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Booklet © Julia Simon 2019

by Julia Simon

(Principal)

How to Use this Booklet

The traditional viewpoint of most educators is that children should be taught to read separately from, and before, teaching them to write. Maria Montessori turned this idea on its head with her remarkable discovery that better results are obtained in the reverse order – that **writing** is best taught **before** reading. She observed that when children create the letters with their own hands, they learn and retain the relationship to speech sounds much easier, and thus learn to read faster and with more certainty.

Using this approach at Alive Montessori, children learn to read **and** write much earlier than previously thought possible in a school setting. In fact, we expect our three and four year olds to be reading and writing at a basic level so they can be fluent readers by the time they enter grade 1, and we consistently achieve this goal.

This booklet was designed by Julia Simon to be easily followed by even the youngest child. The letters are deliberately large to enable the child, still developing his or her fine motor skills, to have success in writing the letters.

In our classrooms, we have many more tools that support reading and writing, but children are **always** taught the sounds that go with the letters at the same time they are forming them.

At home, you as parents can help by reading stories aloud to your children, thereby getting them interested in books and reading. With this booklet, you can also reinforce our efforts by getting them to say the **sounds** of the letter as they are writing them. (With the Montessori method, the **names** of the letters are relatively unimportant and can confuse the child when it comes to reading.)

Important Note on the Sounds of the Letters

Many, even experienced, teachers make a fundamental mistake of adding an **uh** at the end of the sound they are trying to teach.

- The sound of the letter **s** should be taught as **sssss** (a hissing sound), not as **suh**.
- Likewise, it should be **mmmmm**, **fffff**, **nnnnn**, **rrrrr**, **zzzzz**, **lllll**, **vvvvv**, **wwwww**, **yyyyy**.

All these sounds can be easily worked out by prolonging the sound at the beginnings of words like **ss...sit**, **mm...man**, **ff...fit**, **nn...not**, **rr...run**, **zz...zip**, **ll...leg**, **vv...van**, **ww...win**, **yy...yes**.

Letters like **c**, **k**, **p**, and **t** are a bit trickier as the sounds cannot be sustained. However, by paying close attention, it is still easy to say these sounds without the added **uh** at the end. The most difficult letters are **b**, **d**, and **g** – they are actually impossible to say without adding some sort of vowel sound at the end. The trick is to minimize this as much as possible; whispering the sound can help.

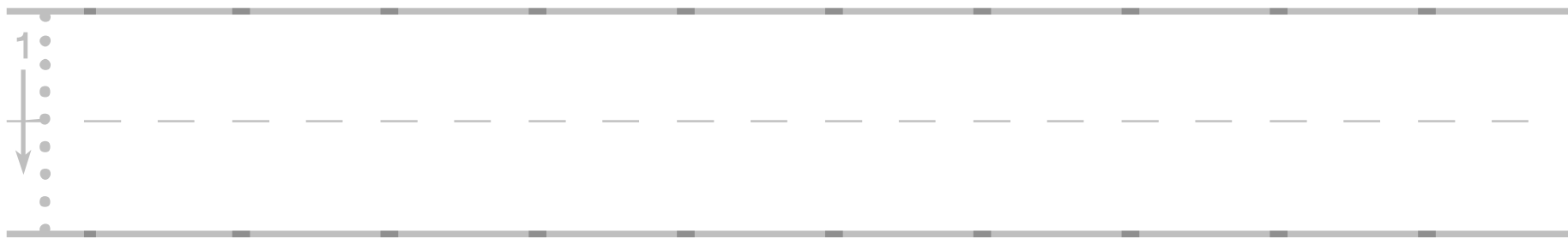
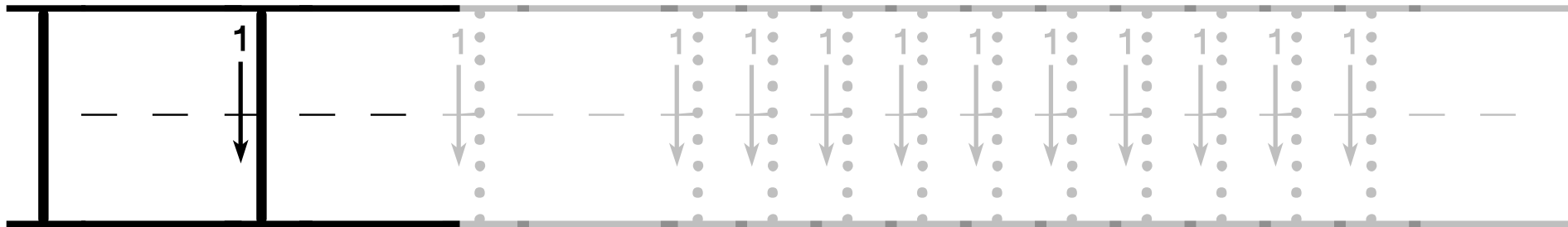
Learning to read English becomes particularly difficult with the five vowels **a**, **e**, **i**, **o**, **u**. Combined, they make 17 basic speech sounds, and according to one source*, can be spelled in 305 different ways! To make sure we don't confuse the child, we teach only one vowel sound for each letter in the beginning stages. These are:

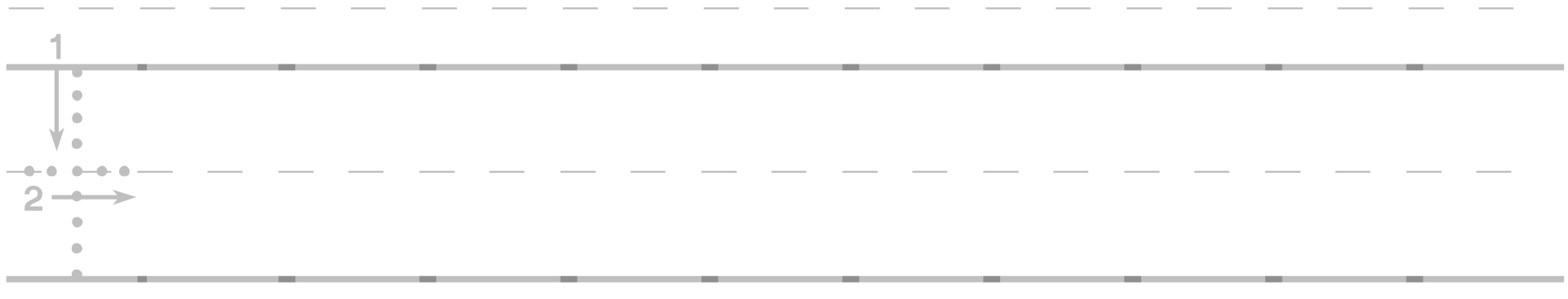
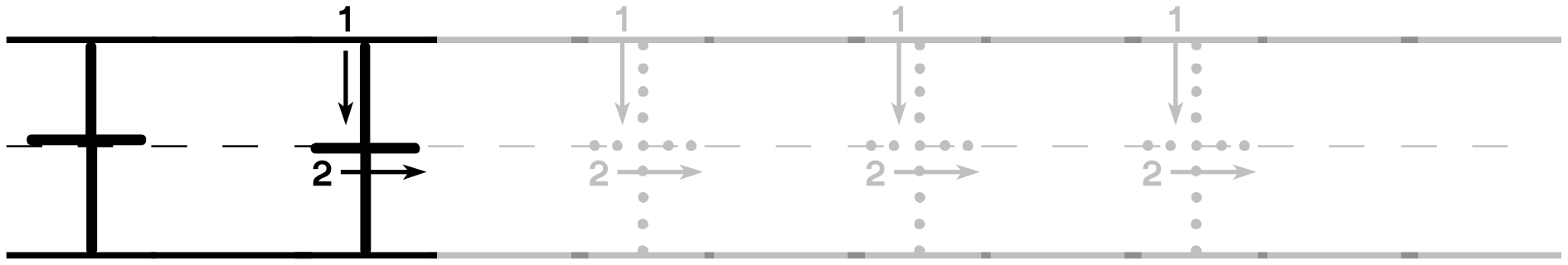
- **a** as in **apple**
- **e** as in **egg**
- **i** as in **in**
- **o** as in **on**
- **u** as in **up**

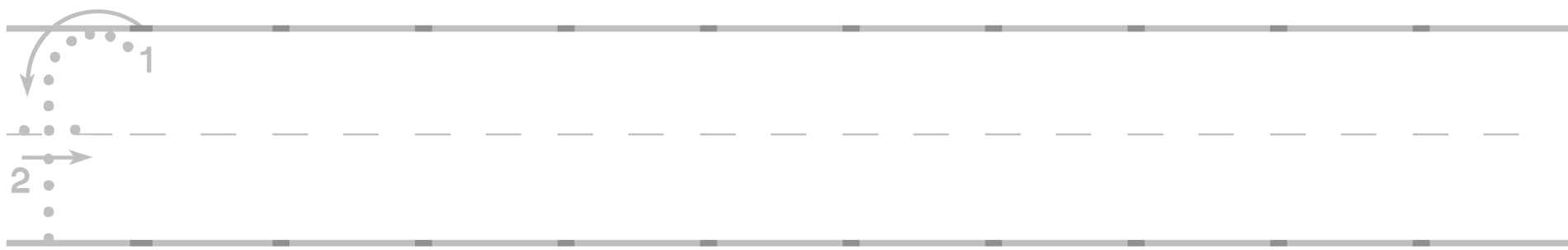
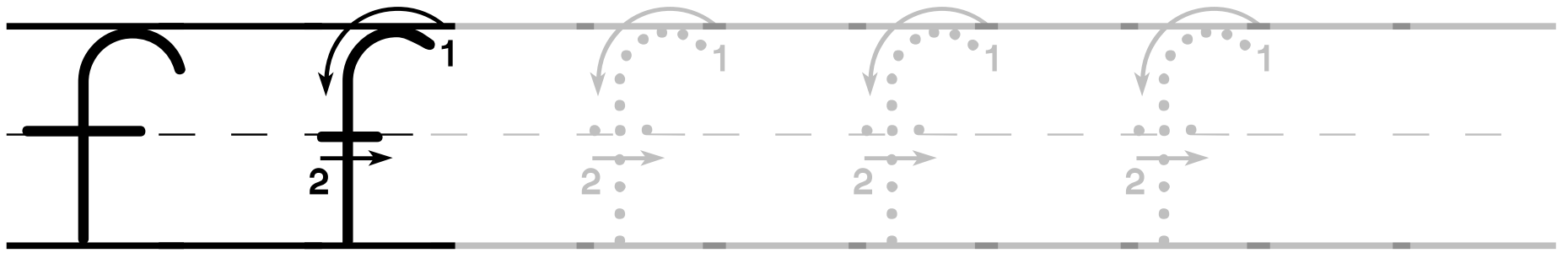
With just the basic sounds thoroughly learned, the child is in a position to be able to read hundreds of words and identify the most common spelling patterns that occur in English – cat, mat, sat, hat, pat, fat, rat, bat; in, fin, pin, tin, bin; bag, beg, big, bog, bug; last, fast, mast, cast, past; etc.

By helping your child read and write at a very young age, you will be getting him or her off to an incredible start to his or her education!

* Godfrey Dewey, *Relative Frequency of English Spellings*, 1970





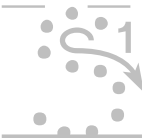


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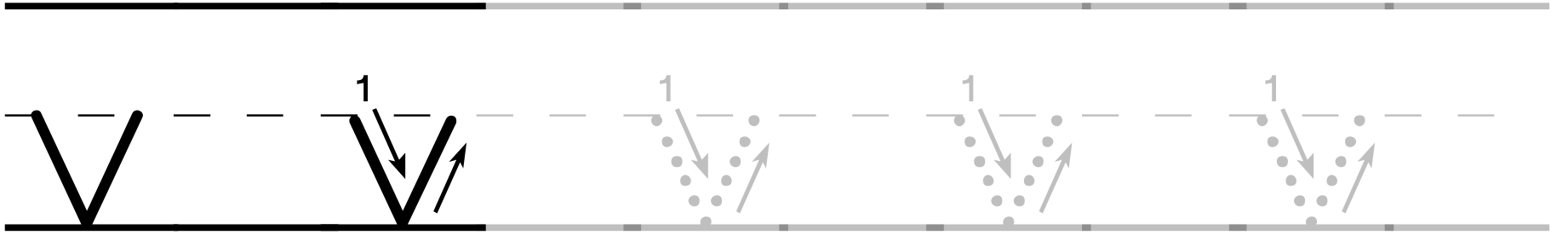
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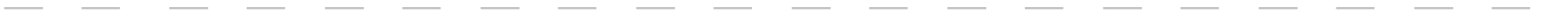
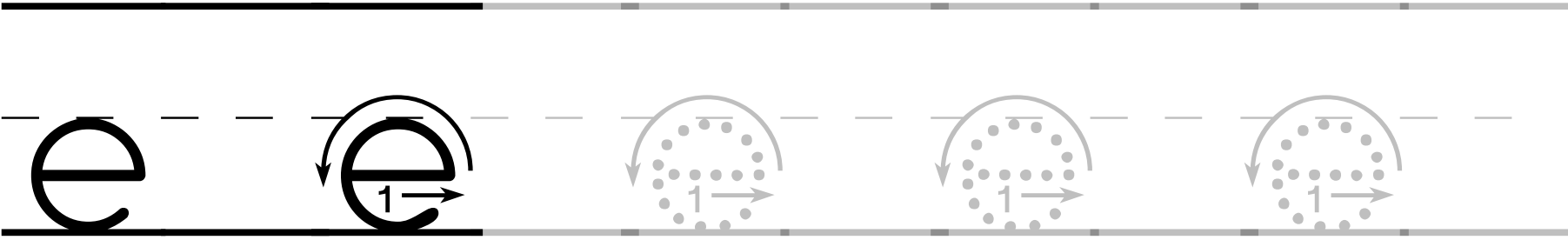


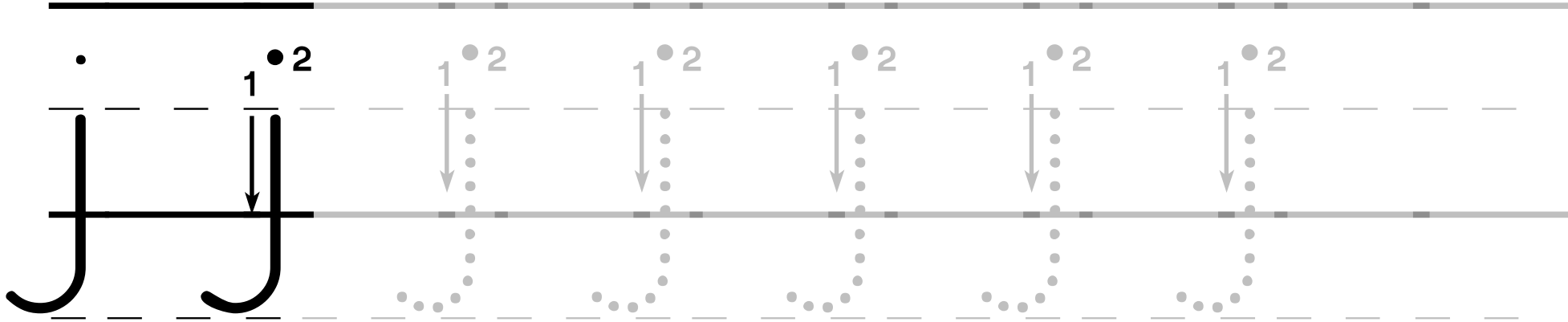
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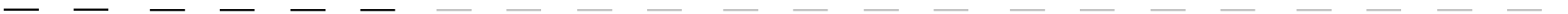
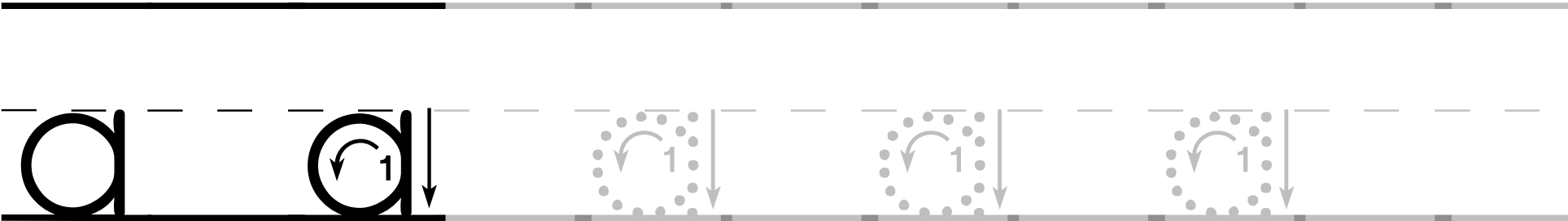


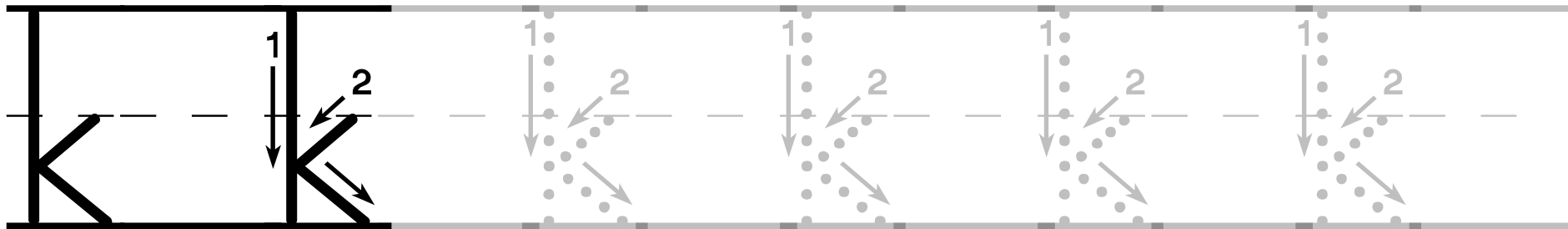


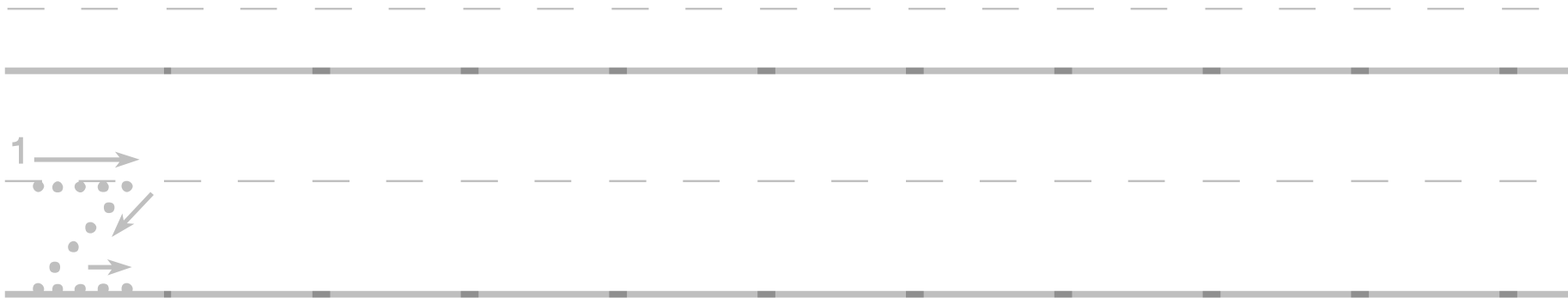
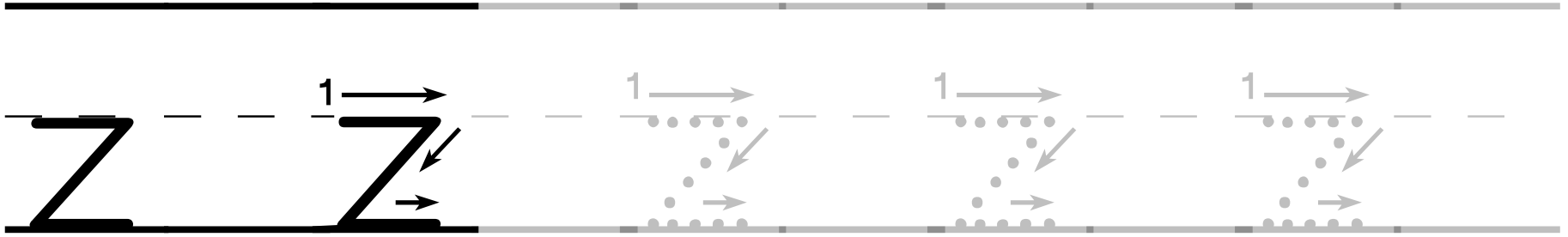














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