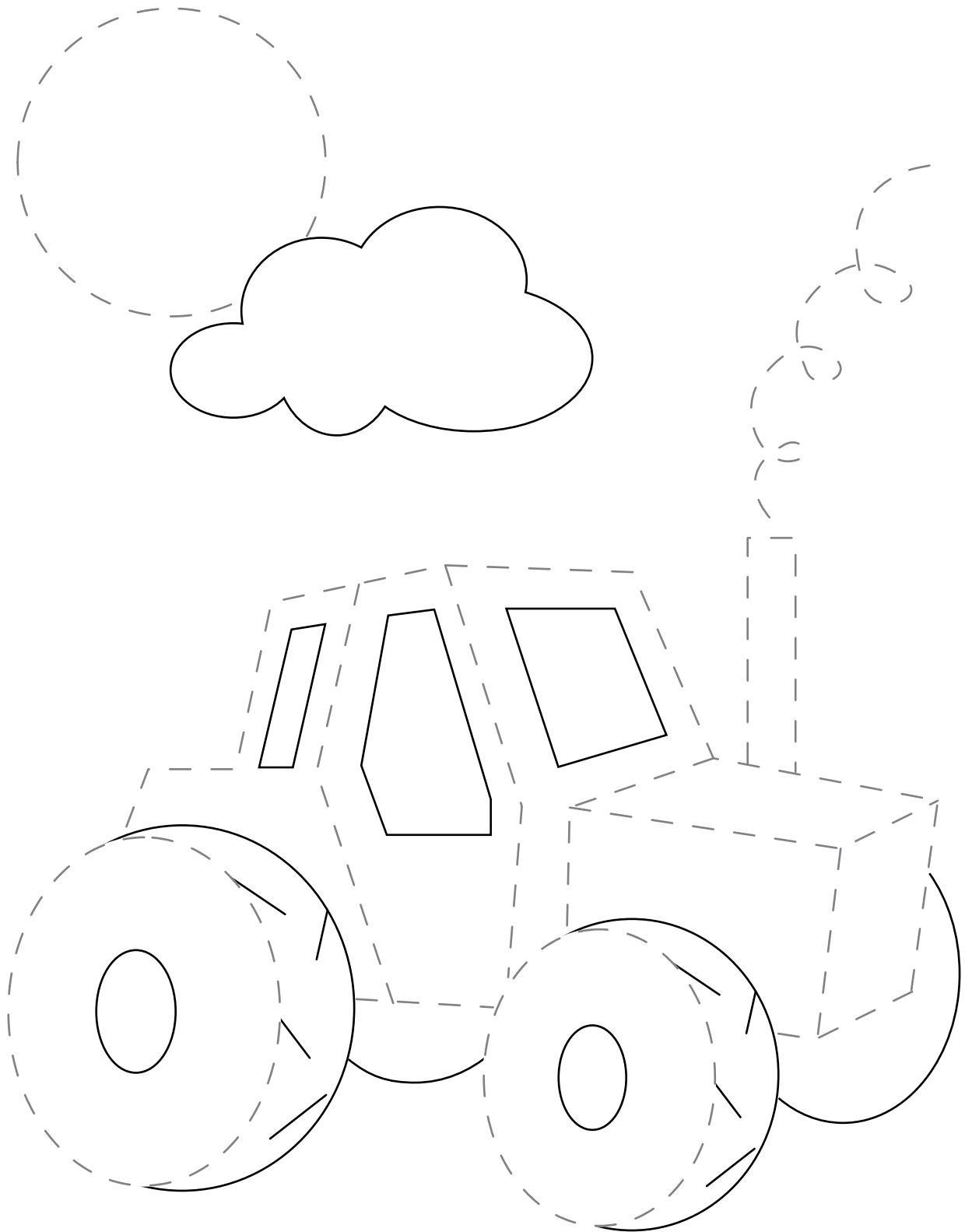
Draw a line in the centre of the shape



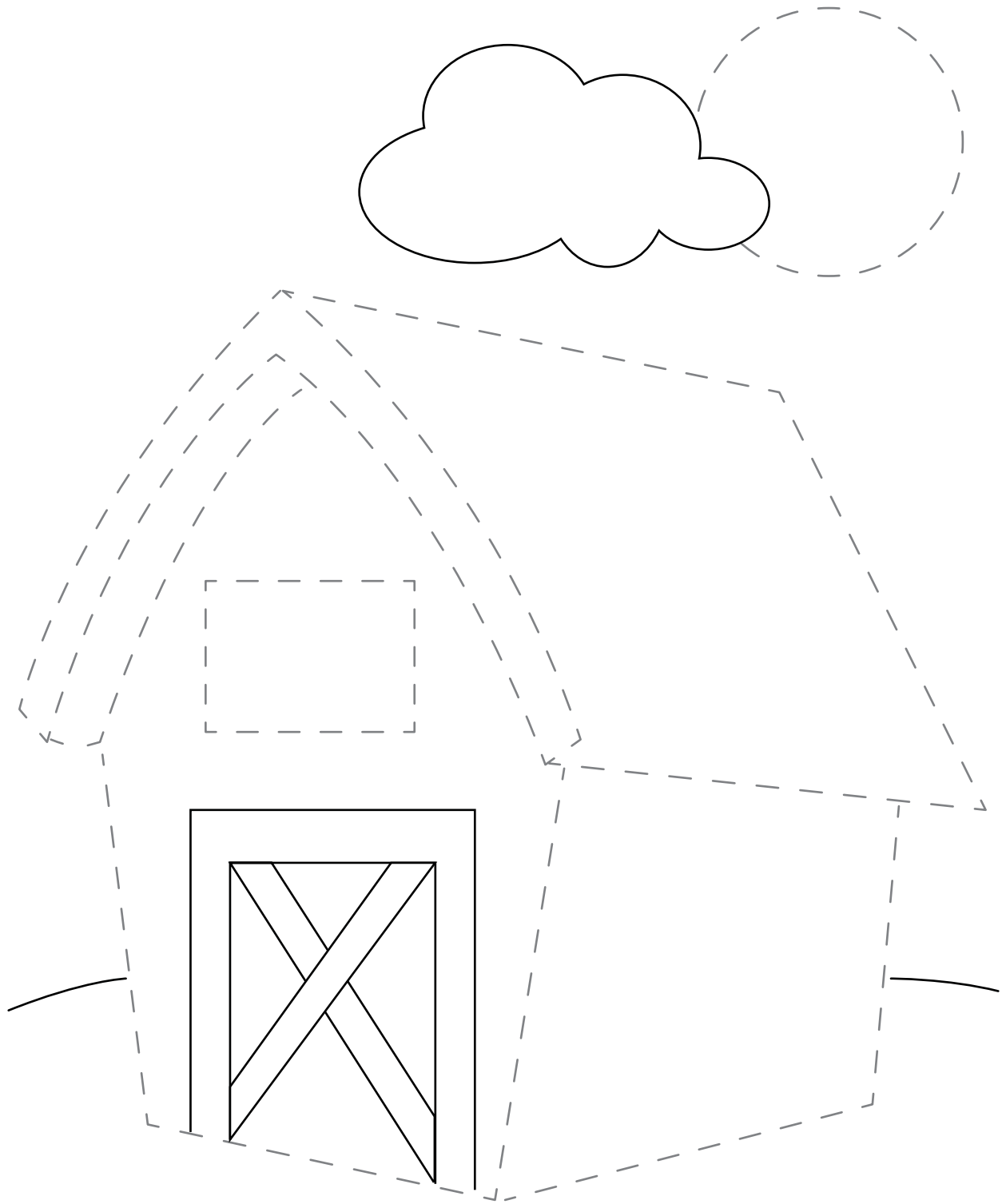
Trace along the dotted line



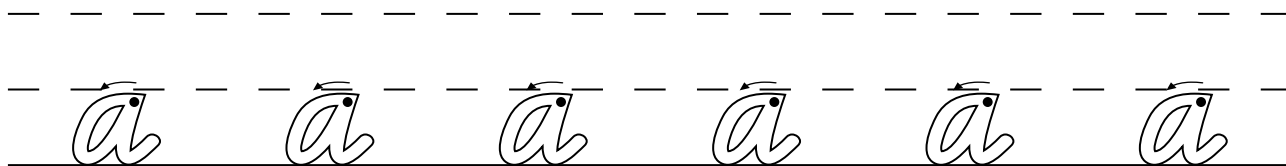
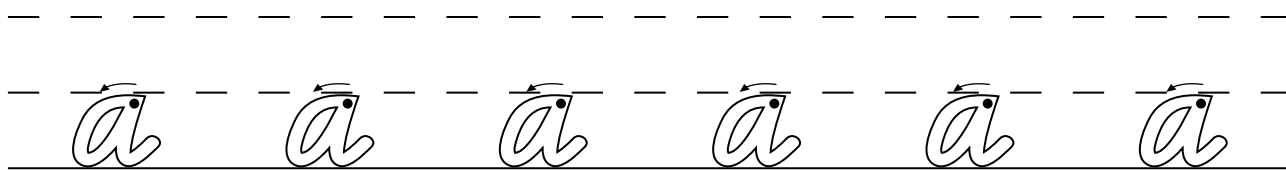
Trace along the dotted lines and colour in the picture



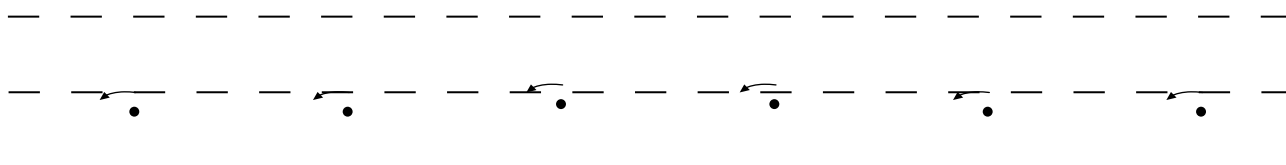
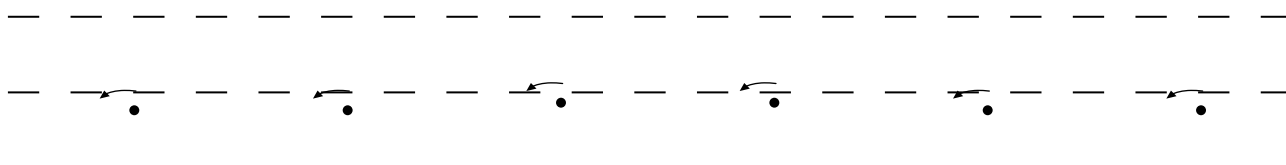
Trace along the dotted lines and colour in the picture



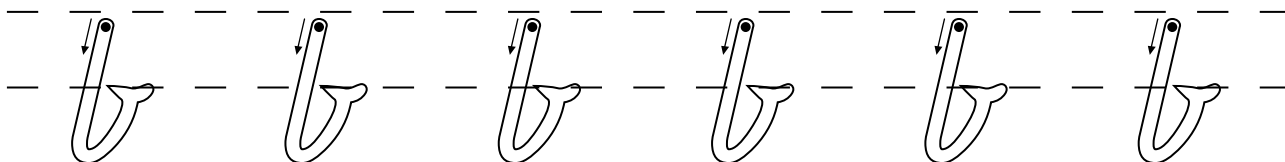
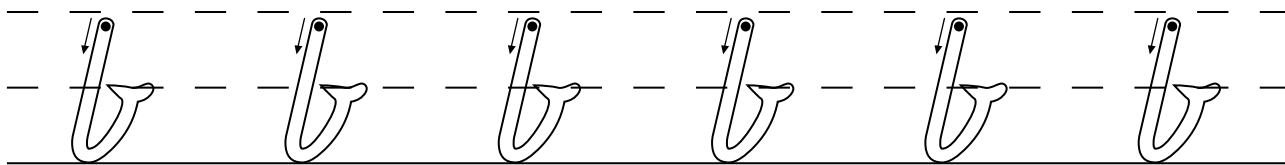
Track the letters



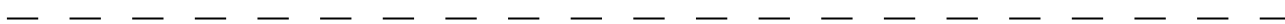
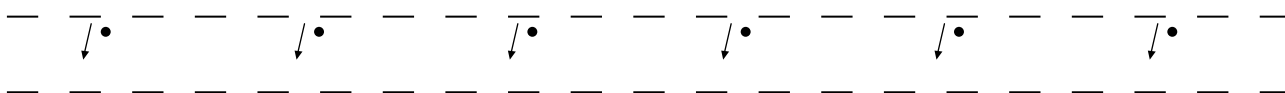
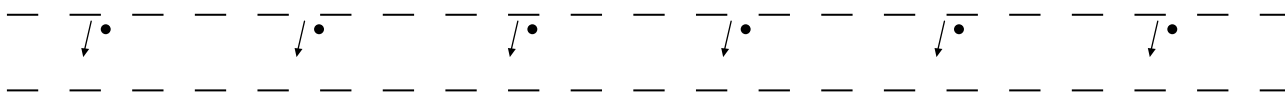
Try your own



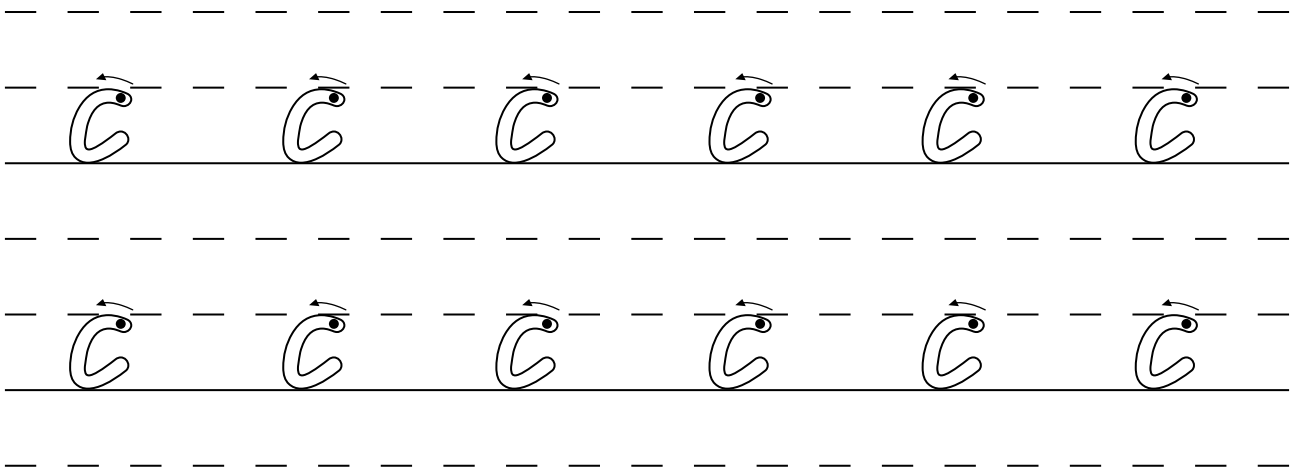
Track the letters



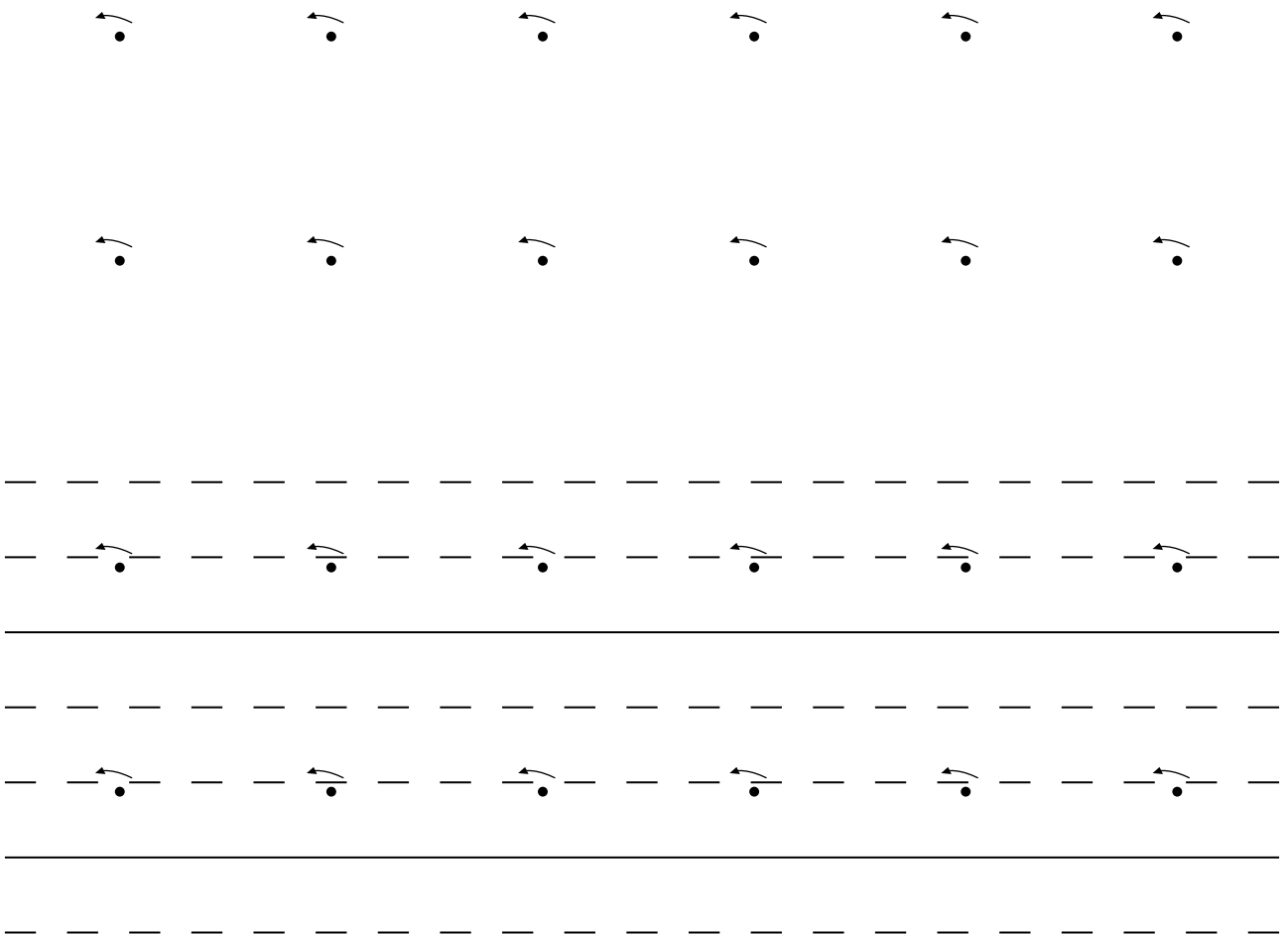
Try your own



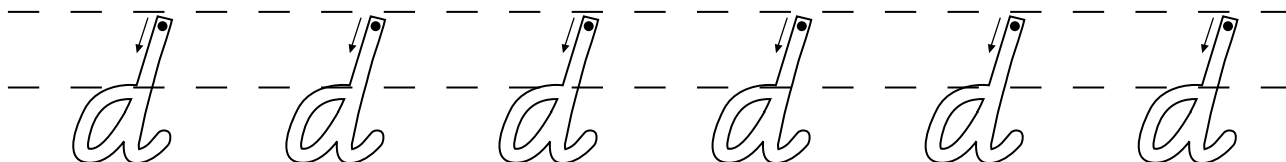
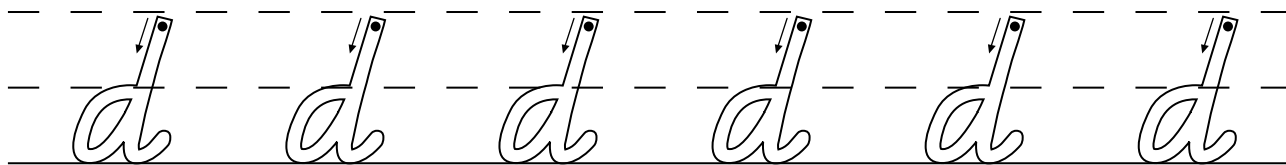
Track the letters



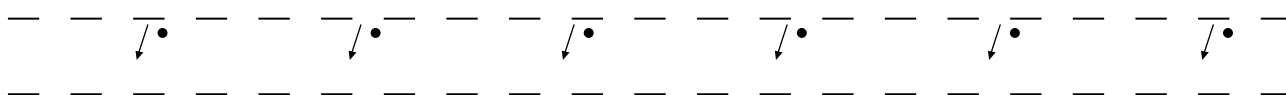
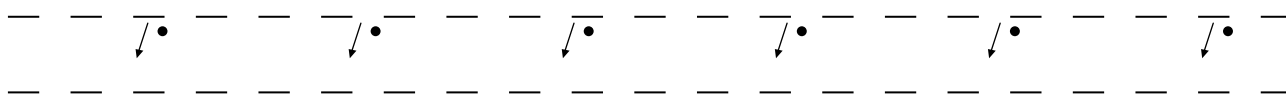
Try your own



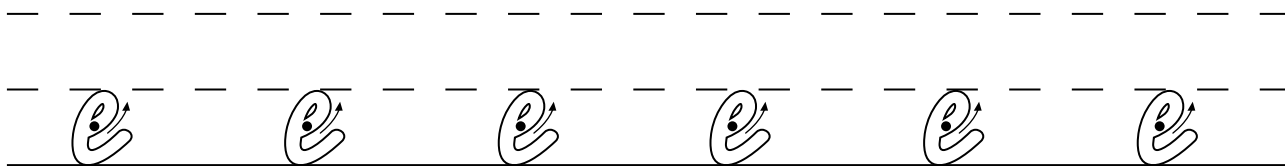
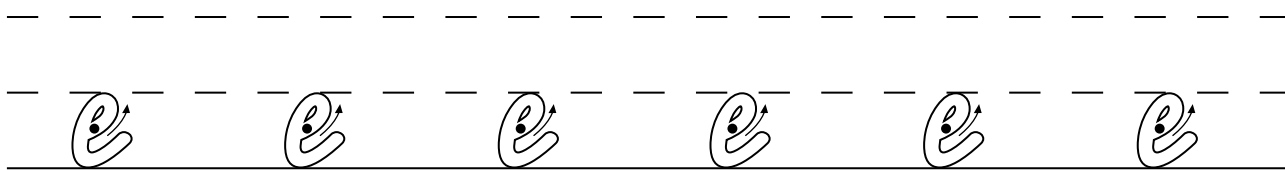
Track the letters



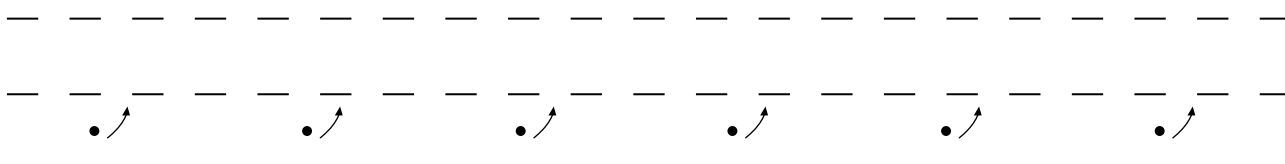
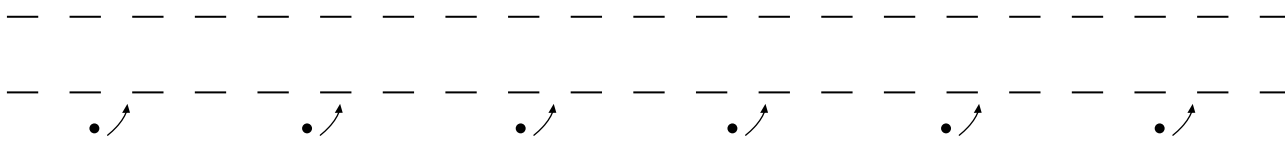
Try your own



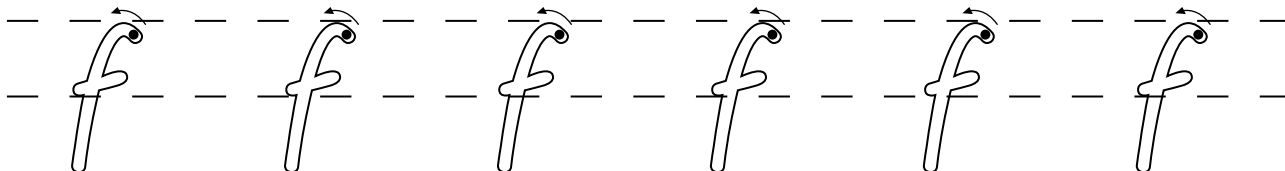
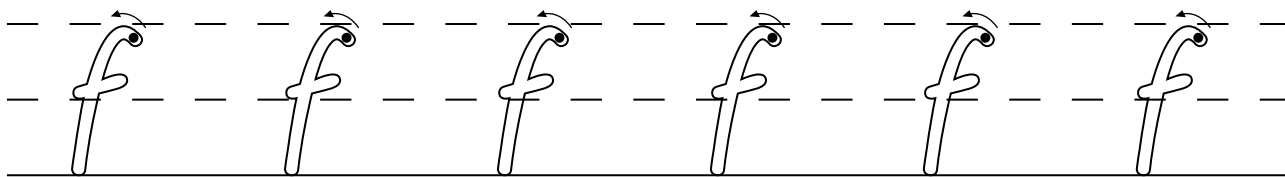
Track the letters



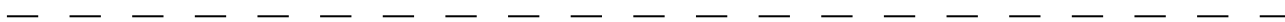
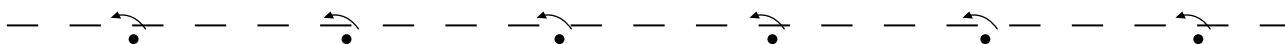
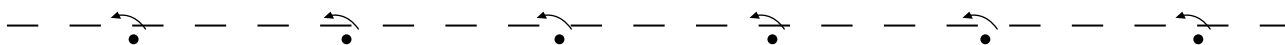
Try your own



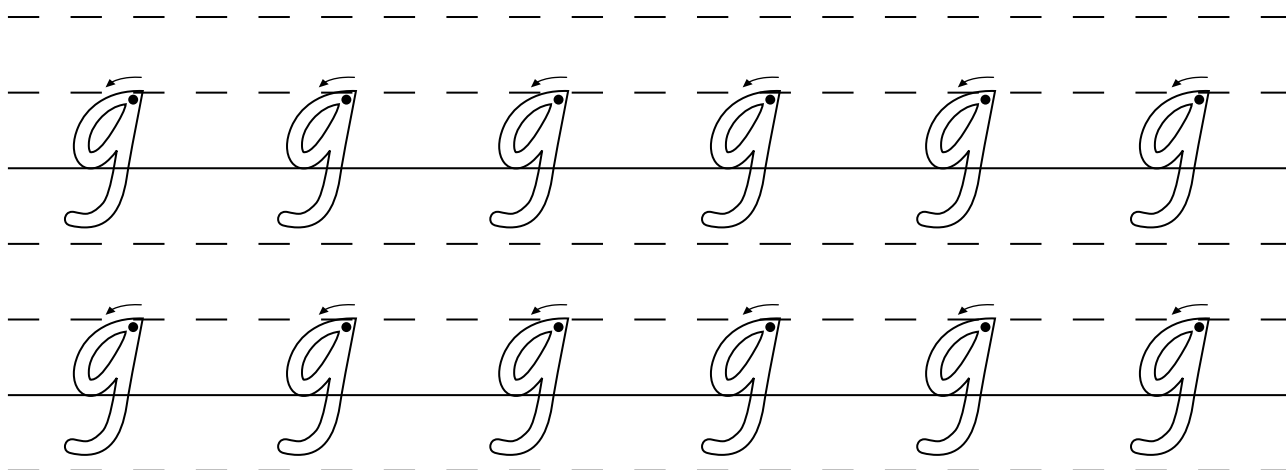
Track the letters



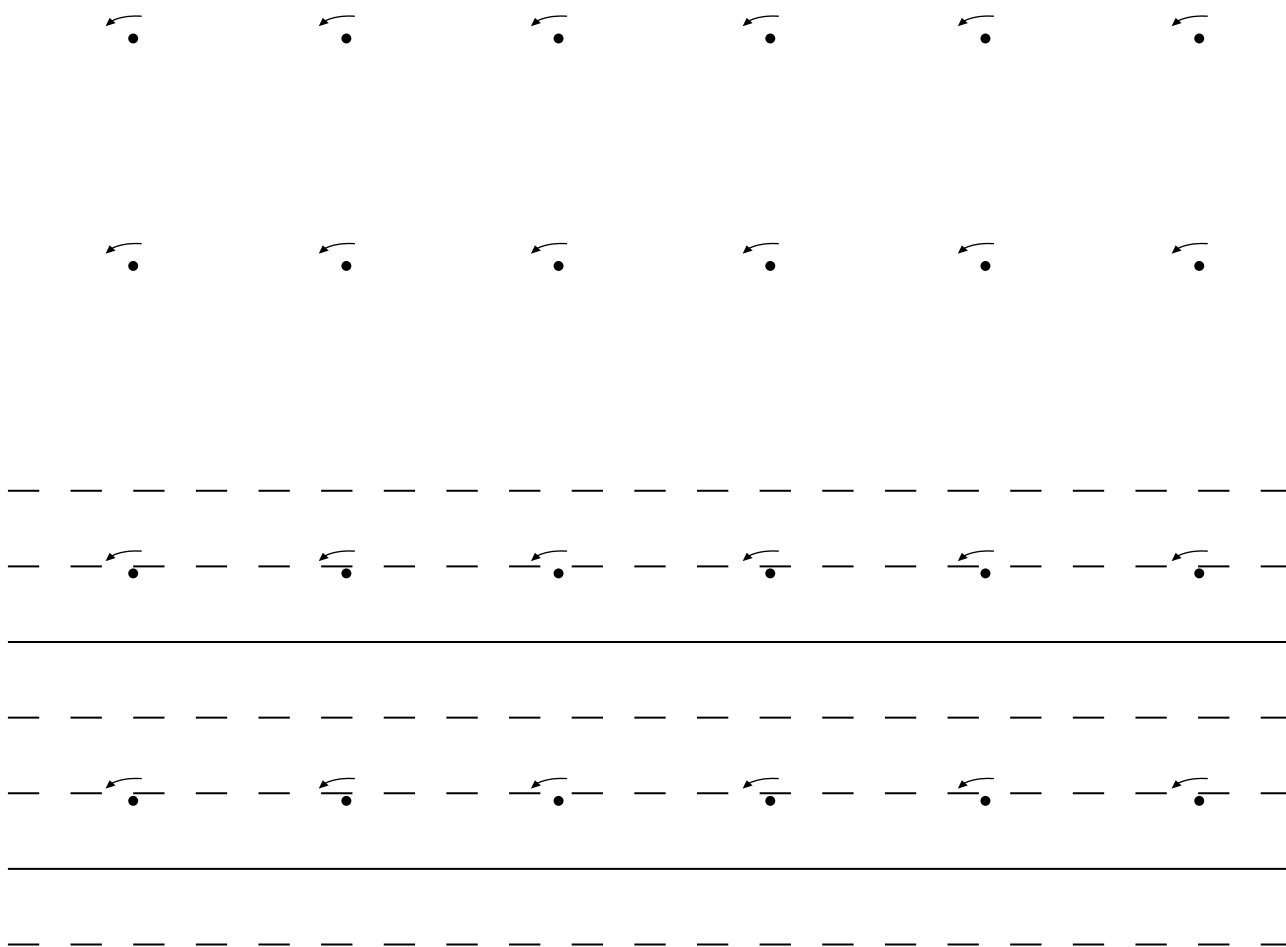
Try your own



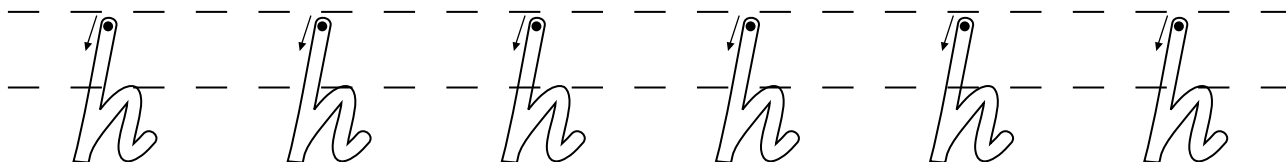
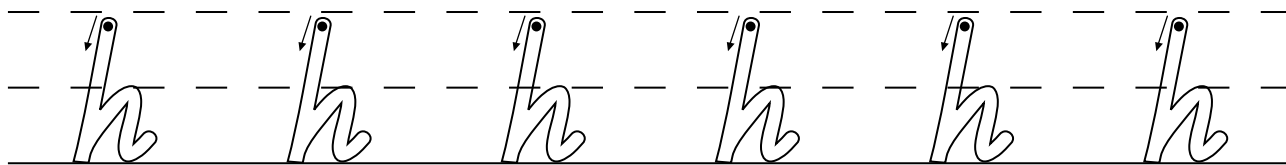
Track the letters



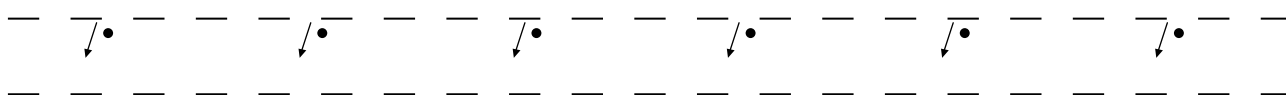
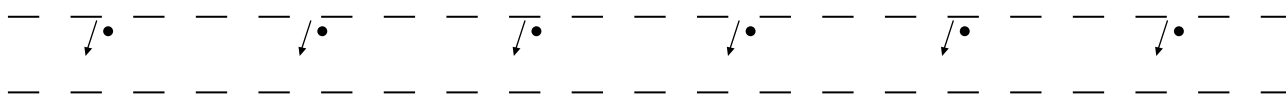
Try your own



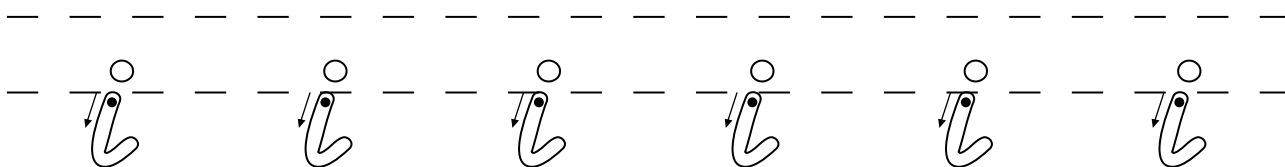
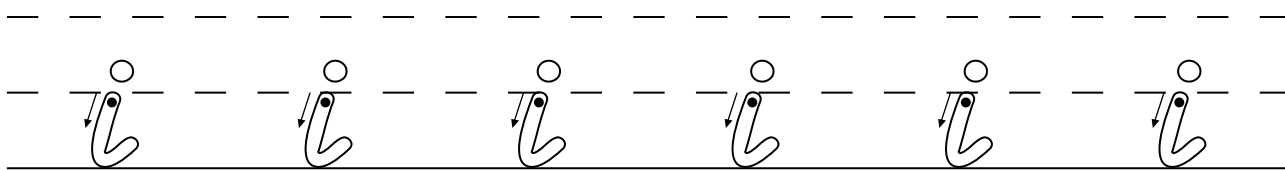
Track the letters



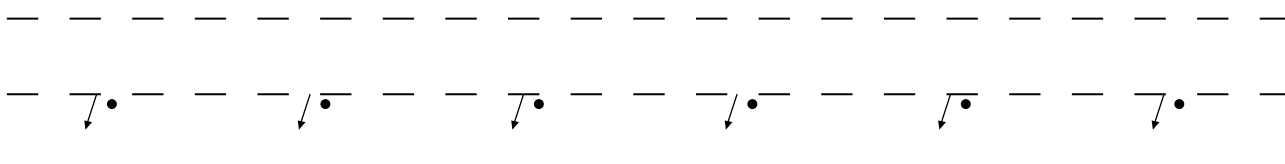
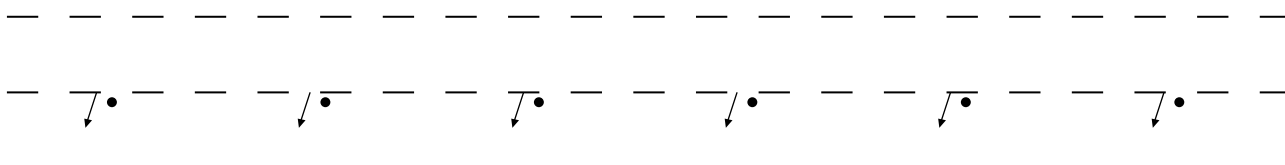
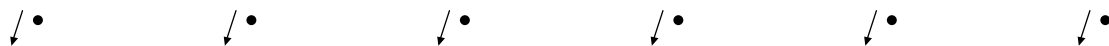
Try your own



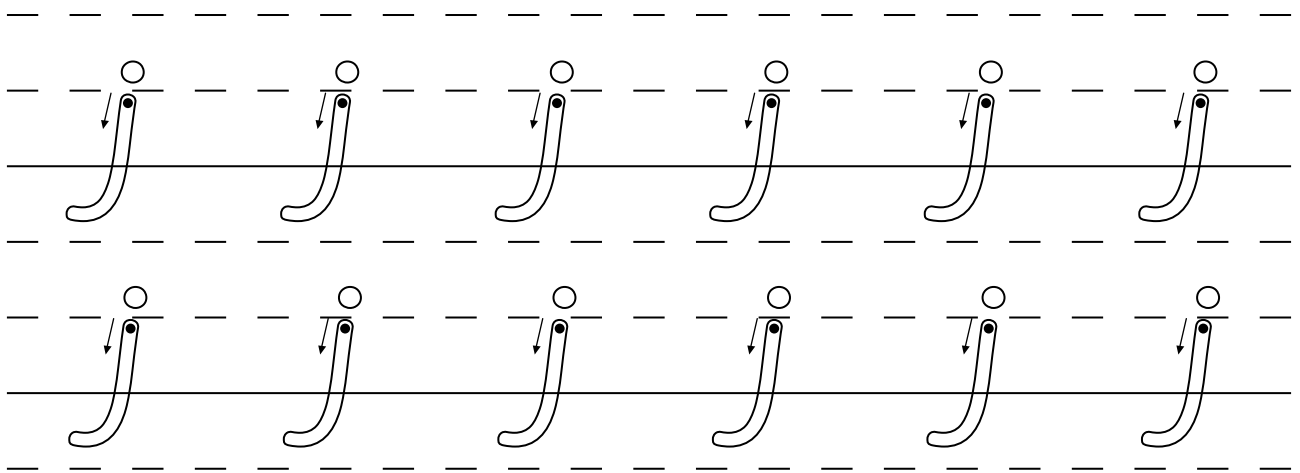
Track the letters



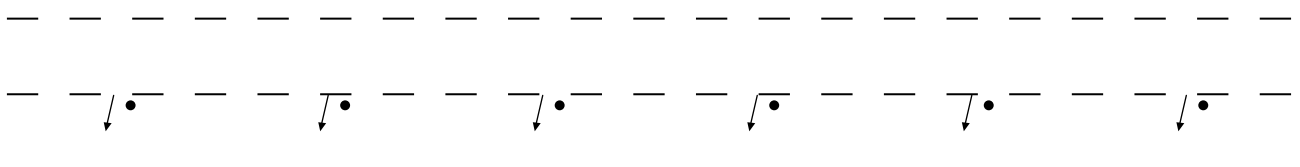
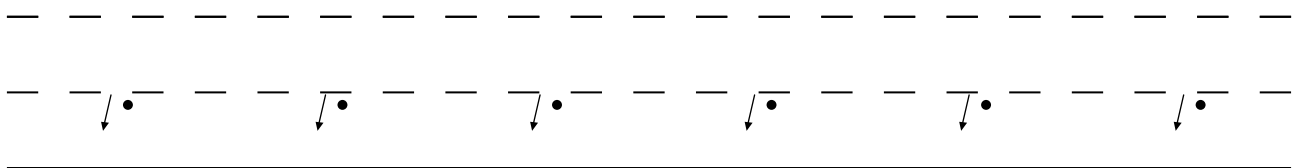
Try your own



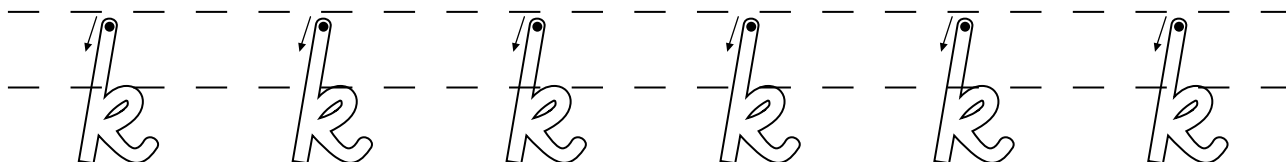
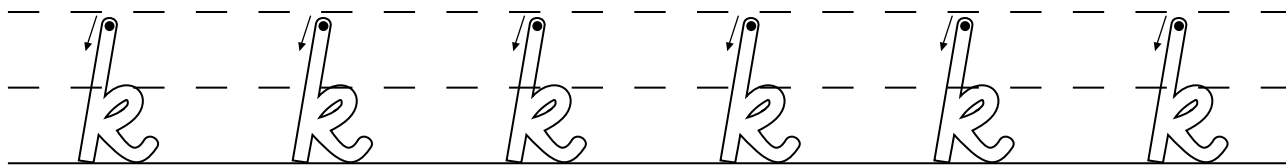
Track the letters



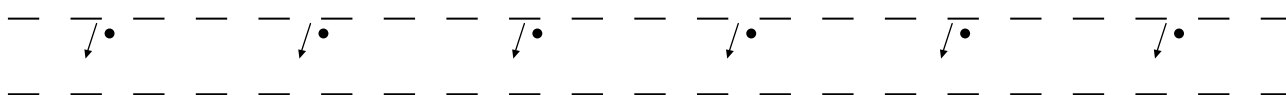
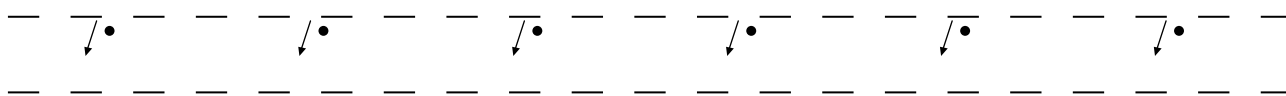
Try your own



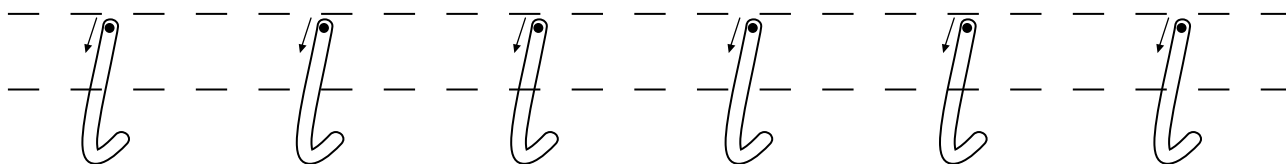
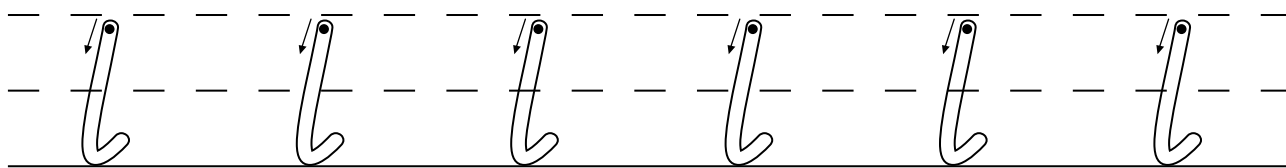
Track the letters



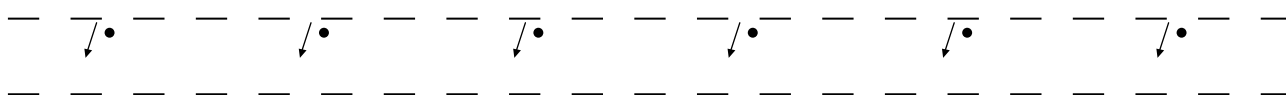
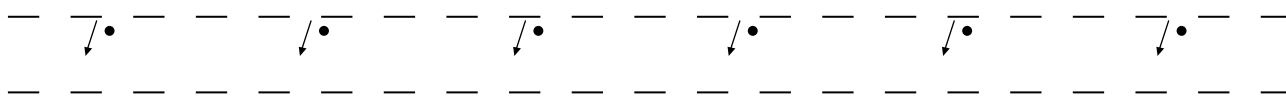
Try your own



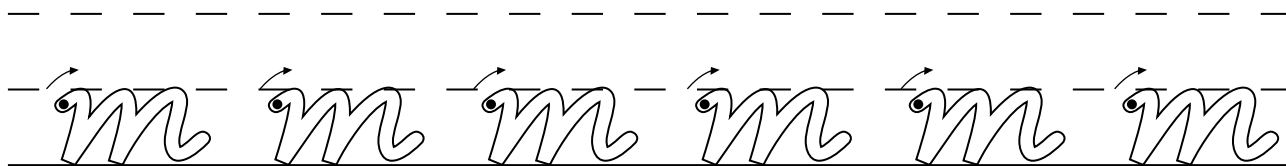
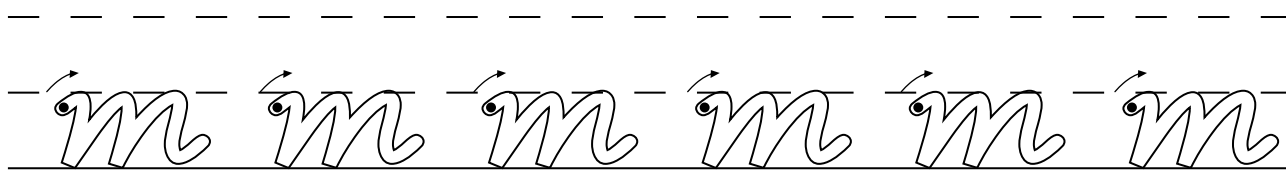
Track the letters



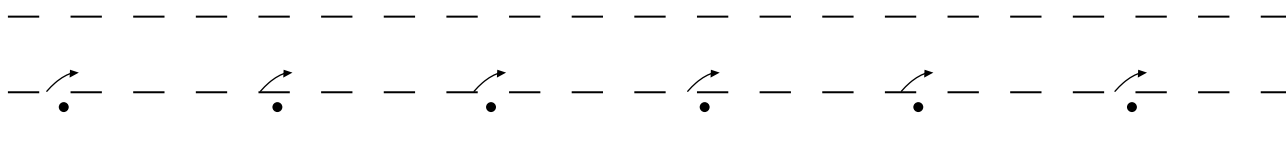
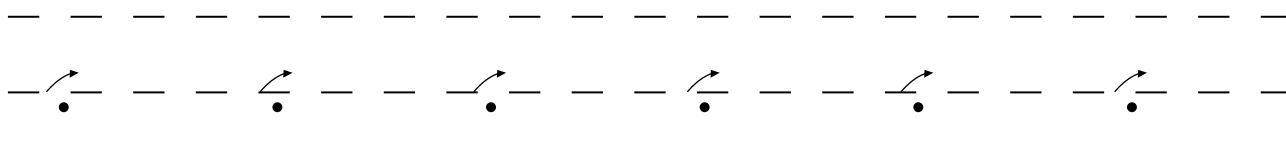
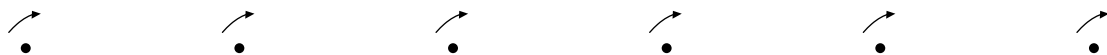
Try your own



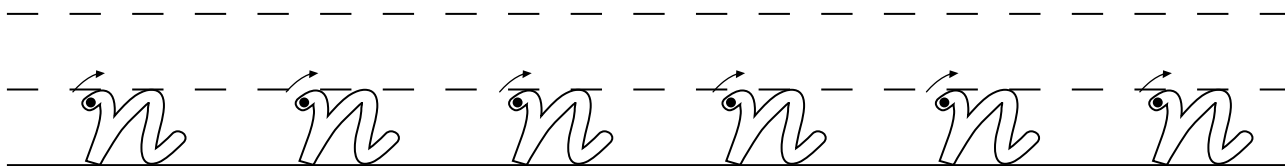
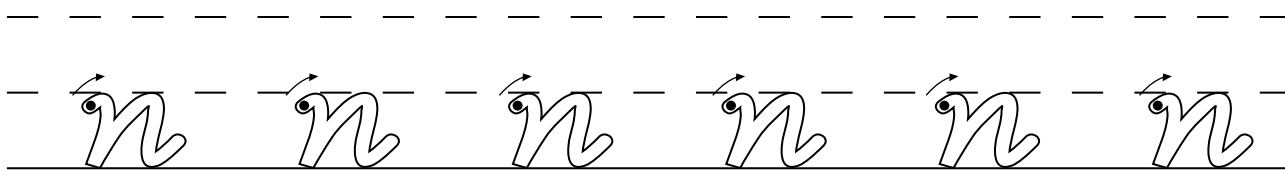
Track the letters



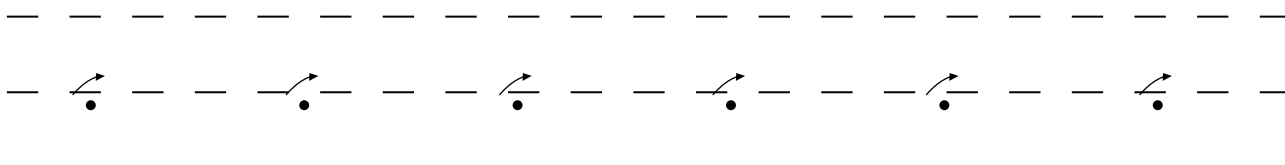
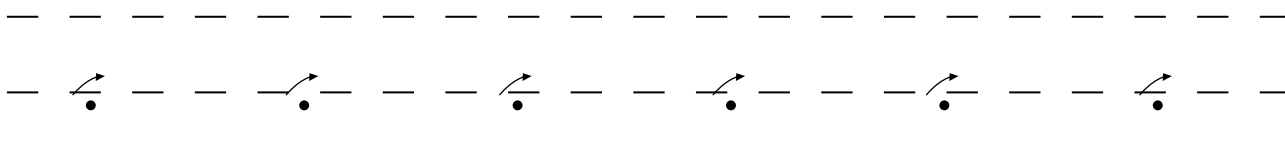
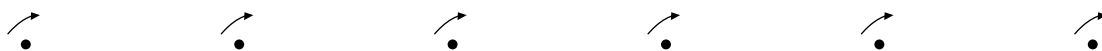
Try your own



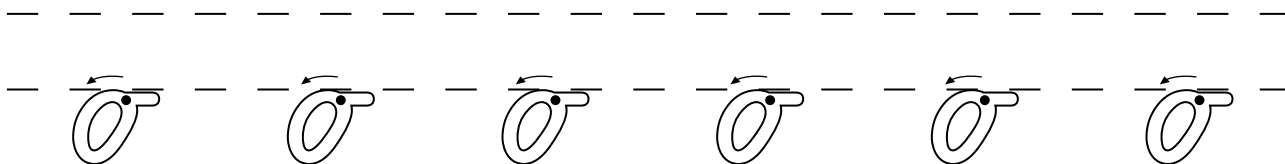
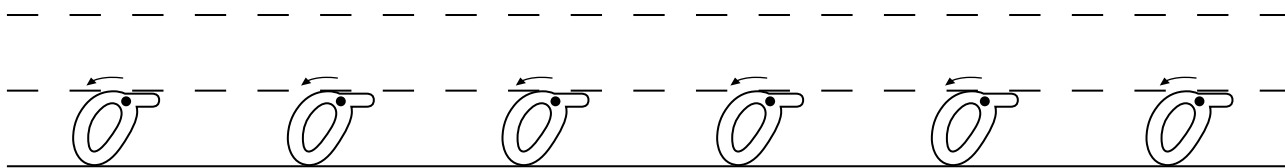
Track the letters



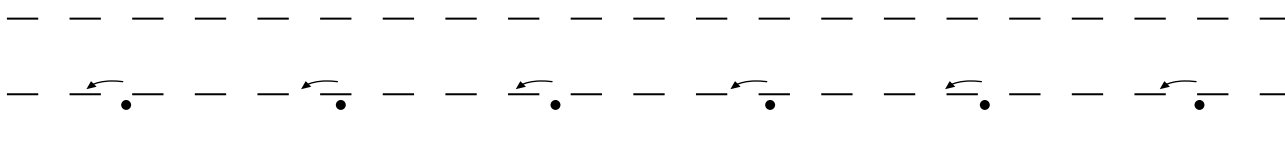
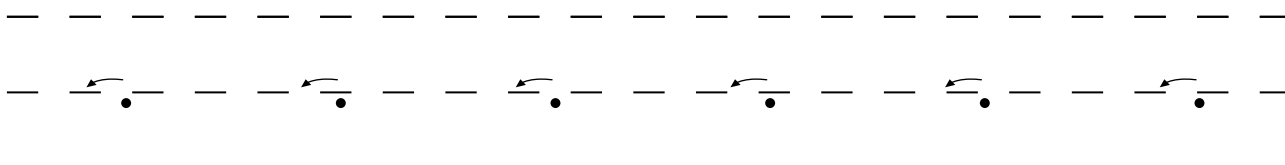
Try your own



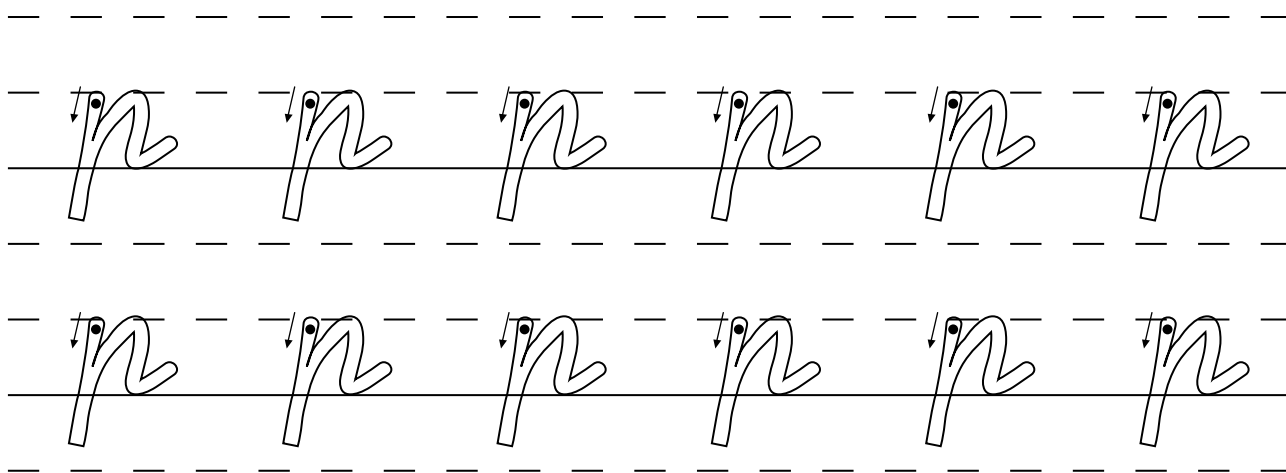
Track the letters



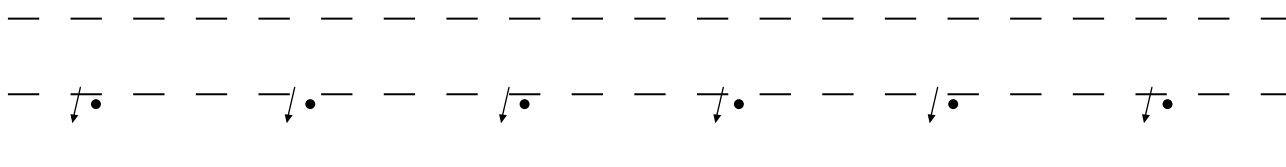
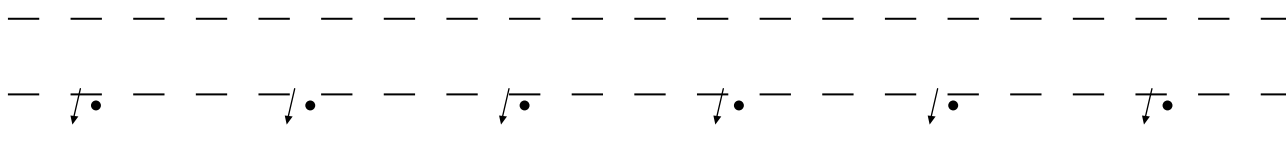
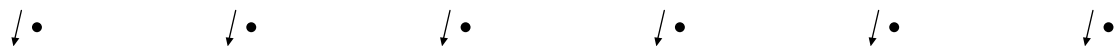
Try your own



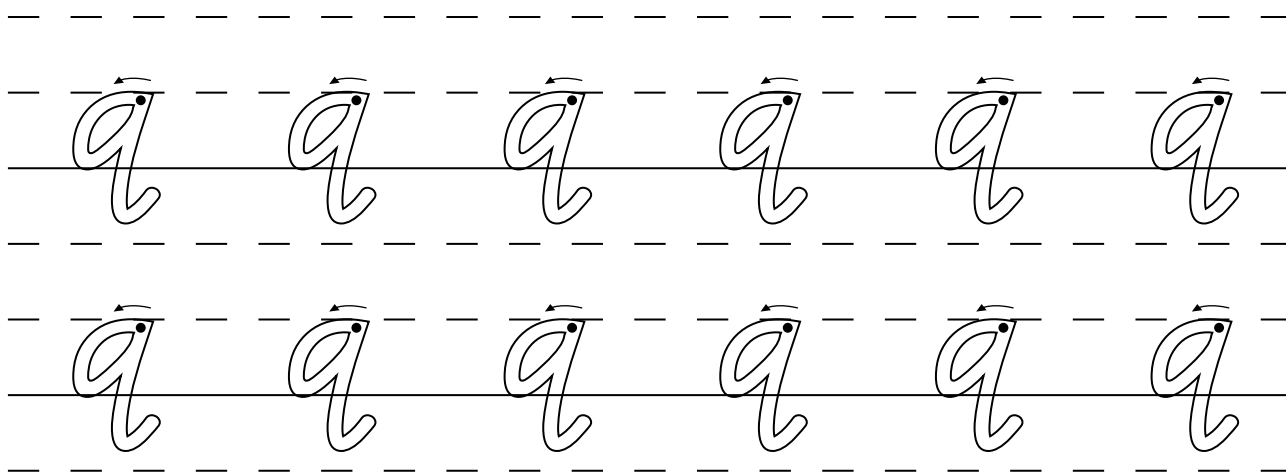
Track the letters



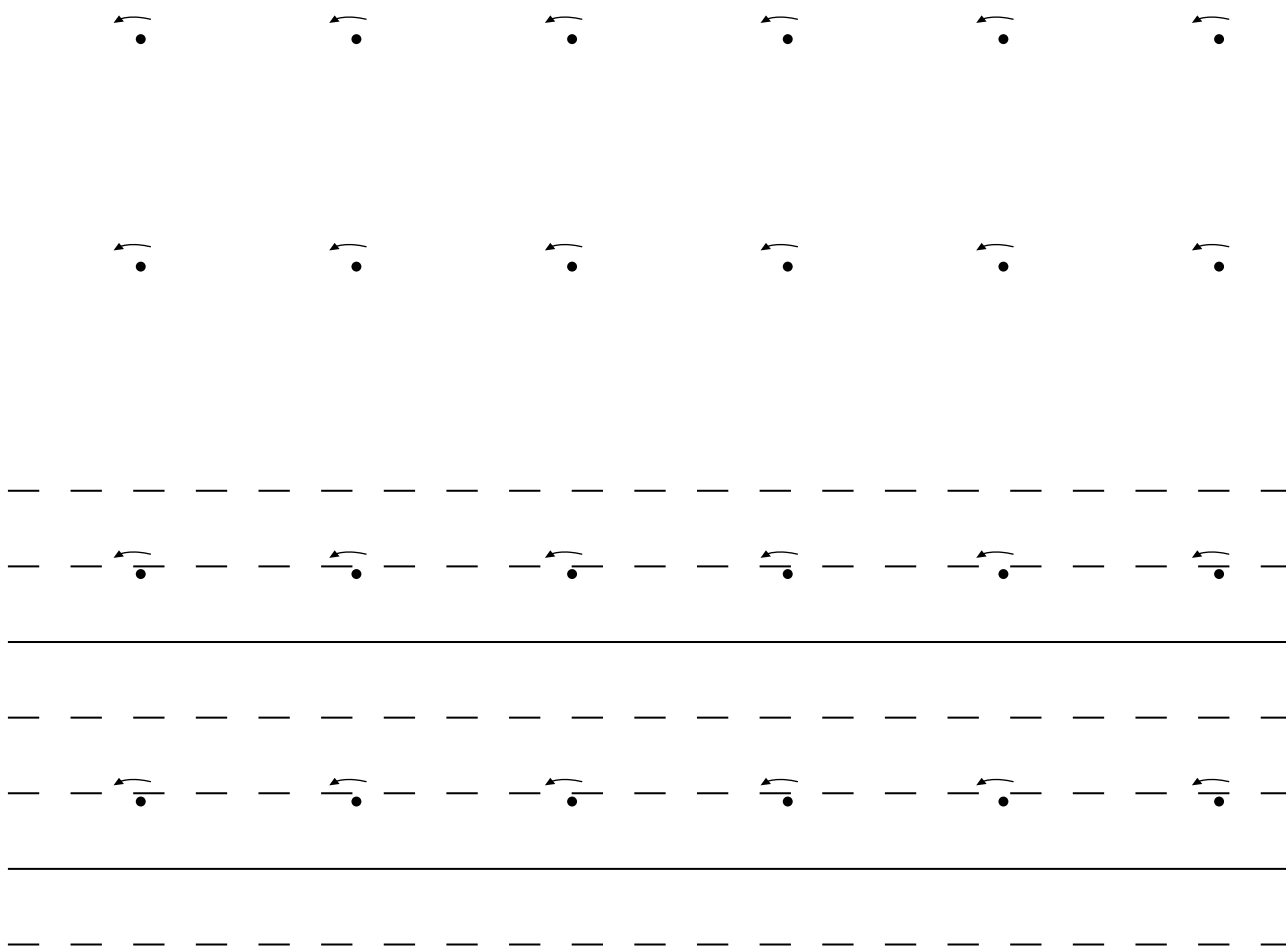
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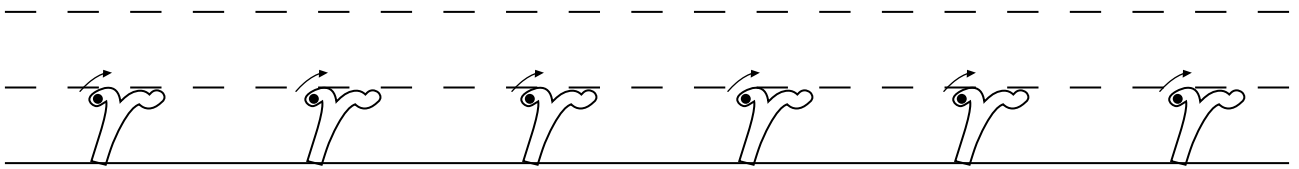
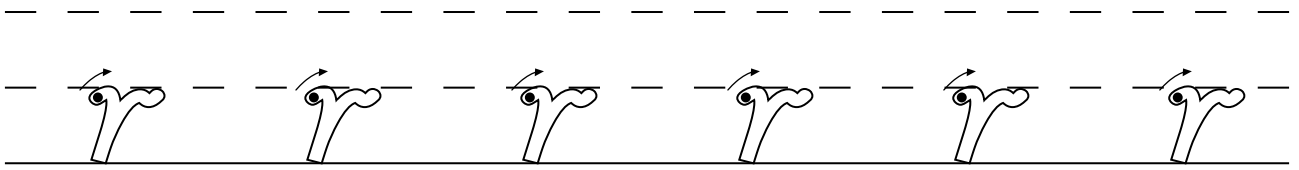
Track the letters



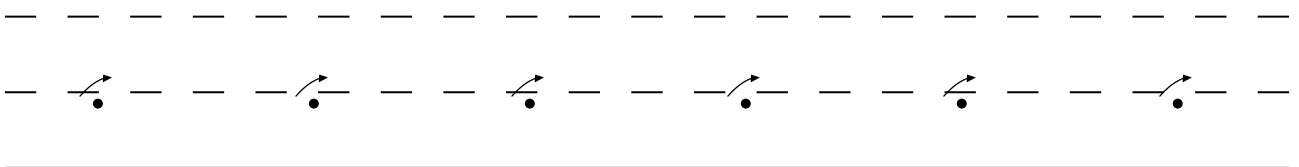
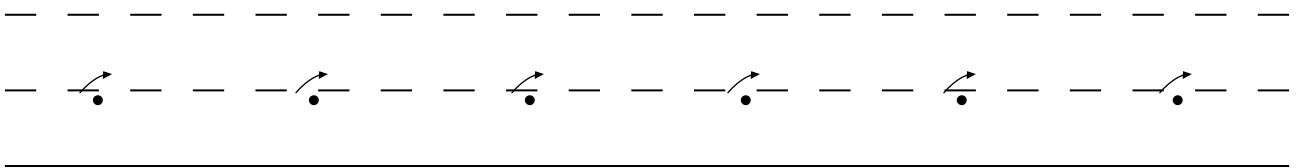
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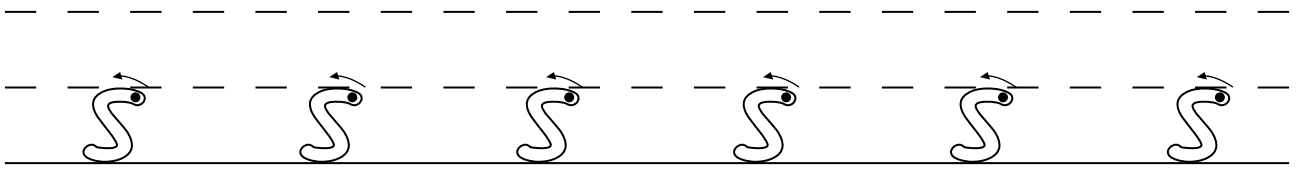
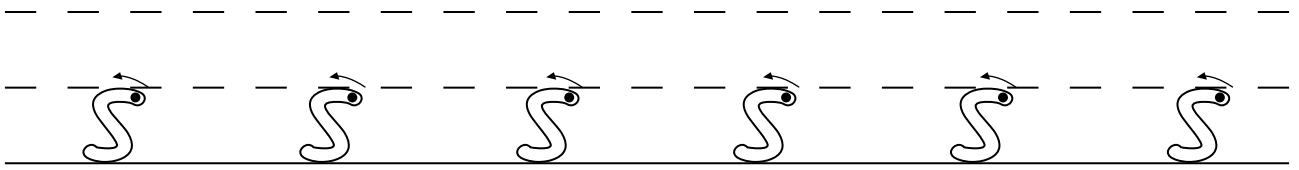
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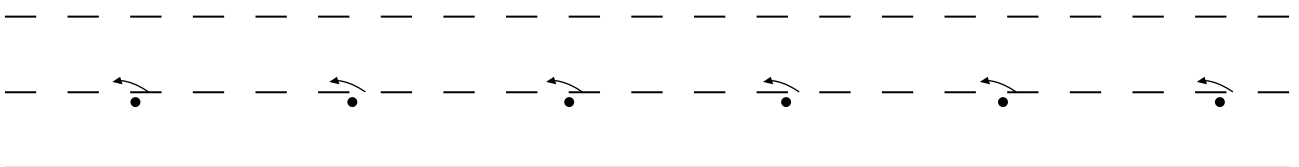
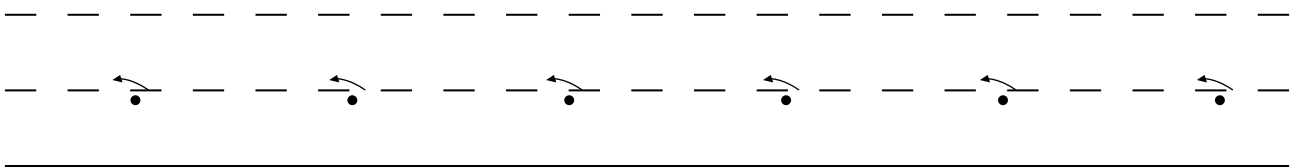
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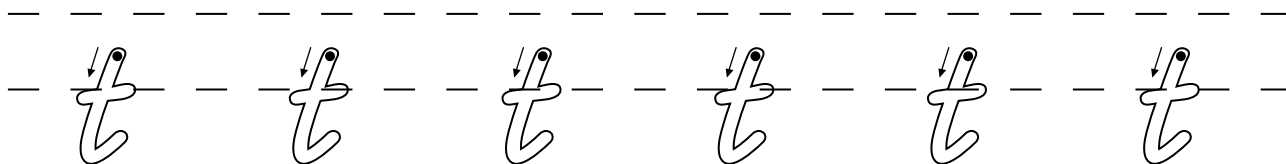
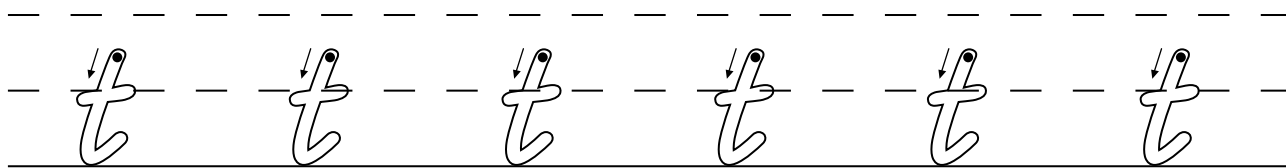
Track the letters



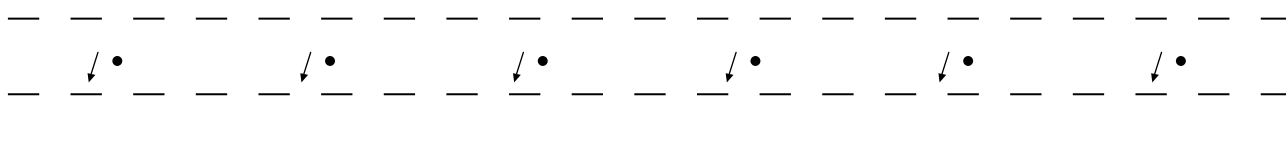
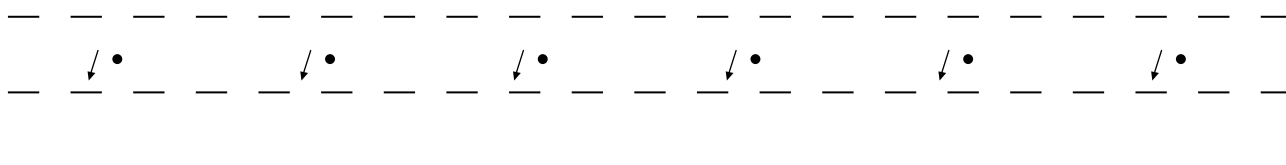
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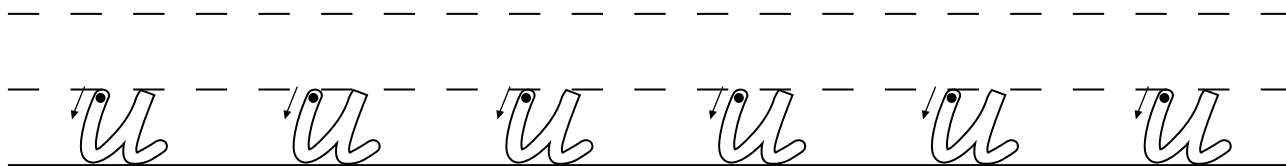
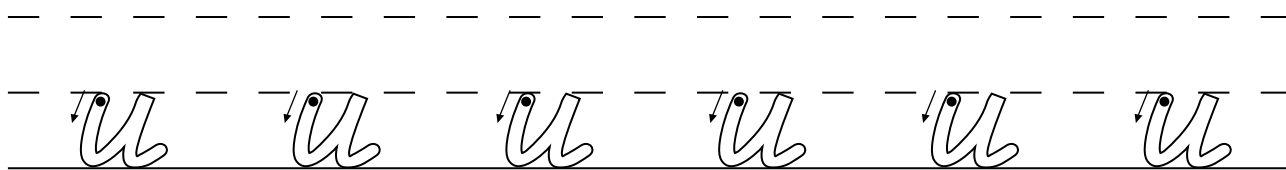
Track the letters



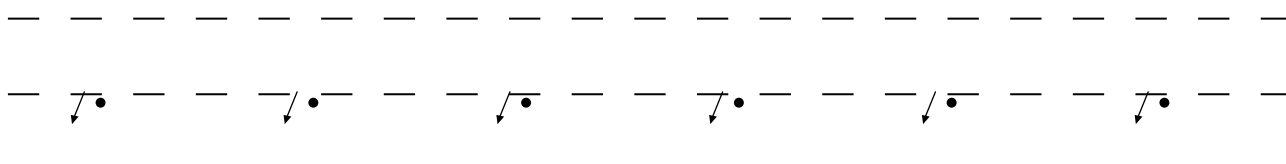
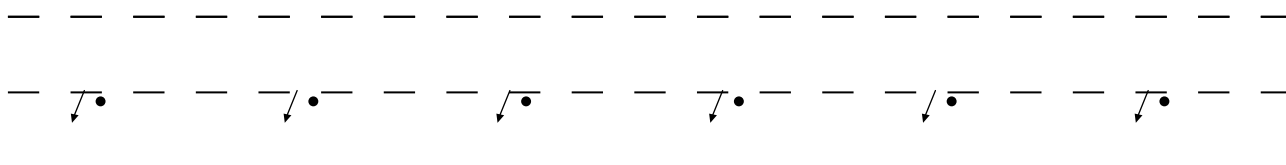
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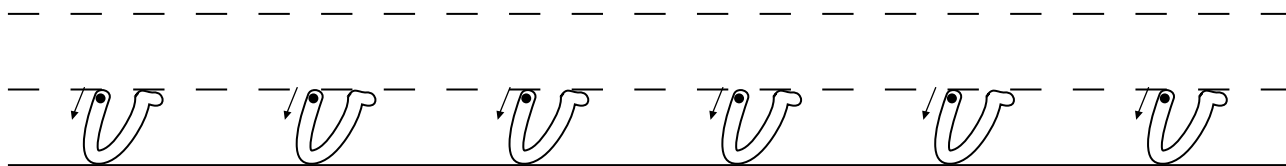
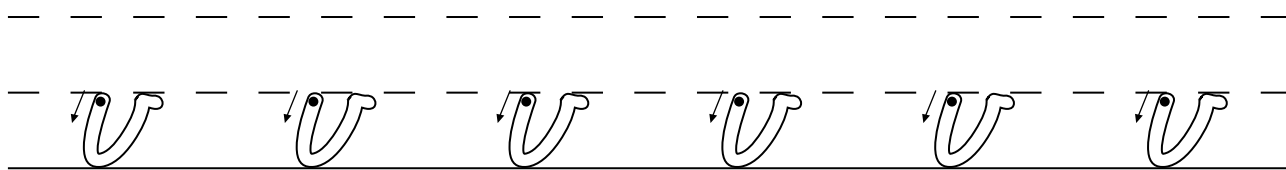
Track the letters



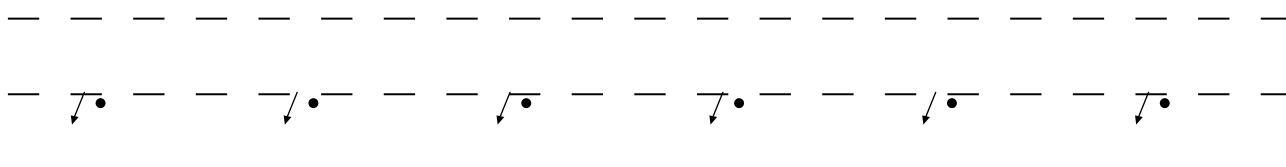
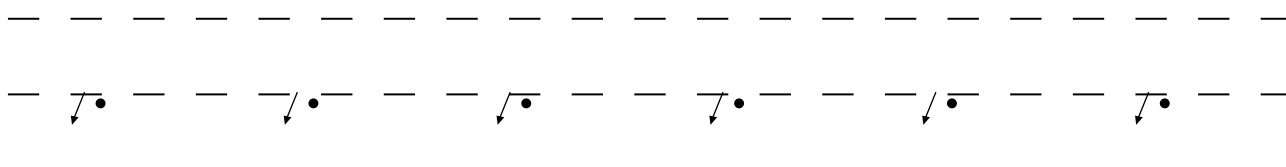
Try your own



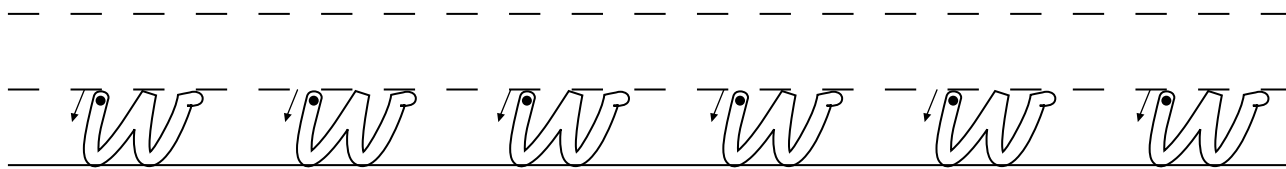
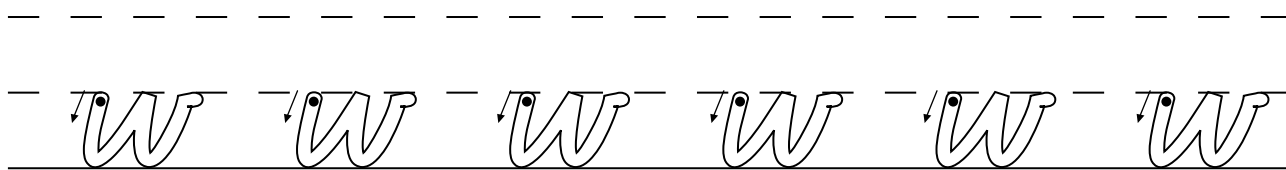
Track the letters



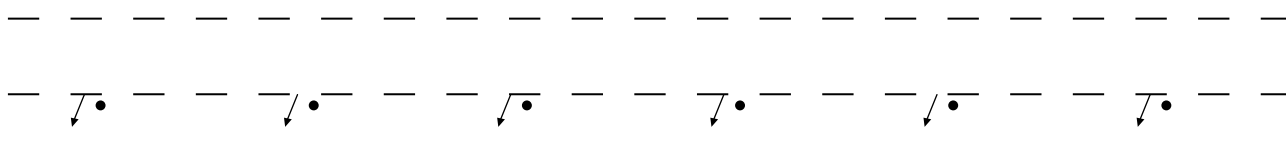
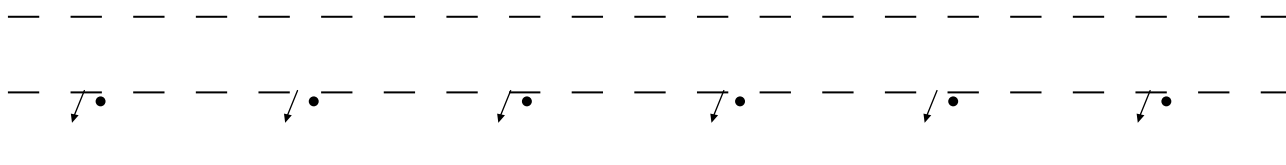
Try your own



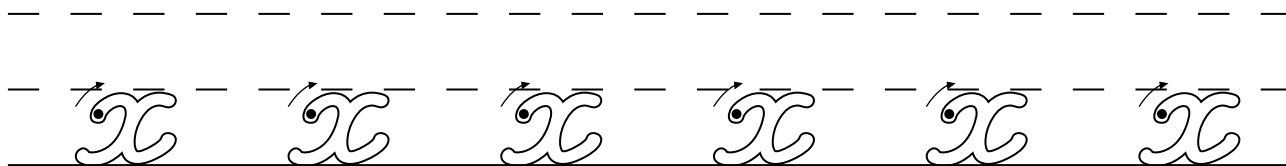
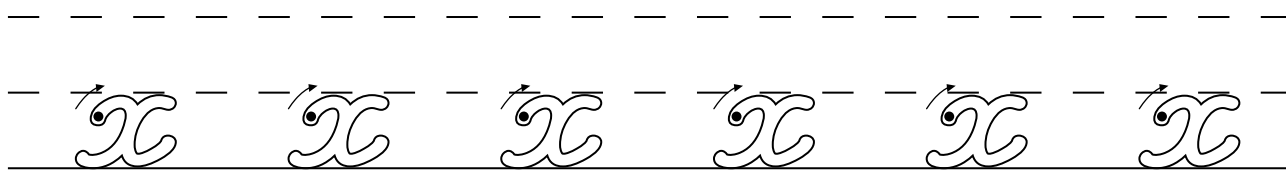
Track the letters



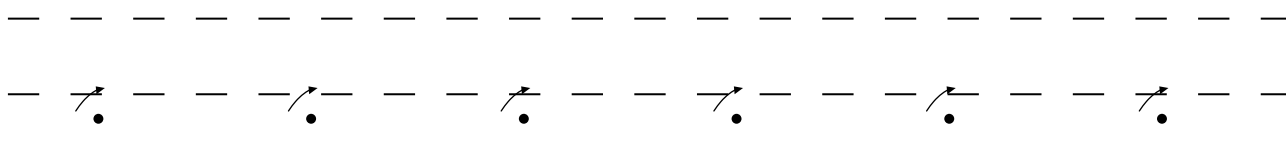
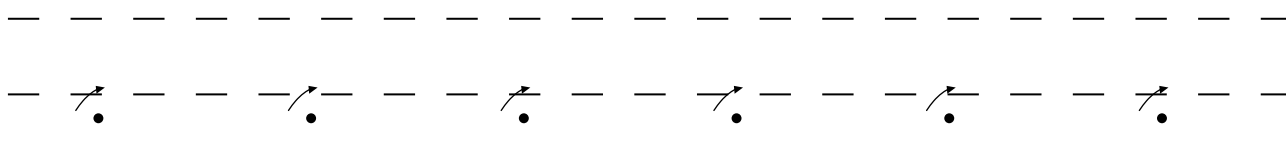
Try your own



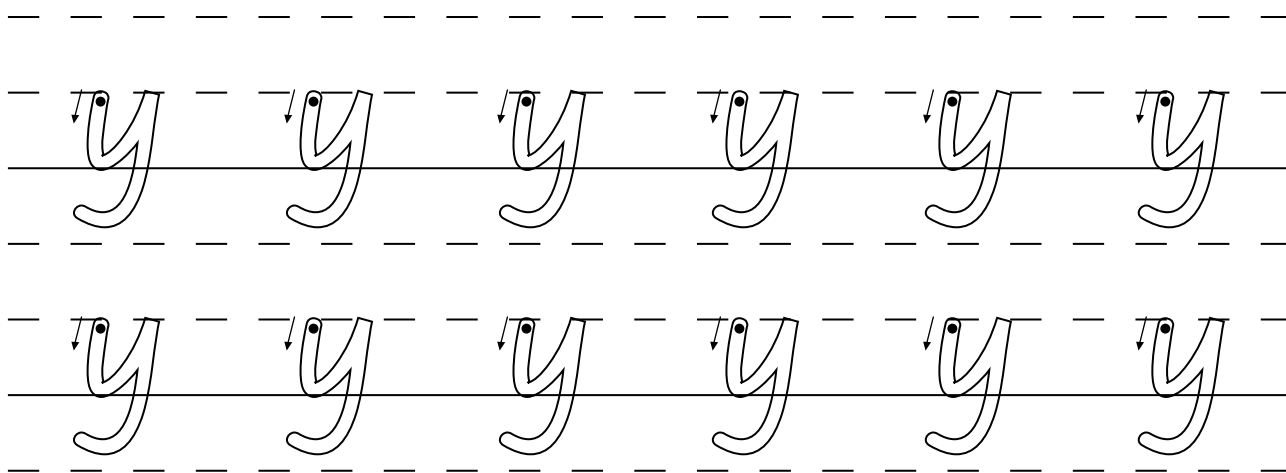
Track the letters



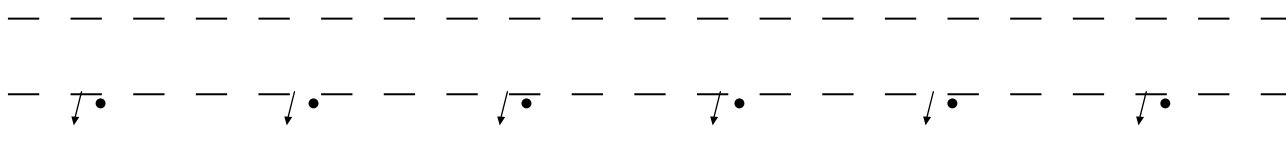
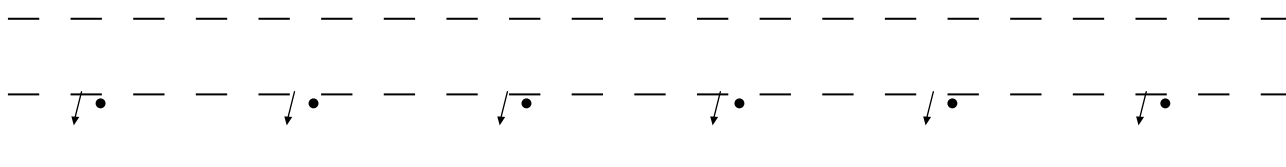
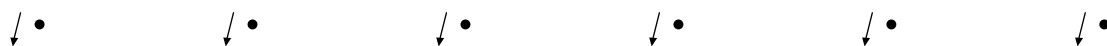
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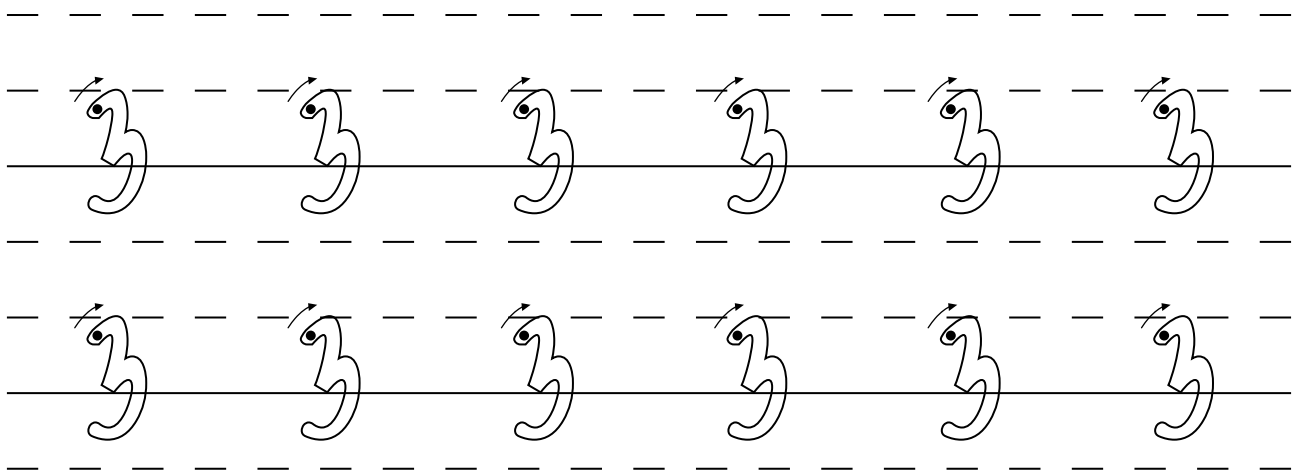
Track the letters



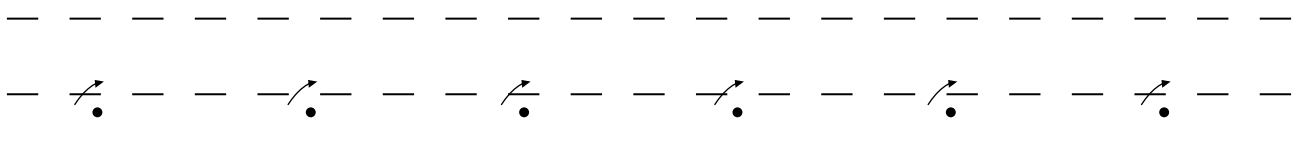
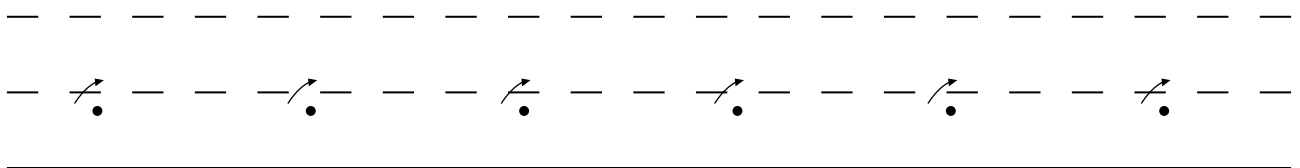
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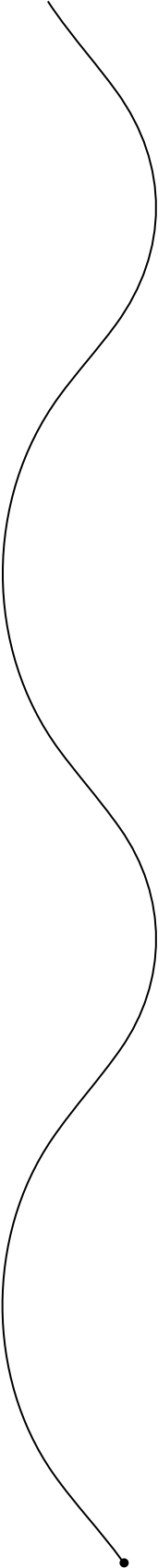
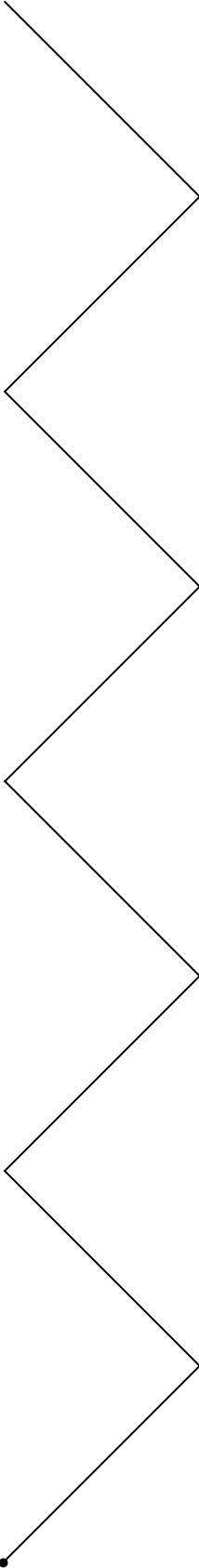
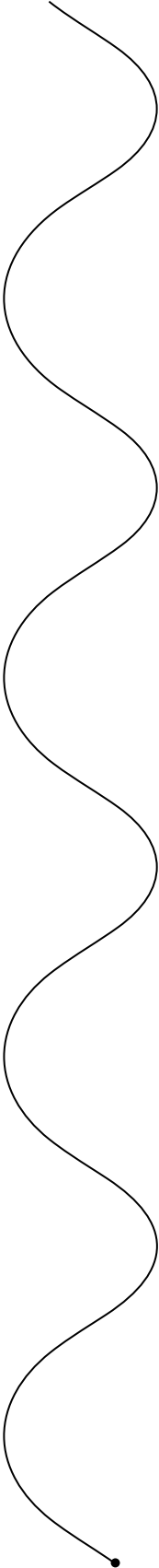
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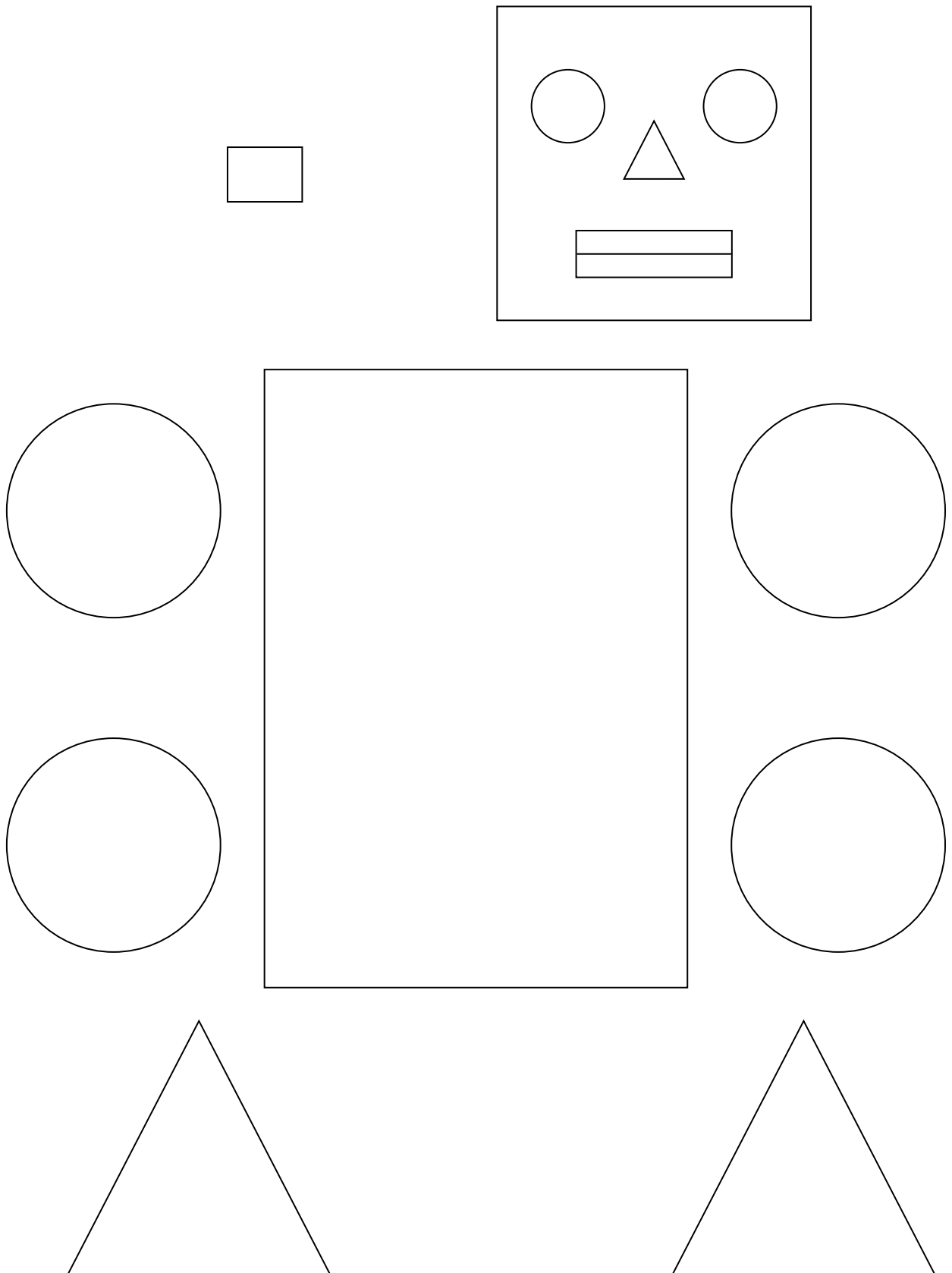
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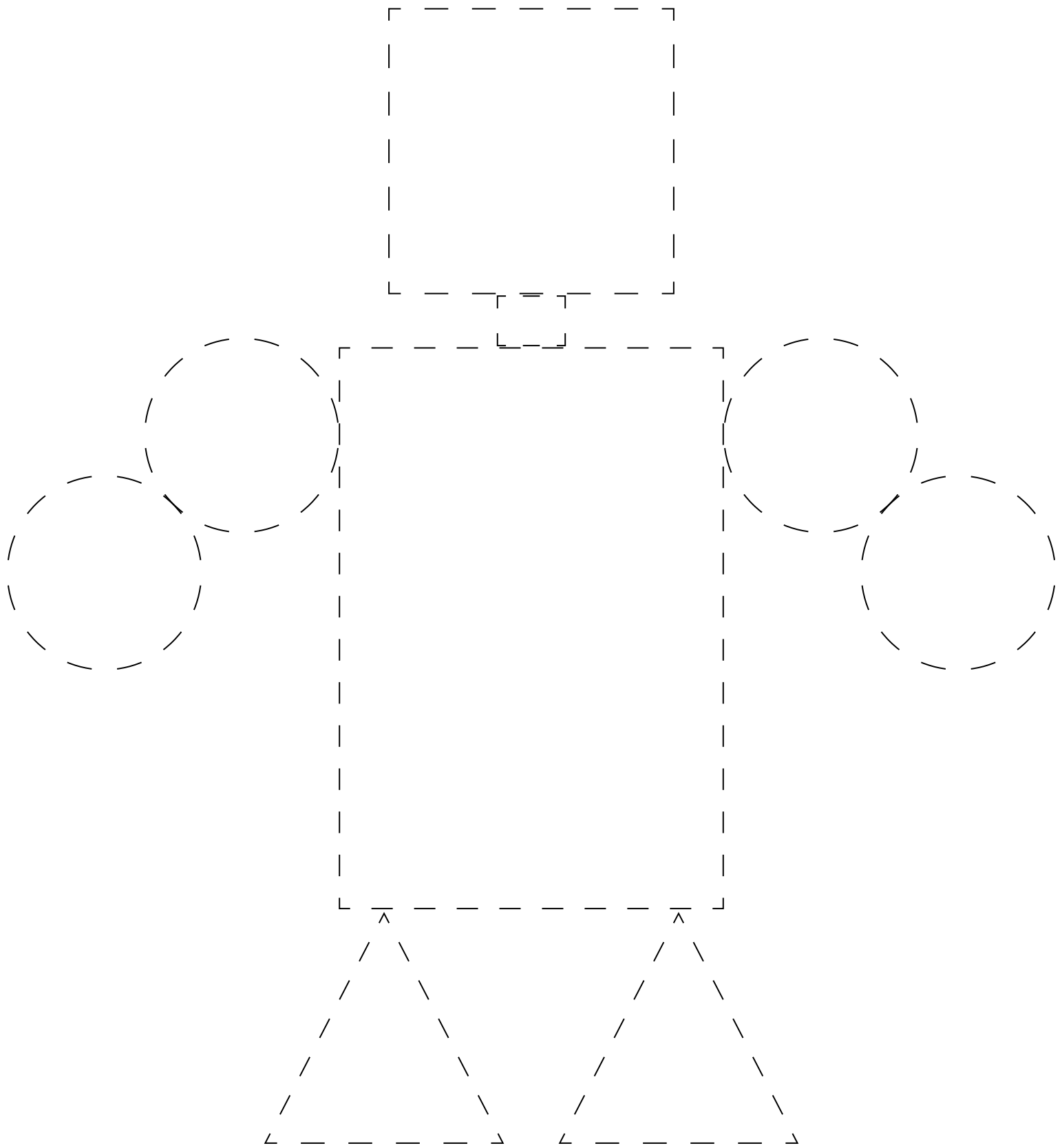
Cut along the lines

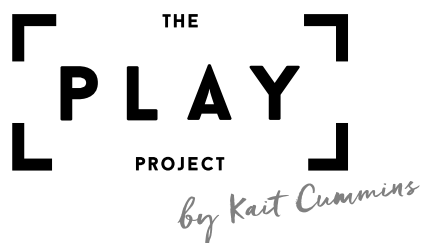


Use these shapes to make a robot (use the robot outline sheet).
Cut them out, colour them and then glue them to the outline.

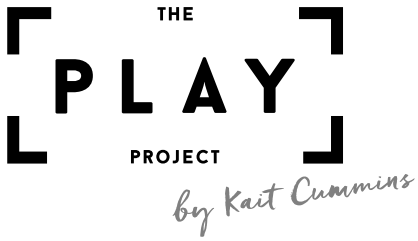


Cut out, colour and glue the shapes to the robot





Appendix



Getting it 'Write'

Letter formation practice for junior primary students. Pick a letter each week and practice these activities at least once daily. Be sure to form the letters the correct way. This will help to develop handwriting speed and fluency.

Tick the box for each task completed:

- Write it in the air
- Write it on someone's back
- Write it with a stick in the dirt
- Write it with stones
- Write in on the shower screen
- Write it with shaving cream
- Write it with sauce on your dinner
- Write it on glad wrap over the fridge
- Write it with chalk on the cement
- Write it really **BIG**
- Write it really SMALL
- Write it **JUST RIGHT**

Good fine motor skills are important for manipulation of school tools, cutting, clothing fastenings, eating utensils/containers, pencil grasp and controlling pencil/pen to draw and write.

WHEN USING A PINCER GRASP TO HOLD/MANIPULATE SMALL OBJECTS, MAKE SURE THE CHILD USES THEIR POINTER FINGER AND THUMB, **NOT** THEIR MIDDLE FINGER AND THUMB (THIS IS A COMMON SUBSTITUTION)

HAND STRENGTH

- Unscrewing jar lids of different sizes
- Scrunch up pieces of paper (start small and get bigger) as part of an art project
- Cooking – kneading dough, stirring mixture
- Tearing paper (for collages or paper mache)
- Foam or stress balls
- Cutting cardboard, thick card (manila folders) or corrugated cardboard (from fruit and vegetable boxes)
- Playdough
- Wringing out wet cloths and sponges
- Use tongs to pick up and transfer objects
- Writing, drawing and colouring on the wall (using water and paintbrushes), blackboard (giant chalk) or white board (giant markers)
- Use squirt bottles to water plants or with colouring to decorate art projects

FINGER STRENGTH

- Pop the bubbles on bubble wrap
- Clip clothes pegs (regular or mini) on and off a container wall or piece of cardboard. Once they consistently have the correct grasp, try timing or having races
- Draw in sand, shaving cream or fingerpaint
- Lift lids off small containers (film canisters)

GRASPS

- Pulling apart cotton balls
- Make collages with torn pieces of paper, small stickers, stick on small beads, sticks, leaves, rice or lentils

- Use eye dropper to put water with colouring on tissue paper, tissues, paper towels or coffee filters to make patterns
- Use Q tip (cotton bud) to paint picture with watercolour or water with colouring
- Sorting smarties, sultanas or yoghurt balls into colours before eating them

IN- HAND MANIPULATION

- Wind up toys or small music boxes
- Cut, colour and paste activities
- Threading small beads or making jewelry
- Scrunch and roll tissue paper into small balls to make origami
- Cooking – placing sprinkles or M&M's on biscuits, grating and putting cheese on pizzas or nachos
- Lego, tinkertoys or other construction
- Craft activities such as knot tying, macramé, knitting, sewing, crocheting or cross stitch
- Coin turn – turn over a line of 20 cent pieces (gradually get smaller) using fingertips and thumbs – see how fast you can go
- Card games such as snap
- Nuts and bolts
- Tracing letter and number shapes, hands, body, household objects (plants, coins etc) stencils or templates
- Activity books with mazes, dot to dot, colour by numbers or letters
- Picking up coins – 2 + coins only using one hand then posting them in money box
- See how many smarties you can hold in one hand (pick them up one at a time while sitting on the other hand)

THE
[PLAY]
PROJECT
by Kait Cummings

Writing Warm-ups

1. DESK PUSH-UPS



4. MAKE A FIST



7. STRETCH YOUR WRISTS



2. 10 BIG JUMPS



5. PRAY



8. CATERPILLAR



3. 10 SHOULDER SHRUGS



6. PULL YOUR HANDS APART



9. PUT GLOVES ON



1. ROY THE ROLLER

Use your thumb to roll the pencil in your fingers. Be sure to keep your two smaller fingers tucked in.



2. WILLY THE WALKER

Use your three larger fingers to walk up the pencil, all the way to the tip. Flip it over and walk all the way back.



3. INCHY INCHWORM

Place the pencil side on and inch you fingers up and down the length of the pencil.



4. WOODY WOODPECKER

Using only your fingers, move your fingers in and out towards your knuckles like you are pecking.



5. HENRY HELICOPTER

Place your fingers in the centre of the pencil and use your fingers to spin the pencil around. After five spins one way, switch and spin back the other way.



TIP:

To help keep your smaller fingers tucked into the palm of your hand, try placing a coin in your palm and use your two smaller fingers to keep it in place.

PLAY THIS TO A FAST SONG
LIKE THE MACARENA.