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Why Teach Handwriting?

Despite the influx of technological communication instruments that require only voice and/or button-pushing in today's world, handwriting is still an important life skill. Writing by hand ties in closely with the skills of reading and comprehending. Handwriting personalizes communication with others in a way that technological devices cannot. Neat, legible printing leads to neat, legible cursive writing. Handwriting is a skill students can take pride in throughout their lives.

Teacher Tips

When preparing to teach printing to young students, consider materials to have available, your method of teaching, how to motivate students, general support, and ways to monitor and assess students' progress. Here are tips and suggestions for each of these aspects.

Materials to Have Available

A printing center is an excellent way to give students a variety of opportunities to practice their letter formation with a variety of materials. You may wish to include the following:

- practice printing sheets
- whiteboards
- laminated printing practice cards and lined paper
- chalkboards
- individual notebooks, portfolios, or scrapbooks
- center cards with simple phrases, poems, etc., to copy
- pencil grips
- different sizes and colors of paper
- pencils, colored pencils, markers, and crayons

Methods of Teaching

- In small groups, teach the formation of letters in modeled printing sessions.
- Focus on one letter at a time, especially for students just starting to learn how to print. Use lined chart paper or wide lines on a whiteboard or chalkboard to model printing.
- Teach letters with a similar formation in clusters. For example,

- | | | |
|------------------------|-----------|------------------------|
| • E, F, H, I, L, and T | • A and Z | • G, Q, and S |
| • V, W, and X | • C and O | • B, D, J, P, R, and U |
| • K, M, N, and Y | | |

- While introducing a letter, model the formation of the letter, describing out loud the direction of the strokes used to form the letter.
- Repeat the directions for forming the letter while students imitate making the letter in the air with big arm movements. Also have students form the letters with their eyes closed.
- Invite students to print the letter on the chart paper or board. Encourage them to describe their movements out loud, as you previously modeled.
- Consider teaching the upper-case and lower-case forms of the same letter at the same time, especially if you are tying the printing lesson in with letter recognition and possibly phonetics.
- Use the practice sheets found in this resource as immediate follow-up to each lesson. Have students circle their best letter on each line as a form of self-assessment.
- Make sure to reinforce good posture habits while students practice their writing skills. Slouching will create unnecessary strain on students' young spines.

Motivating Students

Consider these ideas for motivating students to practice their printing skills, see progress, feel pride in accomplishment, and have a product to show for their hard work:

- Keep students' work organized in a portfolio, folder, or scrapbook, or bind practice pages into a book for each student.
- As students successfully complete printing lessons (pages 7–58), have them color in their personal completion chart provided in this resource.
- For proficient printers, provide short poems and nursery rhymes to copy. Encourage students to illustrate their pages, then to bind the pages together to make a book.

Other General Support

The classroom environment, and your attention to individual needs, can promote the learning of good handwriting. Here are some tips and suggestions for helping students learn to print legibly:

- Model legible printing at every opportunity.
- Show students how to hold their writing tools properly (i.e., between the thumb and first finger, and resting on their middle finger).
- Consider providing “fat” pencils for beginners, or pencil grips as necessary.
- Ensure that pencils are sharpened before use.
- If you notice some students having difficulty with specific letters, call them together for small-group or individual instruction and review.

Encouraging Fine Motor Control and Finger Muscle Strength

Provide activities that increase fine motor control and finger muscle strength, such as:

- modeling clay to roll small balls, or to create sculptures with details
- art projects that involve using crayons, finger paints, scissors, or tearing paper
- building blocks that snap together
- paper clips to string together
- puzzles
- lacing or stitching cards
- paper to cut, paste, and fold

Support for Left-handed Students

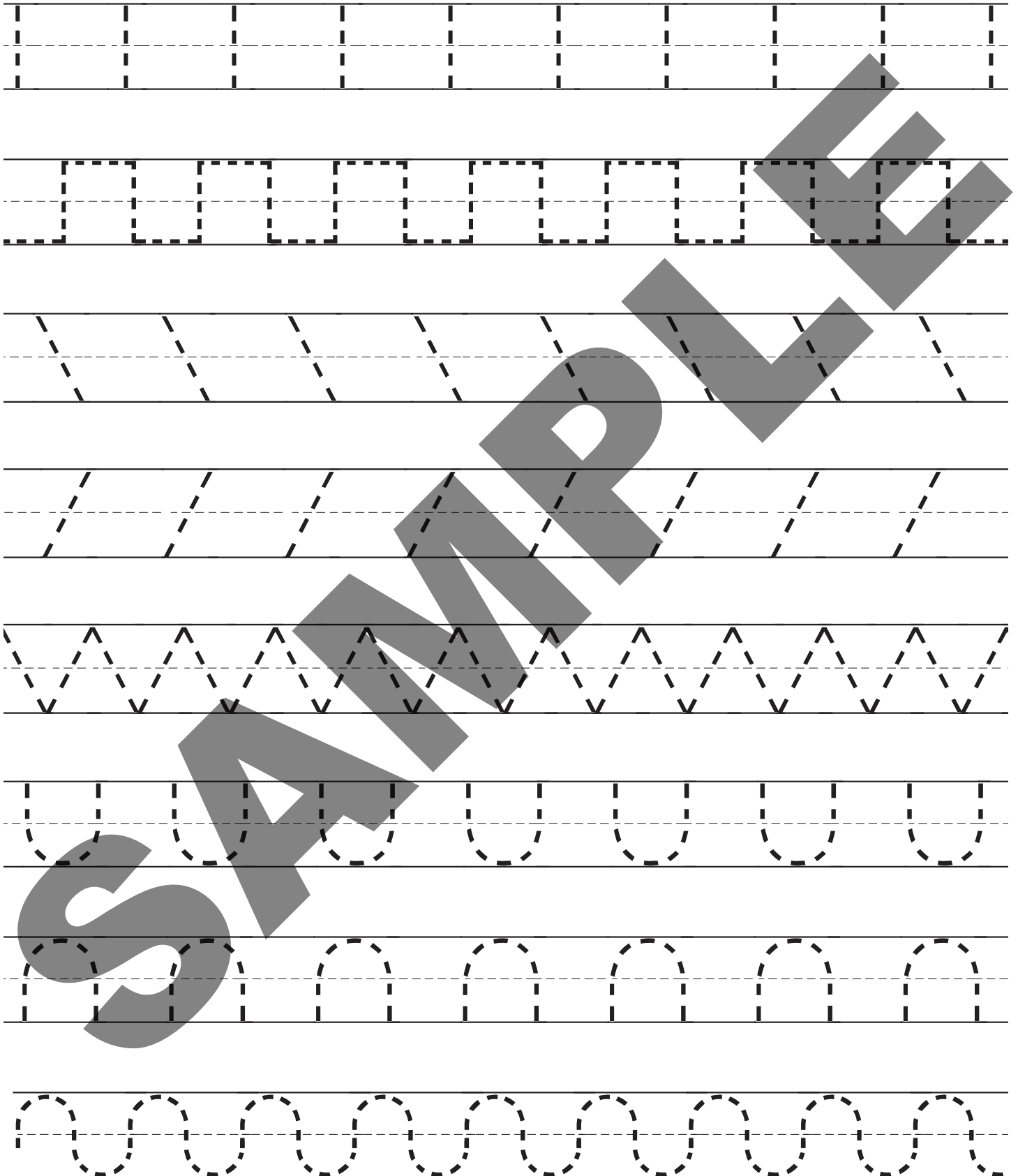
Left-handed students often have difficulty forming some letters smoothly. Help them to be comfortable with their efforts.

- Be accepting if students make some strokes right to left, rather than left to right.
- Orient students’ paper on a slight angle to the left. Students can shift the paper to the left as their writing progresses across the page.
- Encourage students to keep their left wrist straight rather than hooked. (Hooking the wrist is a habit many left-handed writers develop so they can see what they have written.)

Monitoring Progress

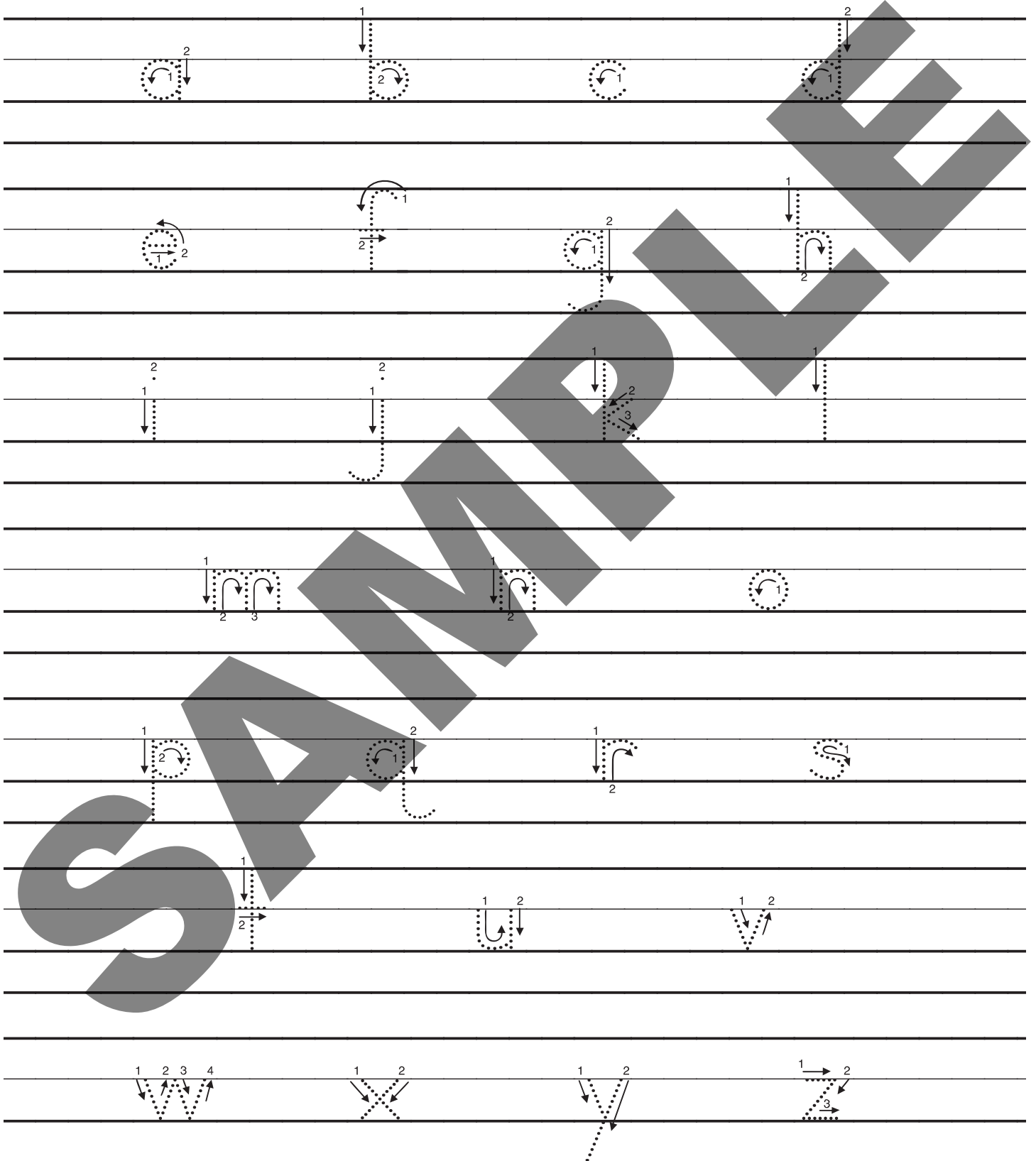
- Use the rubrics and checklists in this resource to assess students’ learning. Encourage students to self-assess their printing according to the rubric provided.

Pre-printing Practice



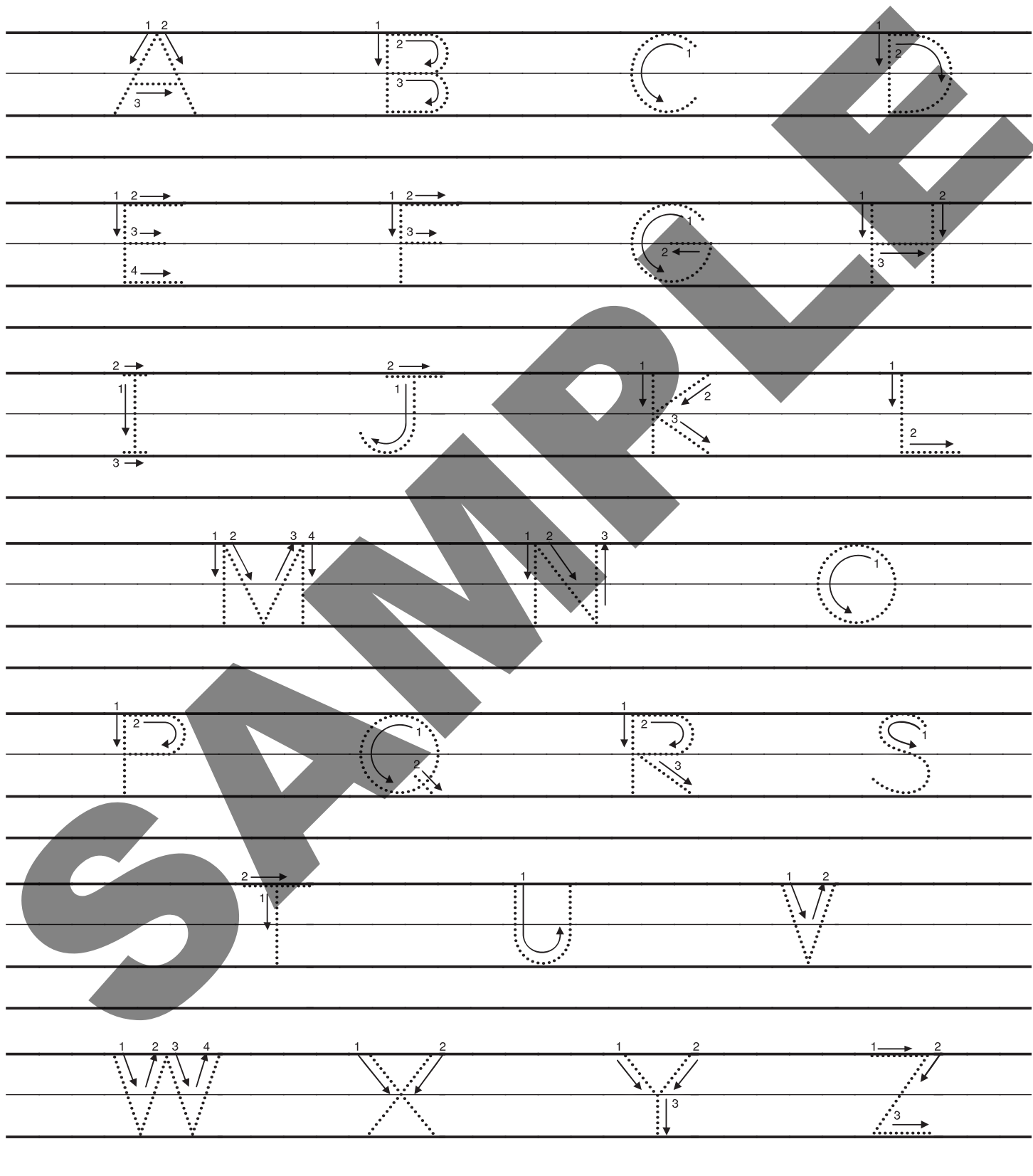
Printing Practice – Letters

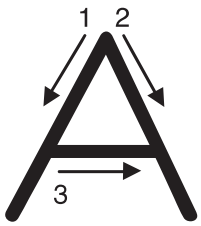
Trace the following lower-case letters.



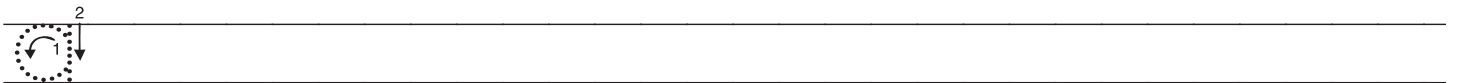
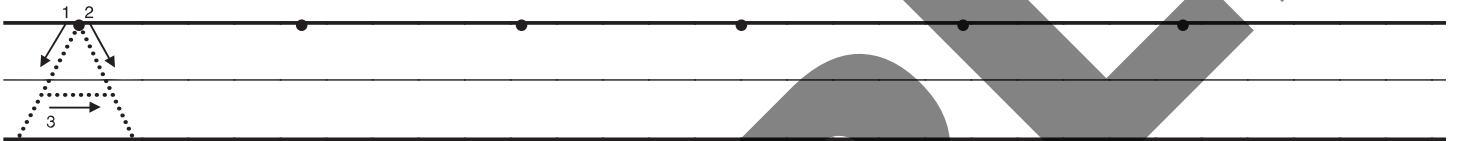
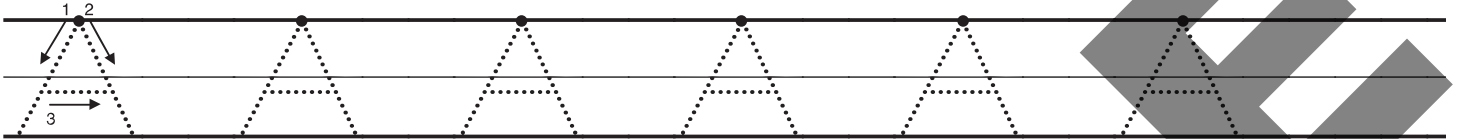
Printing Practice – Letters (continued)

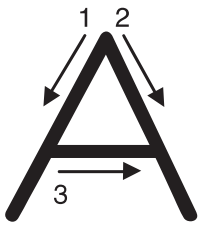
Trace the following upper-case letters.





Trace and print. Circle your best A or a on each line.





Trace and print. Circle your best A or a on each line.

