

Early Transcription and Handwriting Progression

Early Foundations for Successful Handwriting

At St Minver School, we know how important it is to support children with their transcription skills right from the very beginning. Strong handwriting foundations don't just appear later on — they start in our Early Years. Throughout our Early Years curriculum and provision, we build in rich opportunities for children to develop the essential pre-writing skills they need: strengthening their fine-motor control, learning to hold writing tools with confidence, and exploring the early shapes that form the building blocks of writing.

Building Confident Writers Through Consistent Practice

Once children—at any age—have secured those essential pre-writing skills, we then follow our chosen handwriting scheme with real fidelity. We teach and practise letters in carefully planned 'letter families', helping children to see the patterns in how letters are formed. We begin with single letters and move naturally into letter joins as soon as the children are ready, ensuring progression feels smooth, achievable, and purposeful.

How can you help?

1. Understanding Early Transcription and Handwriting Progression

Take a look at the stages of handwriting development so you can see where your child is currently working and what they might need next. This can help you focus support in the right place.

2. Handwriting Stage Guidance

For each handwriting stage, we've outlined simple, practical activities you can do regularly at home. These help build the muscle memory, control, and confidence children need as they move through the progression.

If your child is in a later stage, keep an eye on their bookbag for practice sheets sent home.

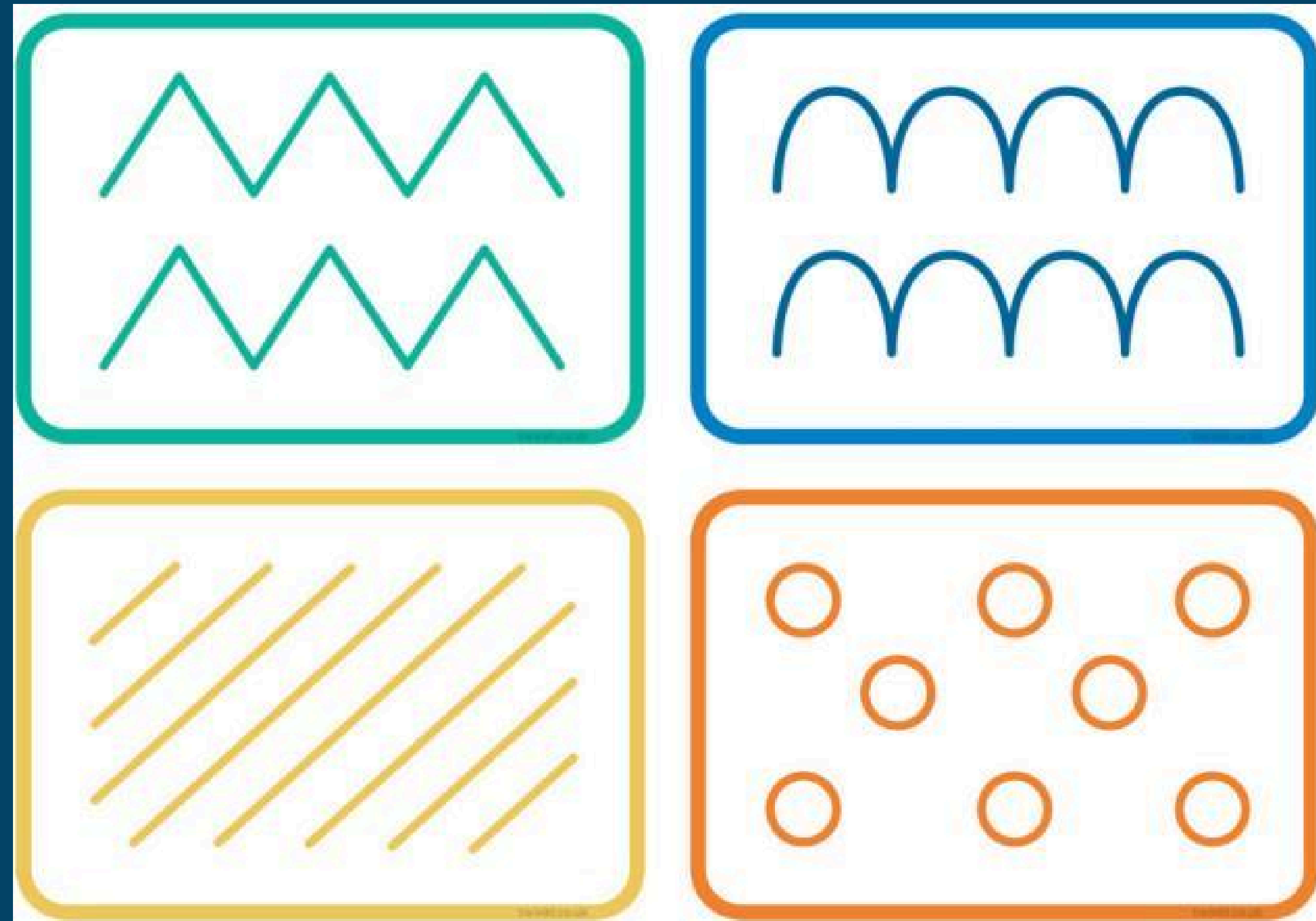
3. Handwriting Warm-Ups ("Drill")

Short, regular warm-up activities—using the tools provided in your child's pack—help develop and maintain strong hands and good fine-motor control. Just a few minutes before writing can make a big difference to fluency and stamina.

Early Implementation and Handwriting Progression

Pre Writing Stage	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
- Developing upper body strength - Developing hand dominance - Holding writing utensils Forming pre-writing shapes.	- Sit correctly at a table, holding a pencil comfortably and correctly - Begin to form lower-case letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place - Form capital letters - Form digits 0-9 - Understand which letters belong to which handwriting 'families' and to practise these.	- Form lower-case letters of the correct size relative to one another - Start using some of the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left un-joined - Write capital letters and digits of the correct size, orientation and relationship to one another and to lower case letters - Use spacing between words that reflects the size of the letters.	- Use the diagonal and horizontal strokes that are needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left un-joined - Increase the legibility, consistency and quality of their handwriting (e.g. by ensuring that the down strokes of letters are parallel and equidistant.
Early Years Provision and Curriculum for mark making and early writing	Morrells Letter Formation Stage 1, 2 and 3	Morrells Joining Letters Stage 1	Morrells Joining Letters Stage 2 and 3

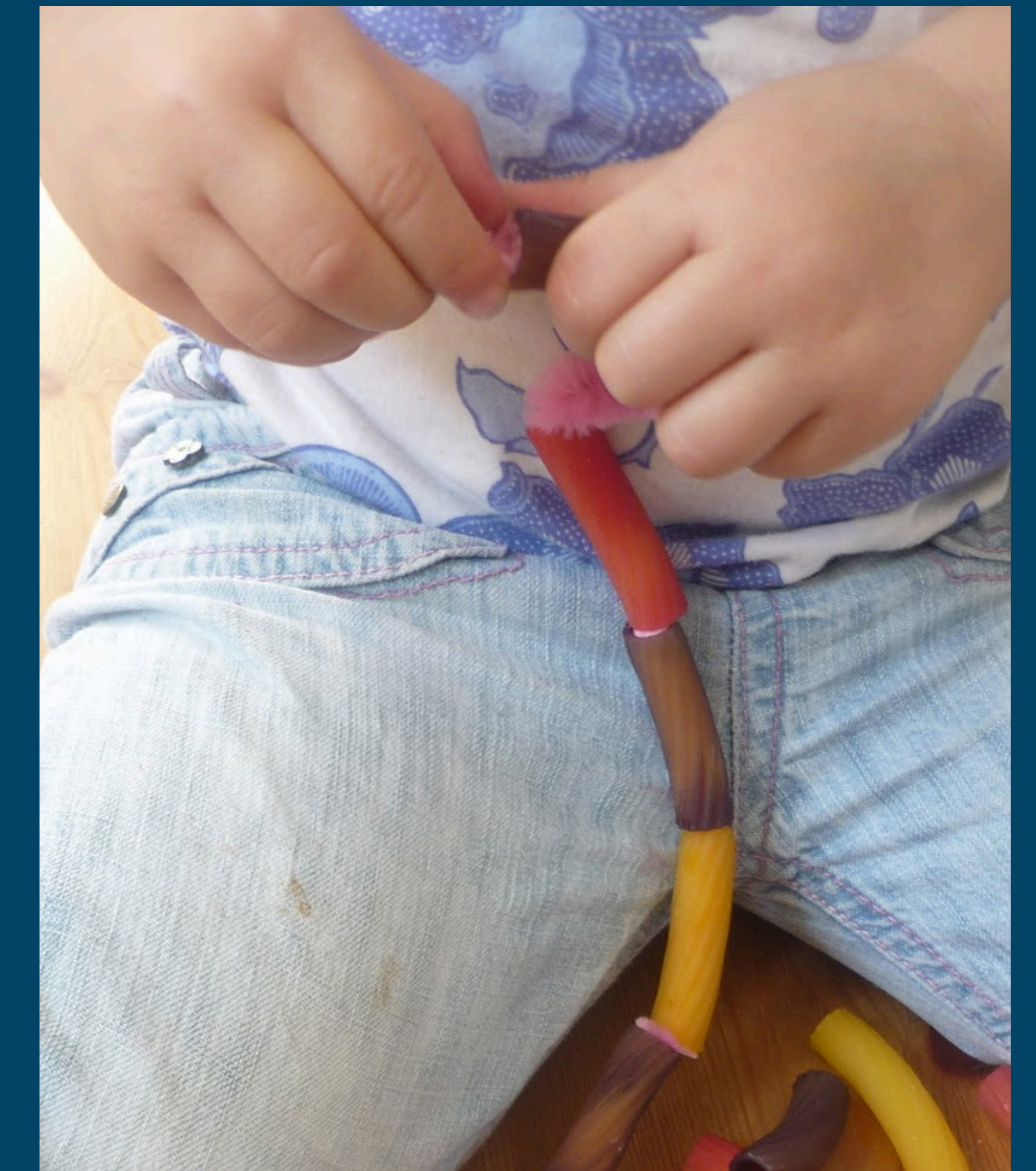
Pre-Writing Stage



Tracing shapes and lines with different mark making tools.



Squeezing tweezers to grab, move and sort different small objects



Threading activities such as beads or pasta on strings and pipes



Making patterns, shapes, lines, letters and numbers in different materials such as sand.



Squeezing, rolling, pulling and pinching playdough.



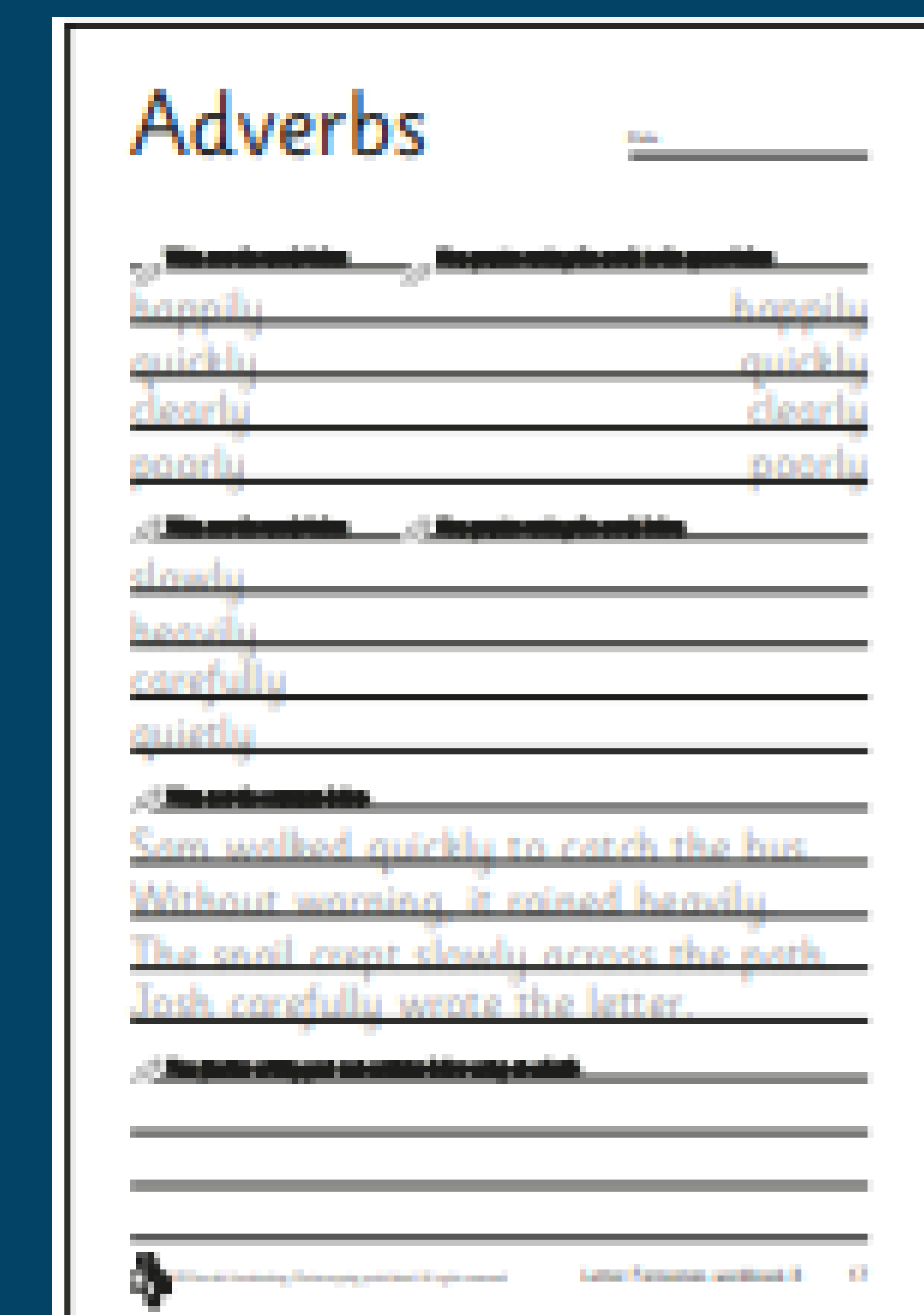
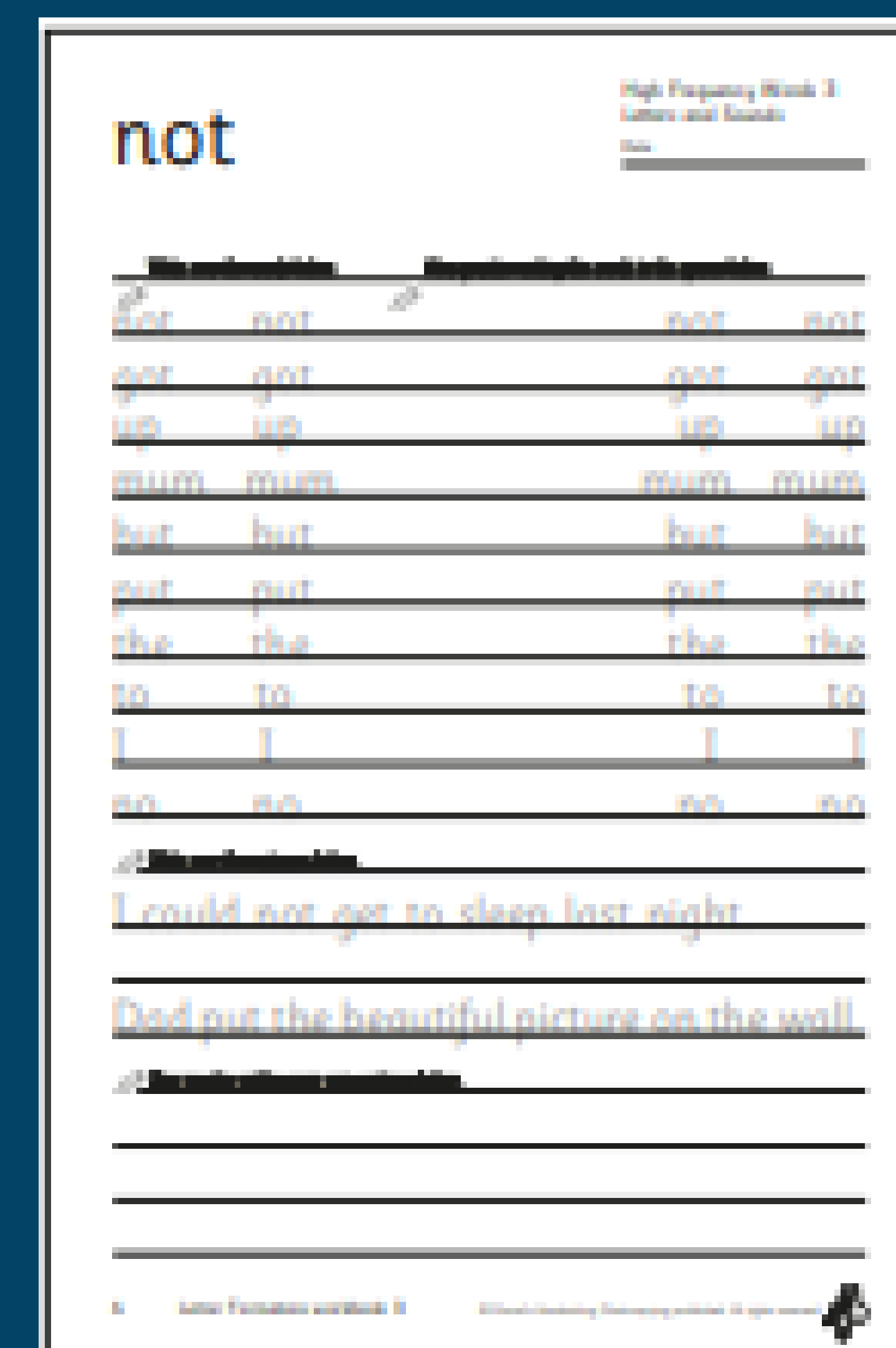
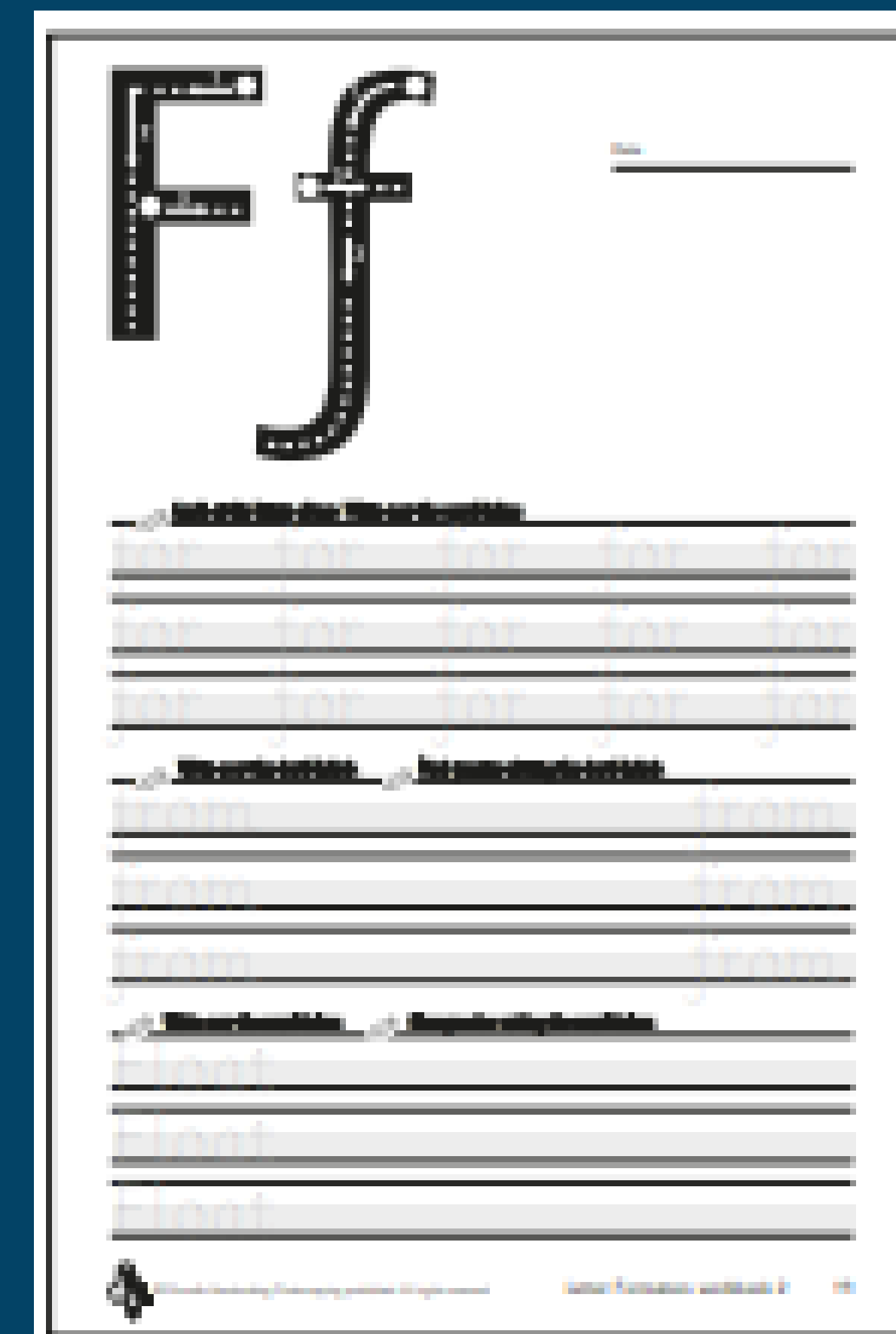
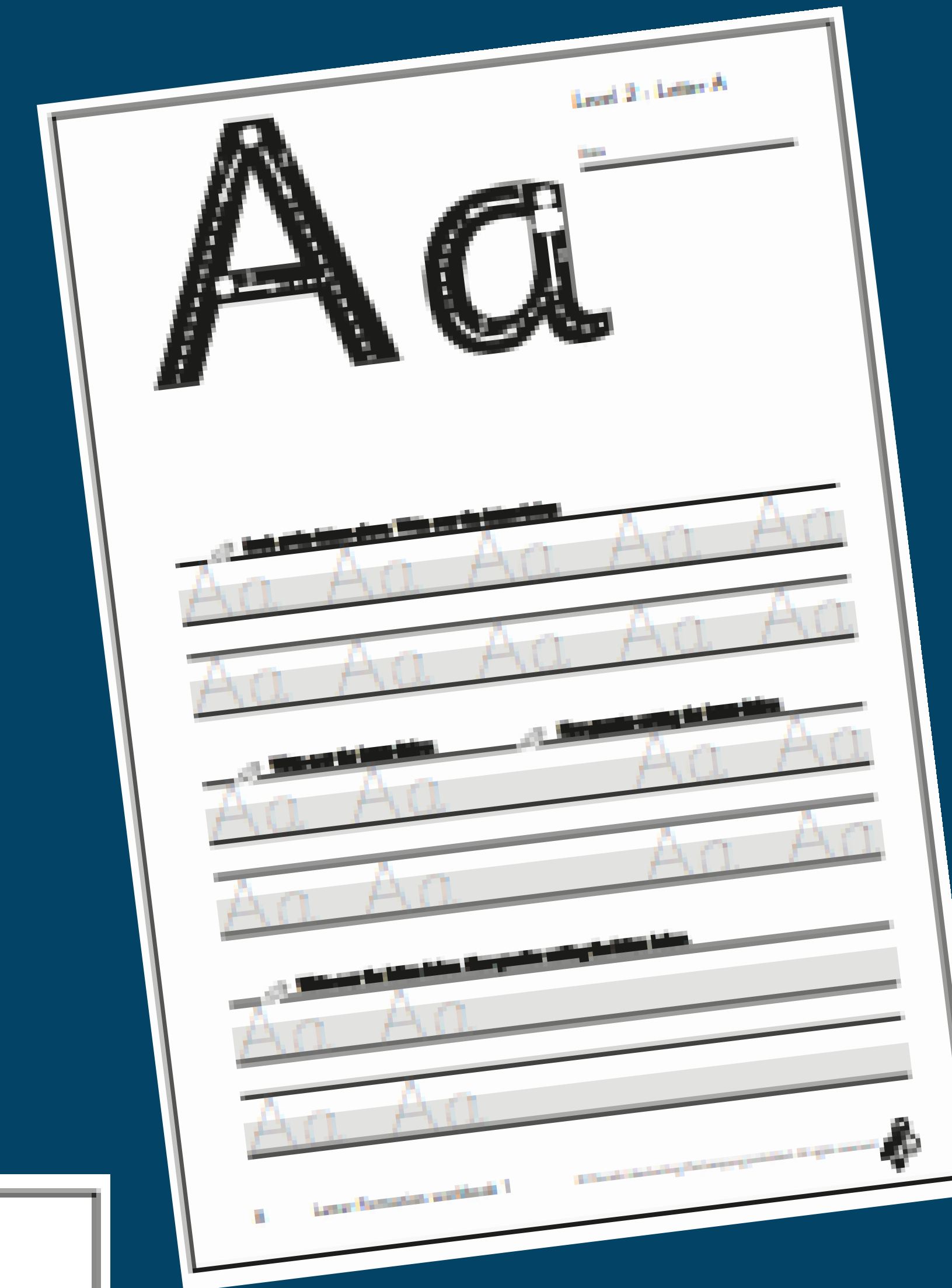
Puzzles and colouring that encourage controlling lines being made.

Stage 1

Before Stage 1 children should have been exposed to lots of prewriting activities to strengthen hand and wrist muscles. Pre writing activities should still be used along side stage 1 to support children at the start of their letter formation journey.

In stage 1 children will first work on the single letters of the alphabet in letter families so that correct handwriting movements can be practiced repeatedly. A 'bounce' system with directional arrows is used to teach the correct direction and orientation.

Gradually upper and lower case and digits will be introduced before these will be practised in whole words and sentences.



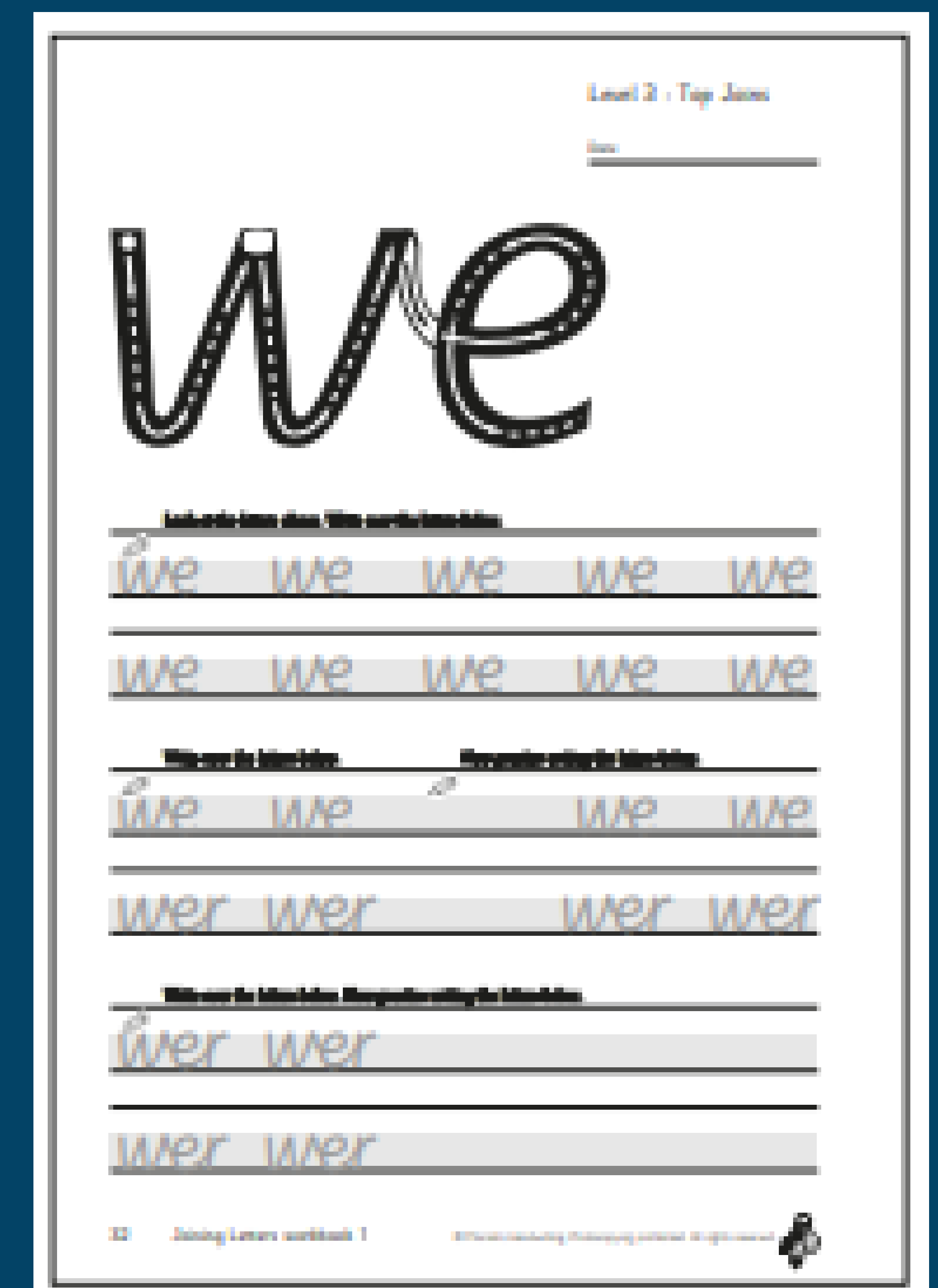
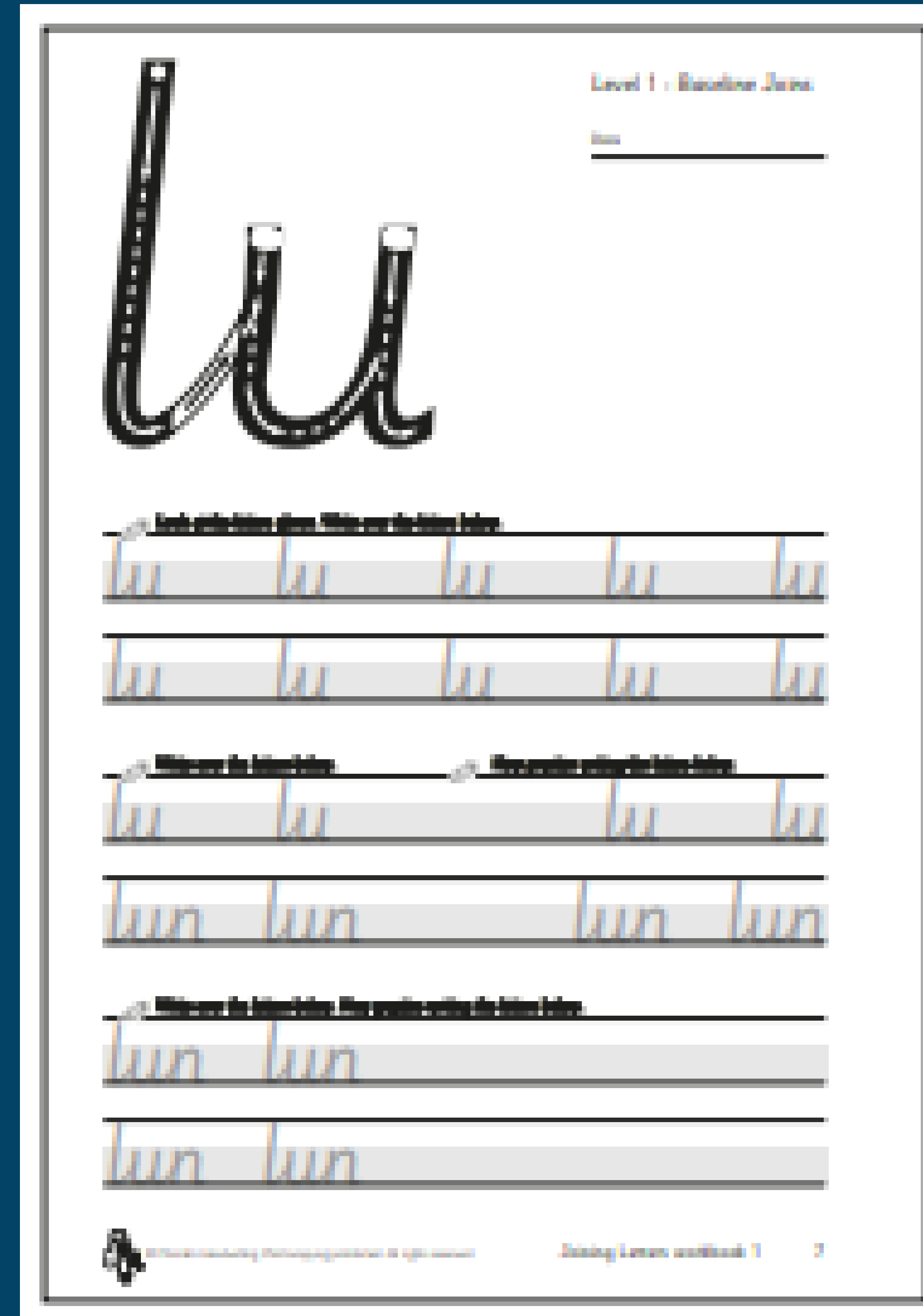
Stage 2

Before Stage 2 children should be confident in printing letters in words and sentences. Over practice and repetition of Stage 1 should be used to ensure children are ready for stage 2 before this is introduced.

Stage 2 continues to use the 'bounce' technique to teach the correct diagonal and horizontal joins to master joined up handwriting.

Children first learn the baseline joins before moving on to round and top joins.

The aim of stage 2 is to develop a fluent handwriting style and positive joined up habits right from the start.

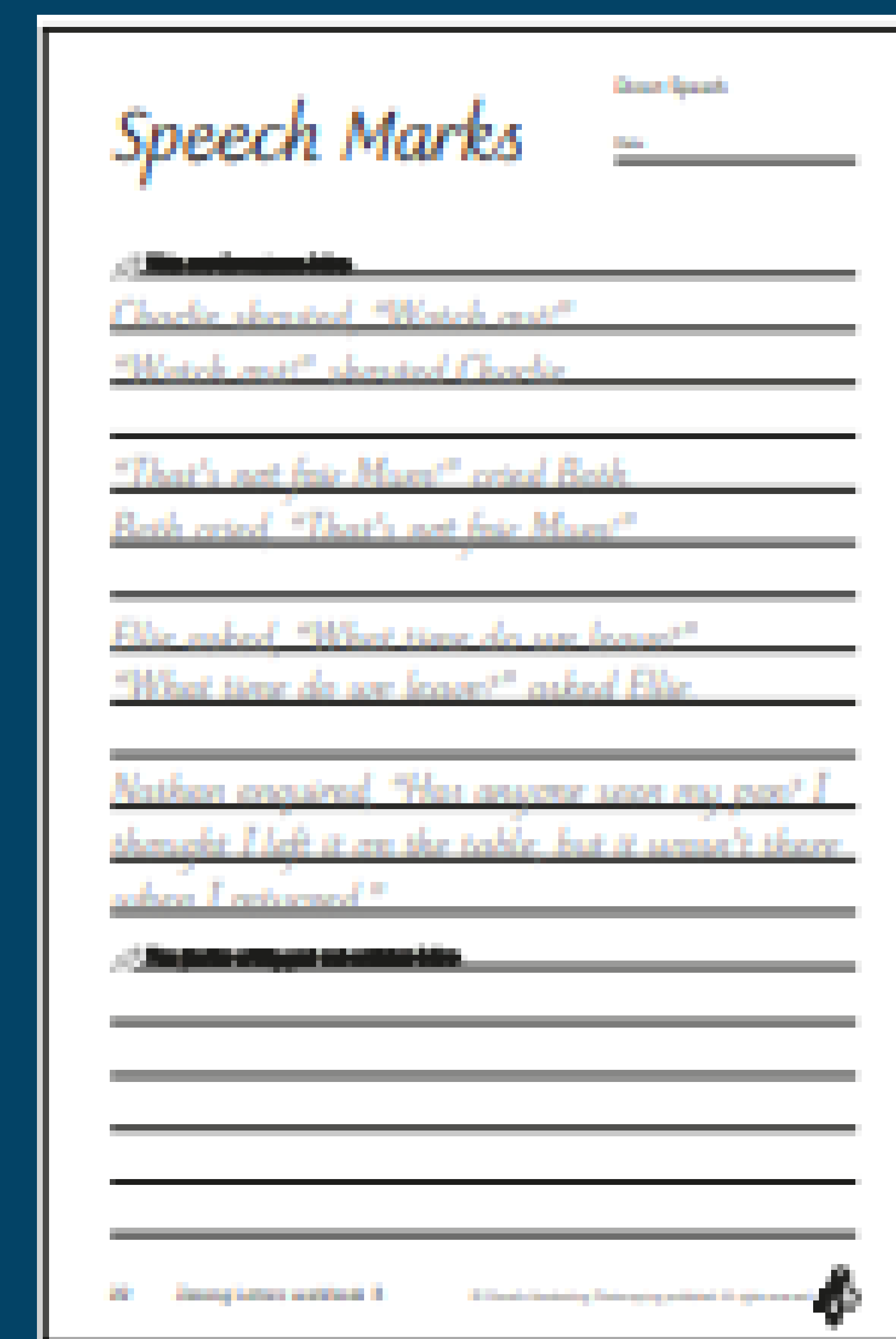
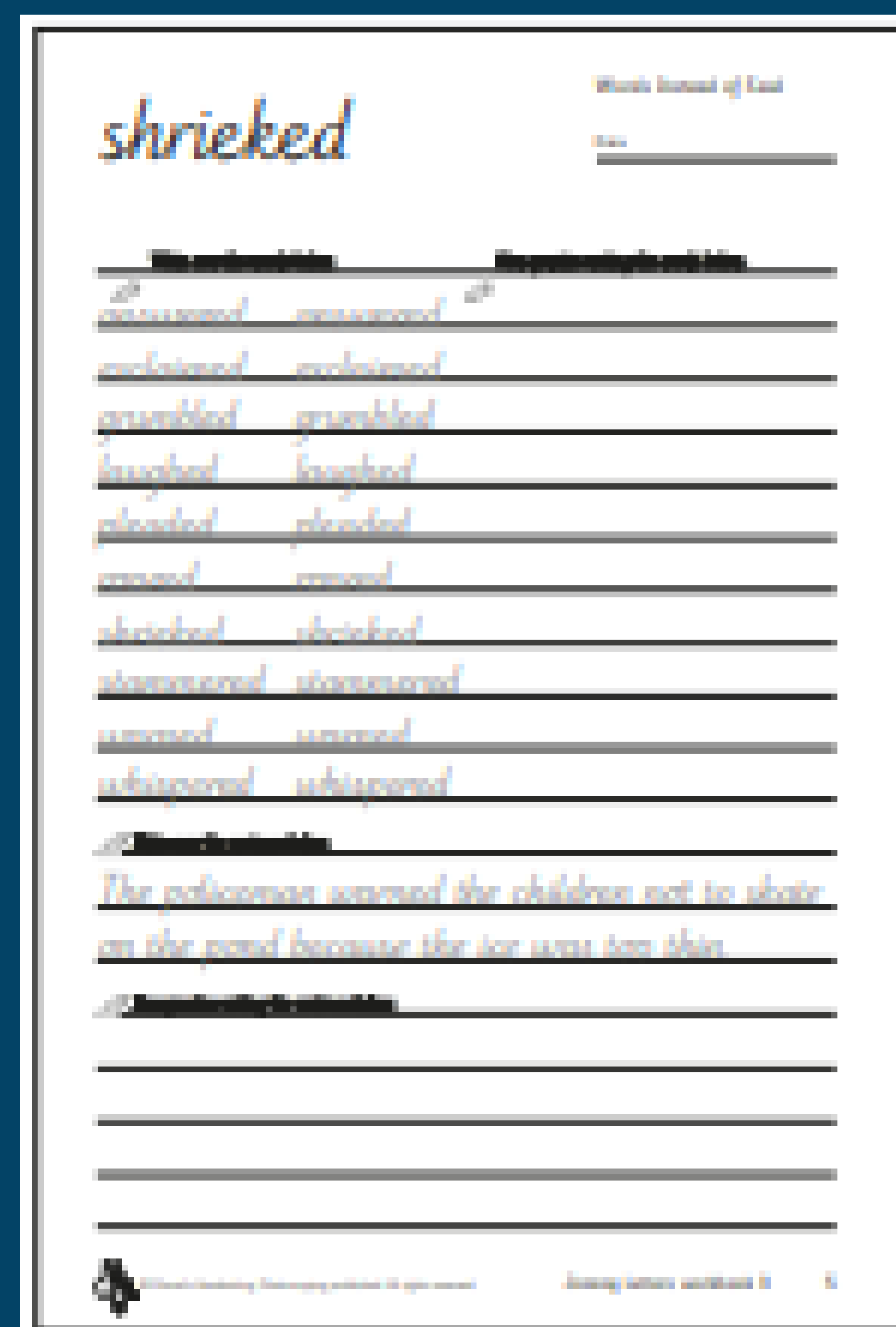
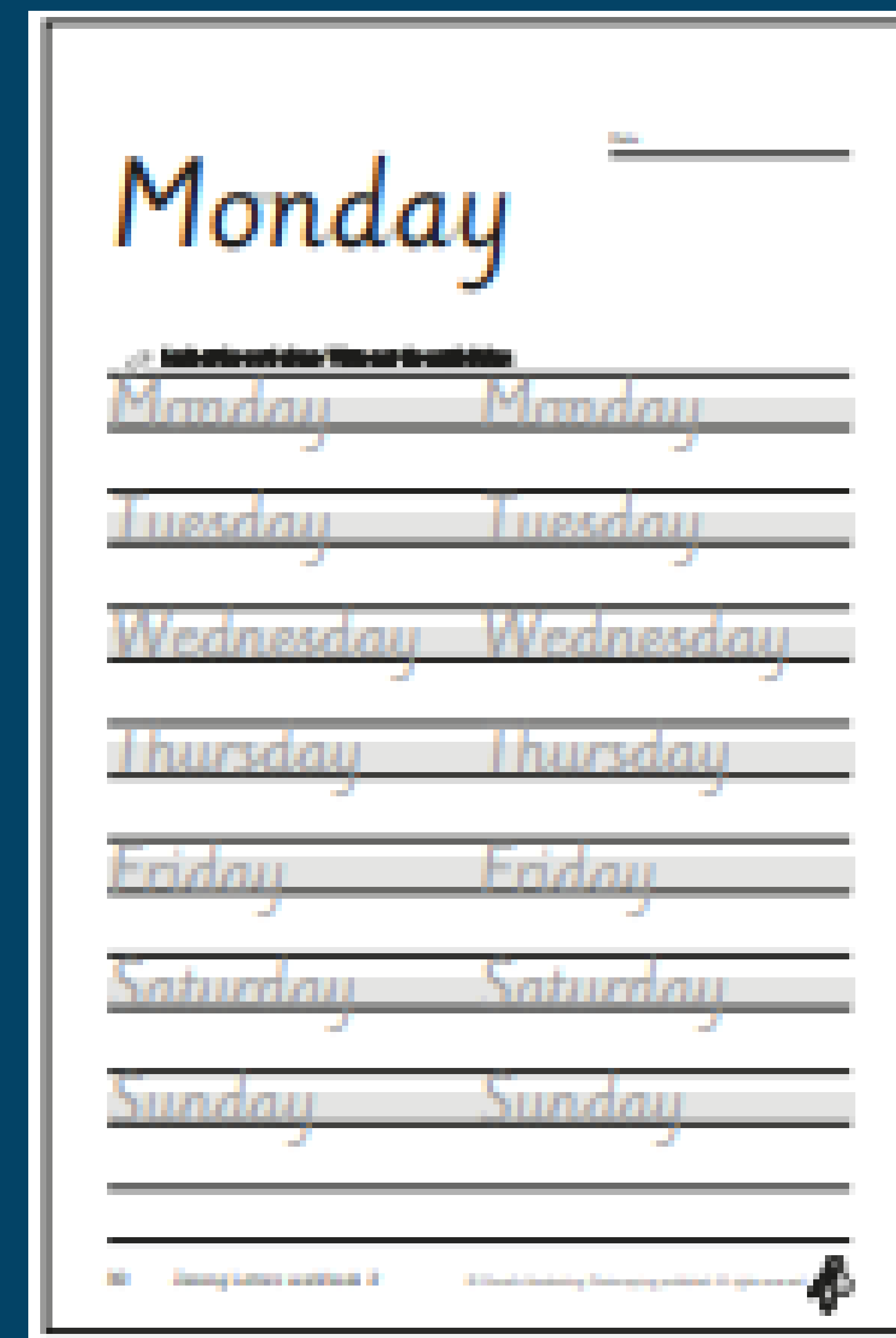
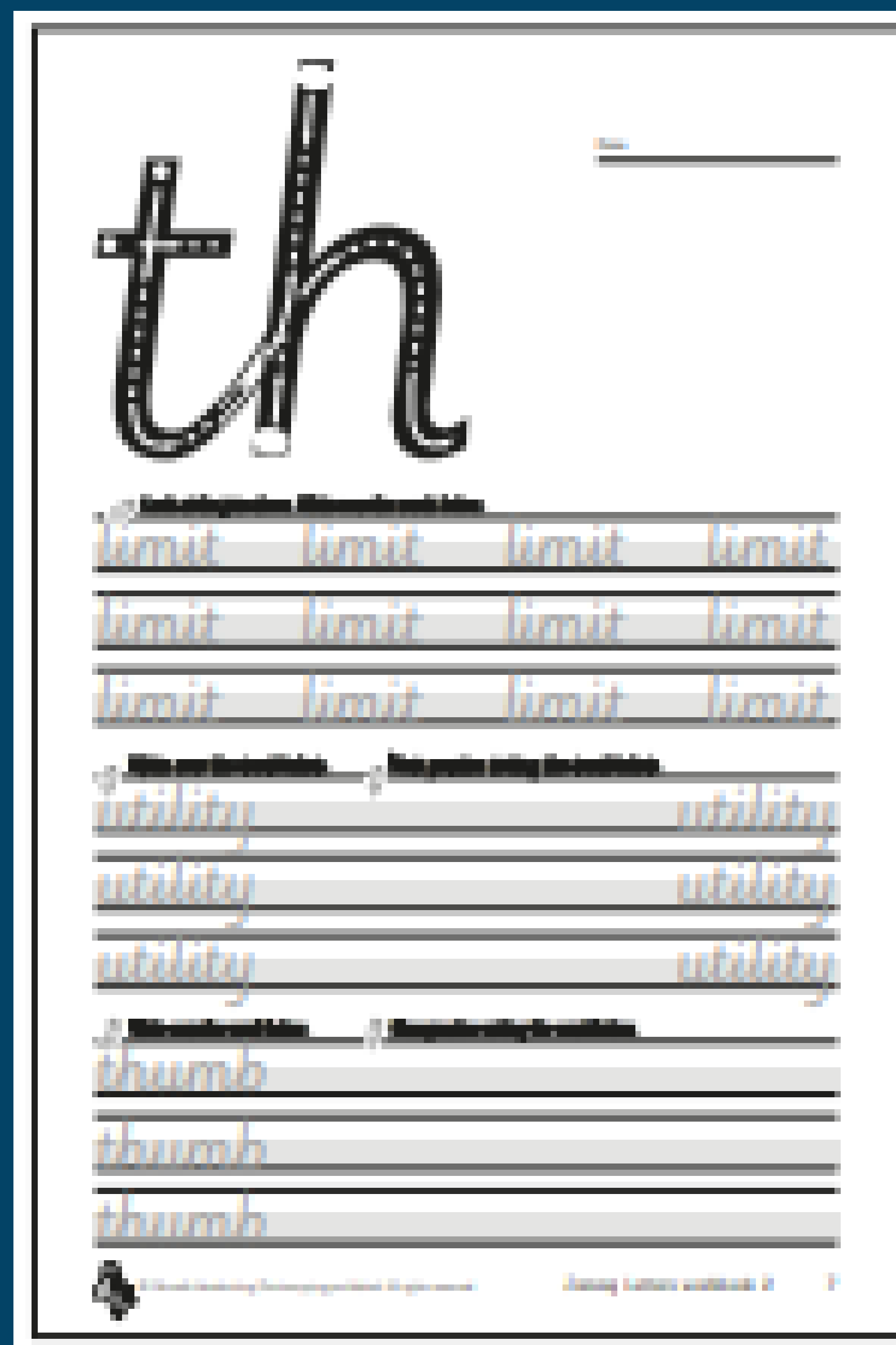


Stage 3

Once children are confident and fluent with joining letters in Stage 2, Stage 3 is introduced to enable progress to joining up whole words.

The 'bounce' technique is used to teach the correct diagonal and horizontal joins and provide further opportunities to practice cursive handwriting.

As children become more fluent in this, vocabulary and grammatical exercises are introduced to enable children to develop fluid and legible handwriting and gain speed and automaticity.

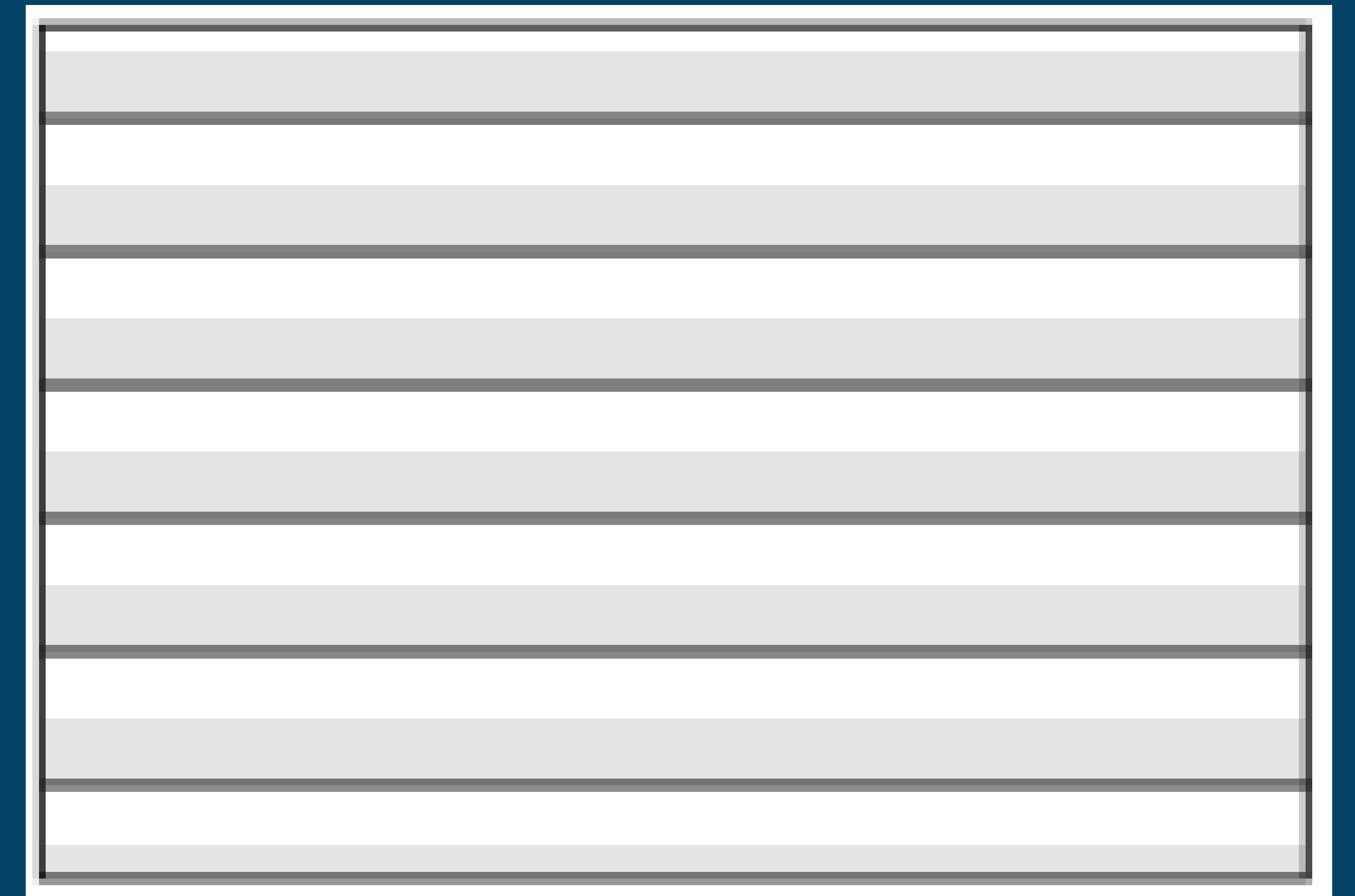


Stage 4

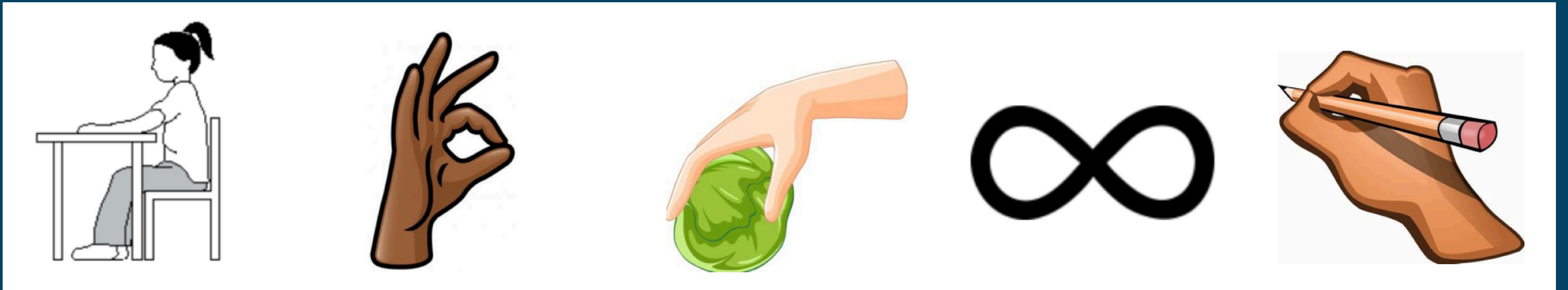
After completion of Stage 3 we would expect children to be fluent and confident in their handwriting style. However, opportunities to practice and apply their skills is important in ensuring this remains.

Children at Stage 4 should still have lots of opportunities for hand-written work and apply the skills and knowledge they have built up over the previous stage.

Warm-ups, fine motor activities and regular more open-ended cursive handwriting of spellings they are learning should be encouraged.



Handwriting Drill!



sit

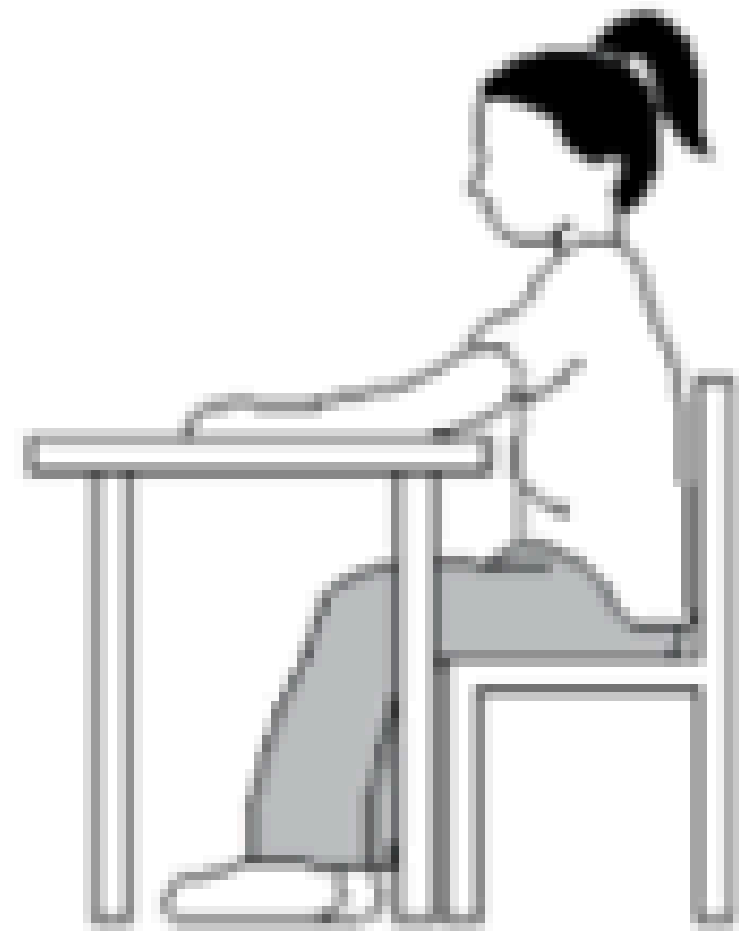
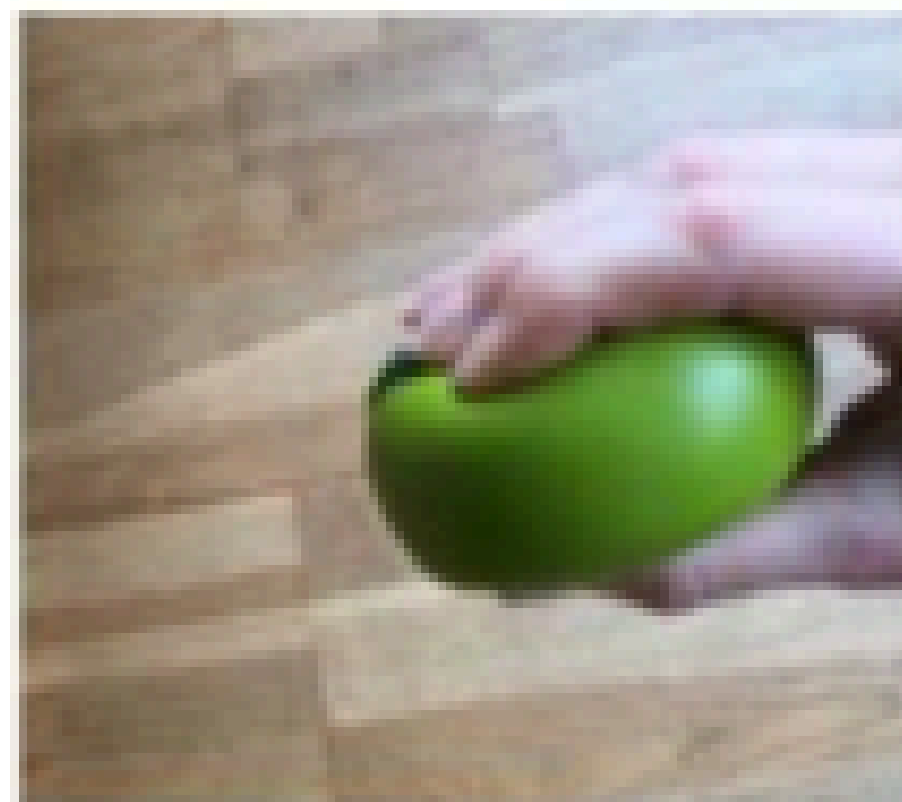
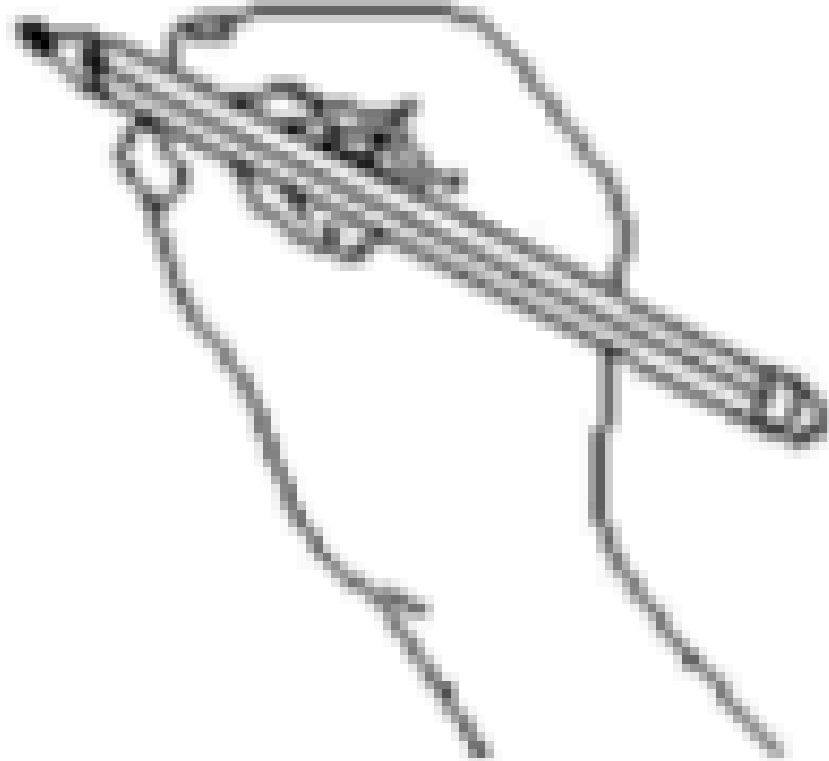
fingers

hand

wrist

grip

Writing Drill Warm Up Example

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5
				
Correct Sitting Feet flat on the floor, arms on the table, bottom touching the back of the chair and body slightly leaning forward. Remember core muscles and core strength is key for supporting neater handwriting.	Finger Warm Up 10 slow squeezes using the thumb and index finger on each hand, gradually increasing to 30 over time. Remember, strong hand muscles are key to good pencil control for neat handwriting.	Hand Warm Up Squeeze a stress or soft ball 10 times in each hand. Remember, any activities over time that strengthen the hand muscles all help – kneading dough, tennis, cycling.	Wrist Warm Up Draw over the infinity sign a number of times to stretch and move the finger and wrist muscles. Remember, good handwriting comes from the wrist not the shoulder.	Get a Good Grip Make sure pencils or pens are being held with a good grip – the dynamic tripod grip is the most efficient. Remember, poor pencil grip leads to slower writing speed and can cause aches and tiredness.