Nuqta and Alif Proportion Exercise

In Thuluth, every letter is measured in nuqtas: the diamond-shaped dot your pen makes when you press its full width onto the paper at an angle. Get the dot right and every proportion that follows gets easier.

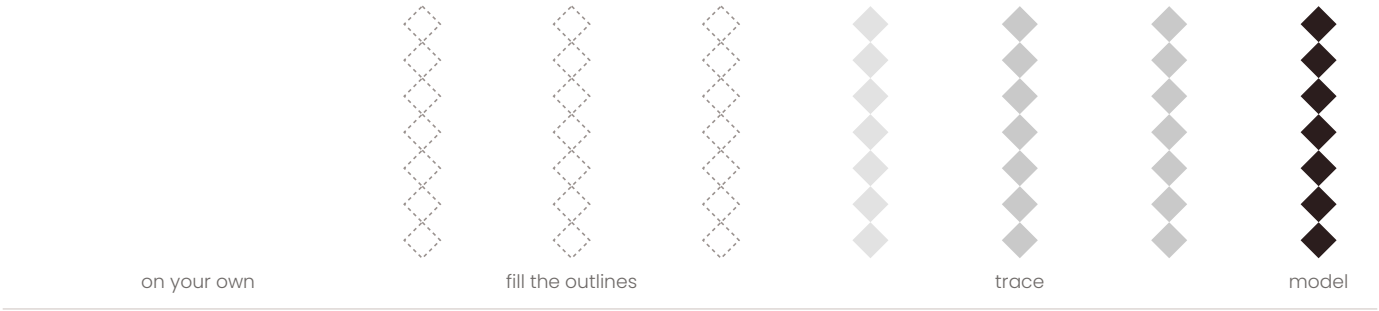
STEP 1 The nuqta

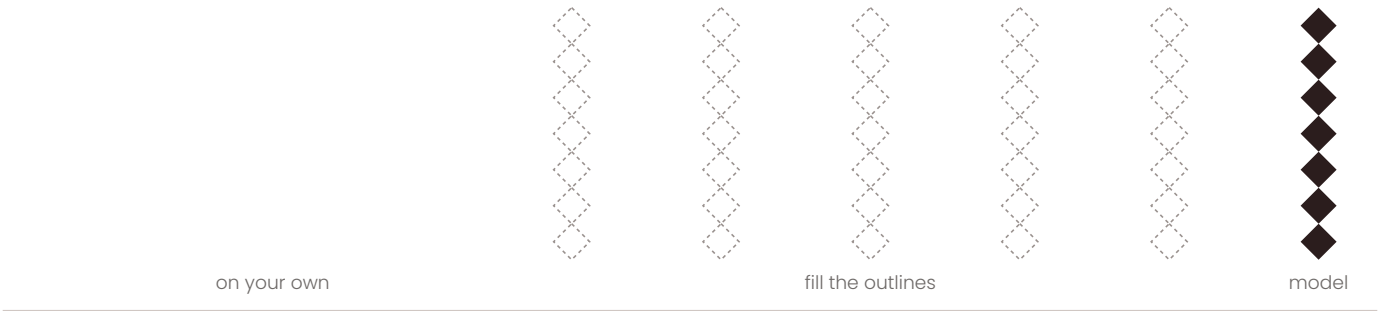
Hold the nib at about 45 degrees, touch down, and pull a short stroke diagonally so all four corners come out sharp. Trace the grey diamonds, then fill the dotted outlines. Aim for exactly the same size every time.



STEP 2 The nuqta ladder

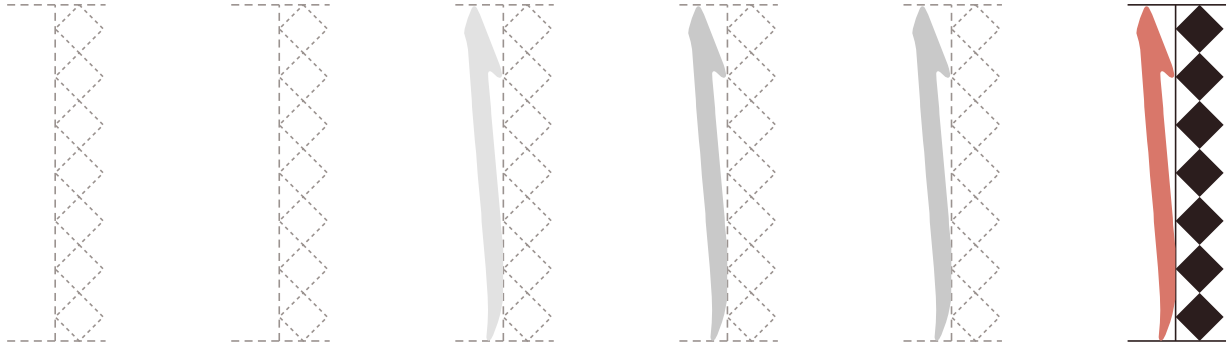
Calligraphers measure with a ladder of nuqtas stacked straight on top of each other, the bottom corner of one touching the top corner of the next. The alif is seven nuqtas tall, so your ladder has seven diamonds. Start at the top.



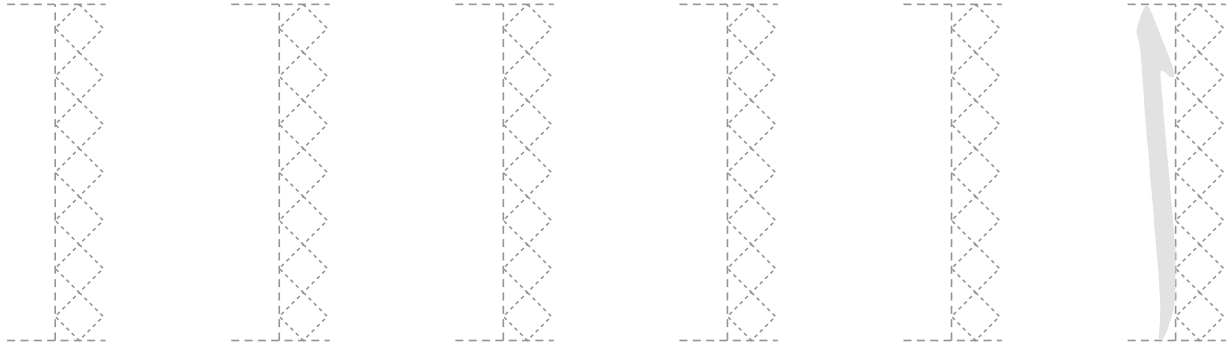


STEP 3 Alif = 7 nuqtas

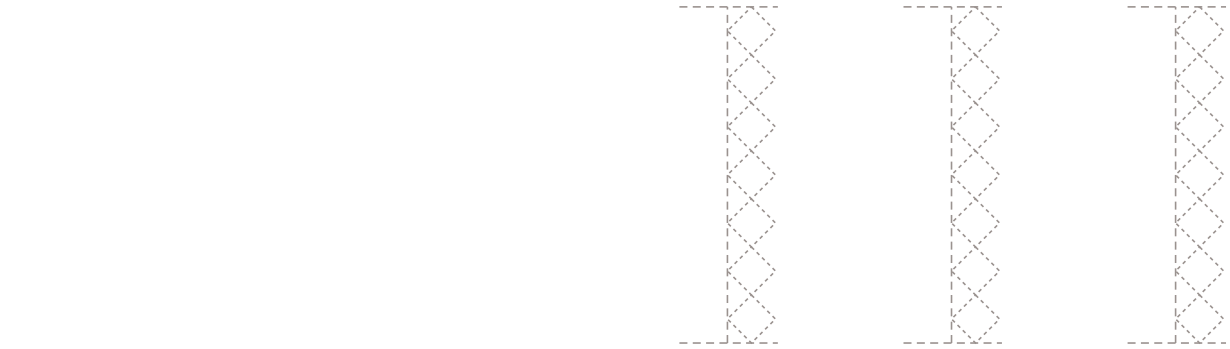
The alif is one long stroke plus a small flick (the hilya) on top. Start at the top and move down with a very slight drift to the right: the alif is not perfectly vertical. Keep the line straight for about six nuqtas, then let it curve and thin out in the last one. Finally add the hilya: one nuqta wide and about one and a half nuqtas tall, flicked down to the right.



write the alif left of each ladder | trace | model



write the alif left of each ladder | trace



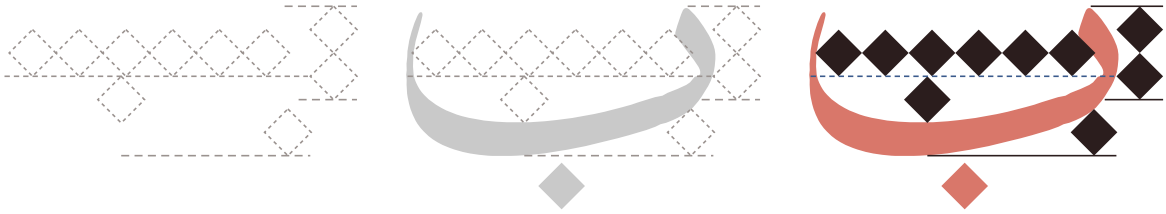
draw your own ladder, then the alif | dotted ladder + your alif

STEP 4

Measure Ba, Nun and Lam

The same diamonds measure every letter. The dark row sits on the dotted baseline, the diamonds below show how deep the bowl goes, and the column on the right shows the height. A small circle stands for about half a nuqta. Trace in the middle, then write the letter on the grid alone.

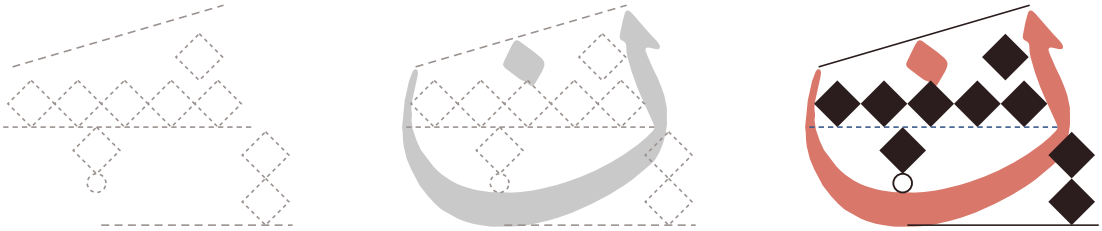
Ba



grid only: write it yourself | trace | measure

6 nuqtas wide, just over 3 tall · head: 2 nuqtas tall · bowl: 1 nuqta below the line · lowest point left of centre

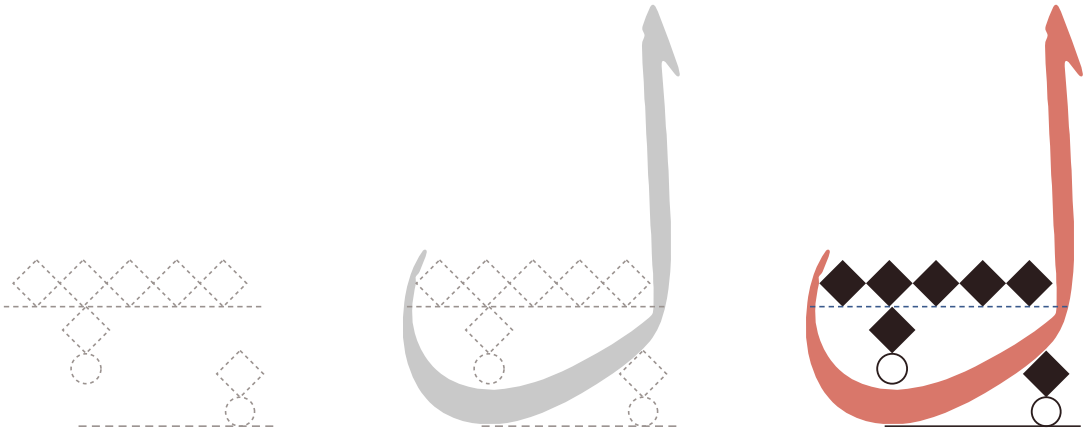
Nun



grid only: write it yourself | trace | measure

5 nuqtas wide · bowl: 1½ nuqtas below the line · right side: 2 nuqtas down · dot: corner on the guide line

Lam



grid only: write it yourself | trace | measure

bowl 5 nuqtas wide · bowl: about 1¾ nuqtas below the line · stem: flexible length · hilya on top of the stem