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### Cursive Writing

Kathy Bittle

*Ouachita Baptist University*

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CURSIVE WRITING

an honors special studies project  
for 491  
Dr. Mims, special studies director

Kathy Bittle  
March 23, 1974

## CURSIVE WRITING

There is no generally accepted agreement concerning the exact time when cursive writing should be introduced. Ruth G. Strickland says that the second grade appears to a number of people to be too early for two reasons: (a) children still have not developed enough muscular skill to make cursive writing easy and an excessive amount of time must be spent learning it, and (b) children have just reached the stage in which they can enjoy manuscript writing as a tool and are beginning to be better writers. Herrick says that, in general, the time necessary for making the transition decreases as the transition period is postponed.

Not all pupils are ready at the same time; some will be by the middle of the second grade, others should wait until the latter part of the third or the beginning of the fourth year. However, most children develop a readiness for cursive writing sometime during the second or third year of school. Evidence of this readiness includes: (a) ability to write manuscript letters well from memory; (b) ability to read cursive writing from the chalkboard and from paper; and (c) a desire to learn cursive writing.

The pupils in the class should be able to read cursive writing and be familiar with the order of the alphabet before beginning cursive writing. Wall charts of the letters placed

prominently on the wall of the classroom are helpful.

Before the pupils start to write, it is desirable for the teacher to demonstrate on the chalkboard by writing simple words or sentences which contain the letters to be studied. In order to introduce the capital letters, as well as the lowercase letters, the teacher might start with the names of the children in the class. After the word has been written, the teacher should call attention to the basic strokes in each letter and the connective strokes that control the spacing between the letters within a word. Another way to stimulate interest in cursive writing is to have the pupils dictate sentences which the teacher should write on the board for the pupils to read and study.

Emphasis should be placed on those letters which the pupils will write most frequently. For example, most pupils will have little need to write capital X and Z. On the other hand, Dr. Frank N. Freeman in Teaching Handwriting states: "It has been found that errors in the formation of certain few letters account for a large proportion of all illegibilities of letters. These letters all occur with high frequency in the writing of English, and it is doubtless because of this that they are responsible for most of the errors. These letters are e, n, d, t, r, i, a, h, and b. Special attention, therefore, should be given to see that these letters are correctly formed."

Four to six weeks of daily instruction are usually sufficient for the transitional instructional period. The following more specific suggestions may be helpful with initial lessons in cursive writing.

- a. Start with one type of stroke such as used in the words cat, in, cup, or it and indicate steps from manuscript to cursive.
- b. Begin with words containing letters that are practically alike in both alphabets except for beginning and ending strokes. Some such lowercase letters: a, c, d, g, h, i, l, m, n, o, p, q, t, u, and y. Some such capital letters: B, C, K, L, O, P, R, and U.
- c. Give attention to letters that do not follow regular strokes, as s and r; also b, e, f, k, and z which do not connect readily may require attention.
- d. Devote some time to crossing t's and dotting i's and j's.
- e. Use the chalkboard for much initial work. (For cursive writing on the board, pupils write directly in front of the right shoulder--in front of the left shoulder if left-handed.)
- f. Use pupil spelling words for practice in handwriting class giving much greater proportion of time to lowercase letters (98% of the letters that pupils write will be lowercase letters).

During this time the children may continue to use manuscript for some work, especially that done without close supervision by the teacher. Skill in manuscript should also be maintained throughout the elementary school years. The continued use of manuscript even through adulthood is becoming more and more prevalent.

An important factor for the teacher to keep in mind is that there are considerable differences in the writing abilities of the pupils in any class. One child may not be forming his letters correctly. Another may not be maintaining uniform slant. Still another may not have proper alignment and may have difficulty in keeping his letters just touching the base line. That is why the old-fashioned method of using the mechanical approach, with all the pupils studying the same "push and pull" exercise is not satisfactory. Pupils should be encouraged to analyze their own handwriting and practice those skills that are needed.

A teacher must see her handwriting instruction not so much in terms of a class group as in terms of the individual pupil. Pupils differ widely in abilities and needs. They require individual attention. Therefore, the teacher should attempt to discover the defects in the writing, and the causes for such defects, particularly of those below standard. This can be done in several ways:

1. By critical examination of the pupil's paper. (The pupil too, should be encouraged to make a self-analysis of all his written work.)
  - a. In what respect is the writing poor?
  - b. Are the heights and proportions of the letters correct?
  - c. Is the slant regular and are the letters parallel?
  - d. Is the spacing between letters and between words correct?
2. By watching the individual pupil write.
  - a. Is he sitting properly and relaxed?
  - b. Is he holding his pencil or pen too close to the point?
  - c. Is his paper in the wrong position on the desk?
  - d. Is he drawing the letters or is he using a rhythmic movement?
3. By having the pupils keep an individual record, checking each month.

After the errors have been detected remedial instruction is needed with the definite aim of trying to correct the situation. Determine the type of exercise that is needed. Demonstrate to the pupil the correct way to do it. Then the child, under supervision, should perform the exercise to secure correct initial performance.

Short and frequent periods of practice are more effective than long periods of drill. Appoint a specific time for practice and insist upon practice during this period. Promote self-criticism. Do not accept unsatisfactory writing in any form of school work.

If a pupil has poor and illegible handwriting and does not show any significant improvement from instruction, the teacher should look for emotional disturbances. Children show signs of emotional disturbances when they bite their nails, twitch muscles, stutter, or when they are easily upset, shy, over aggressive, or extremely self-centered. It is important to help the nervous child relax sufficiently to write without strain and tension.

#### FUNDAMENTALS OF CURSIVE WRITING

1. The letters in a word are slanted.
2. The letters of a word are joined, so that the pencil is not lifted from the paper until the end of the word.
3. The t's and x's are crossed and the i's and j's dotted after the word has been completed.
4. Spacing between the letters of a word are controlled by the end stroke of one letter and the beginning stroke of the next. Since the end strokes are so important in developing proper spacing within the words, the pupils should always complete every letter with the proper ending.

I have made cards for each of the cursive letters, capital and lowercase. In all there are fifty-three cards (I made cards for the capital letter Q). I will use these when teaching each of the cursive letters. The children can use these cards to help them work individually in forming their letters correctly.

Enclosed are copies of the cards.

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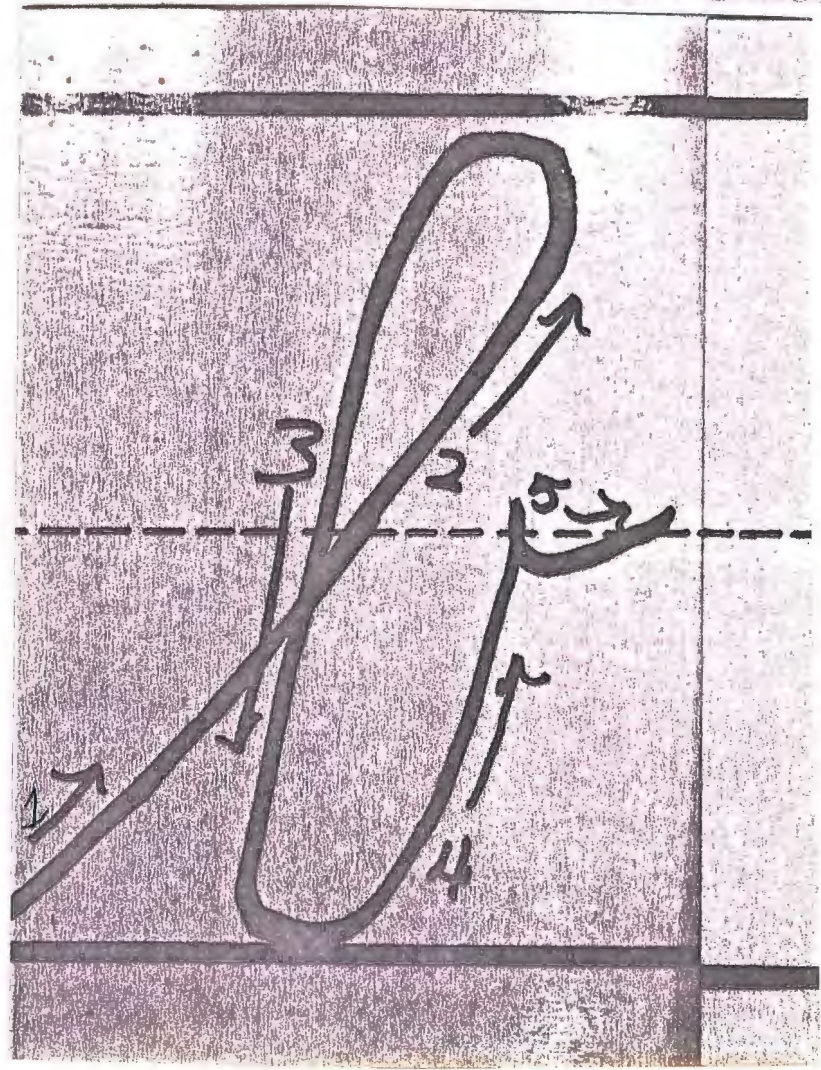
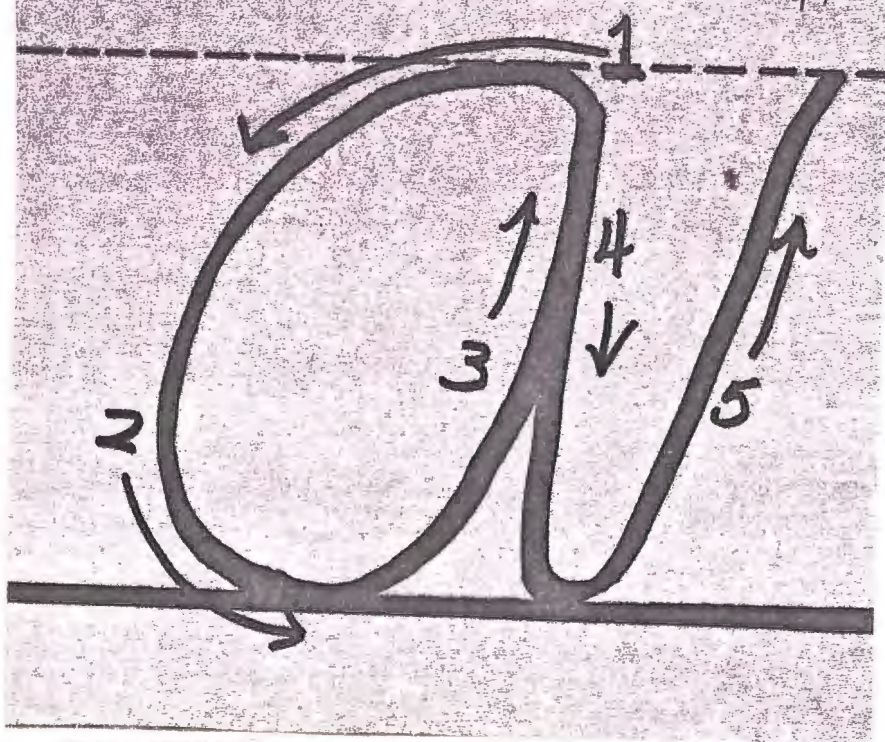
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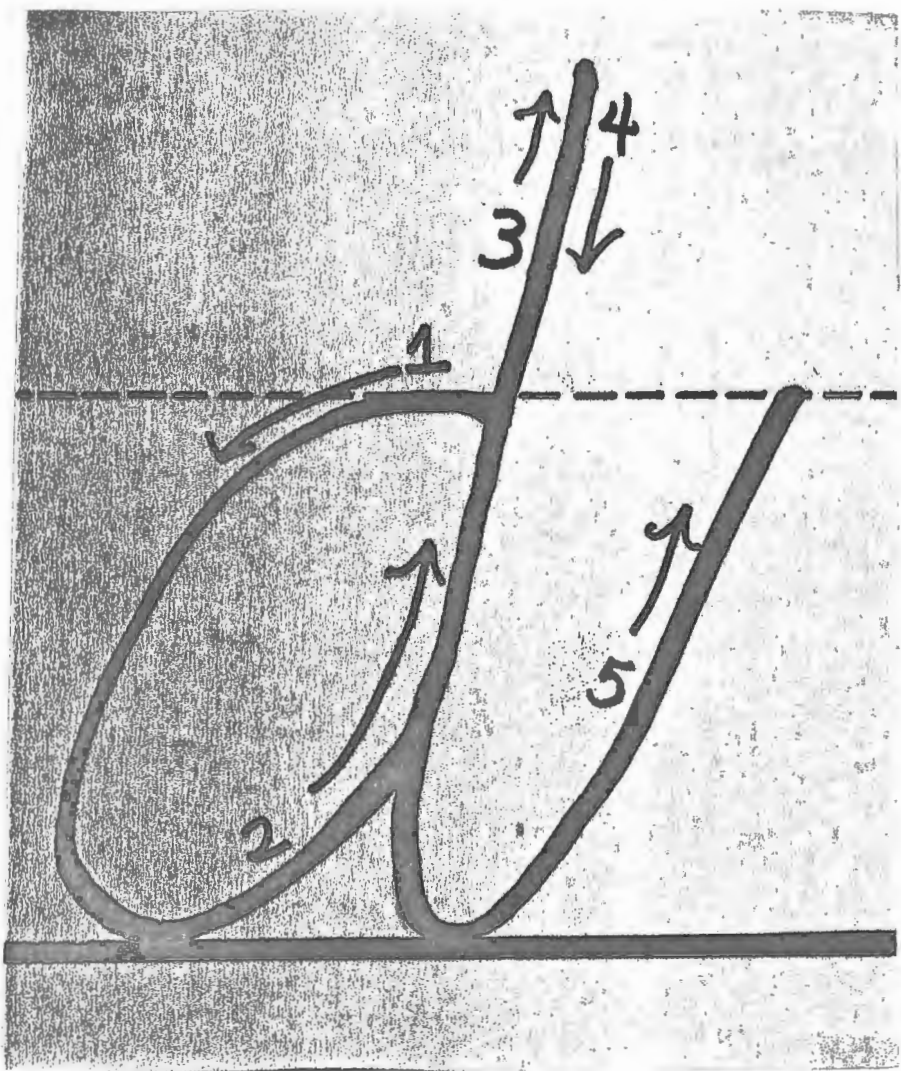
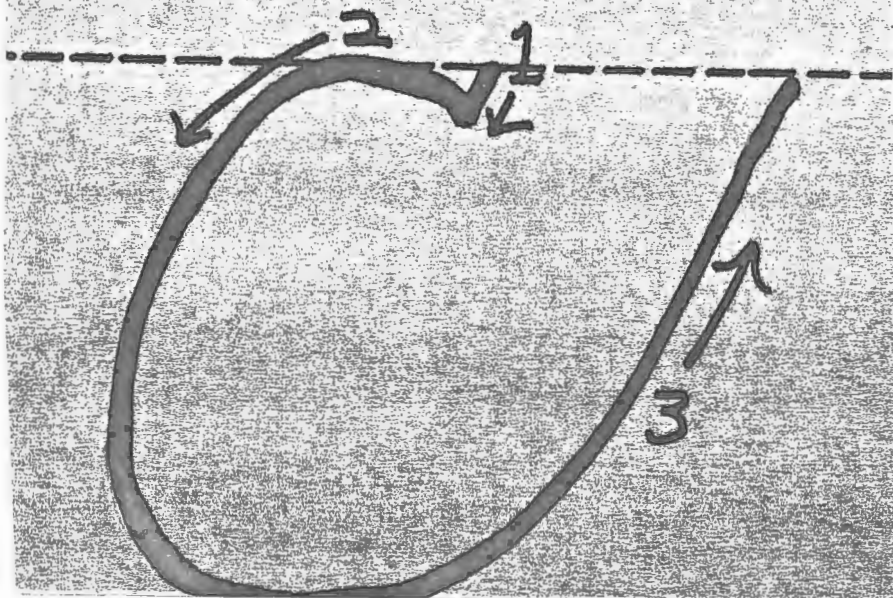
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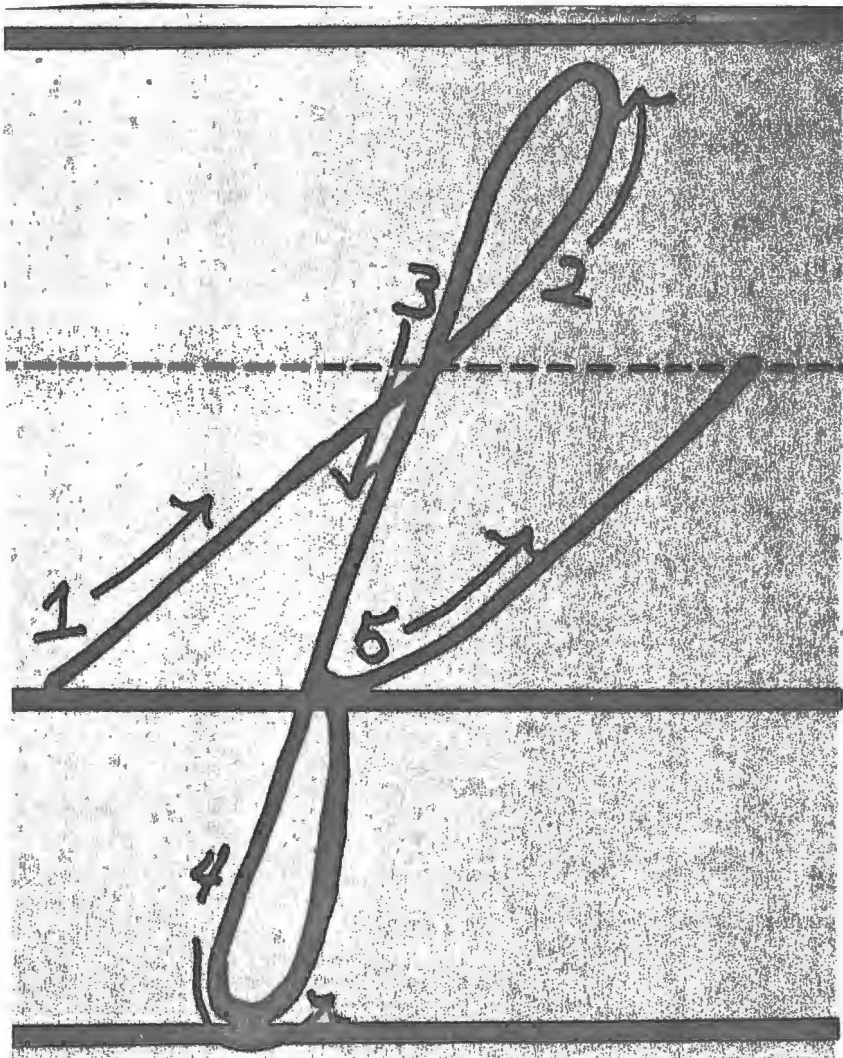
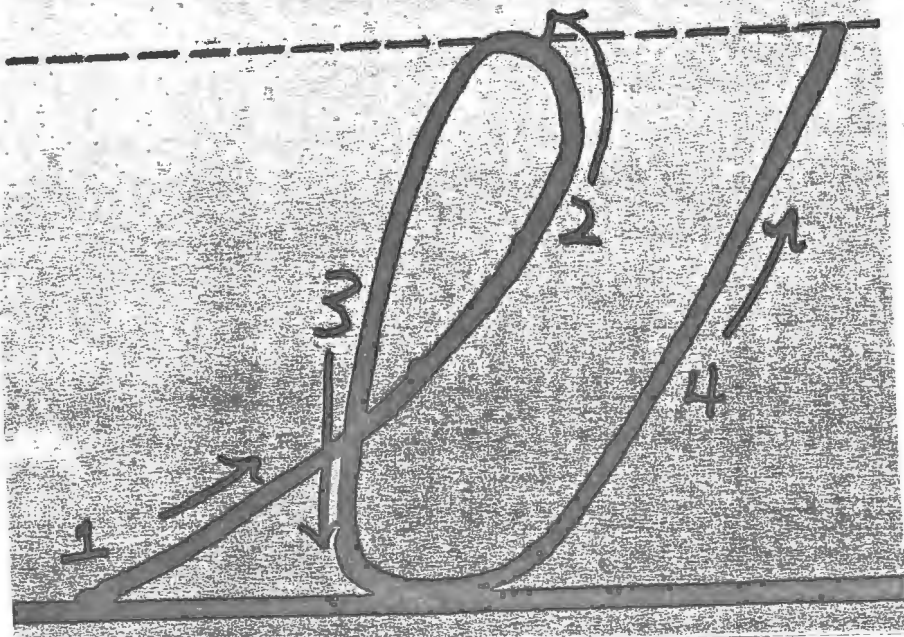


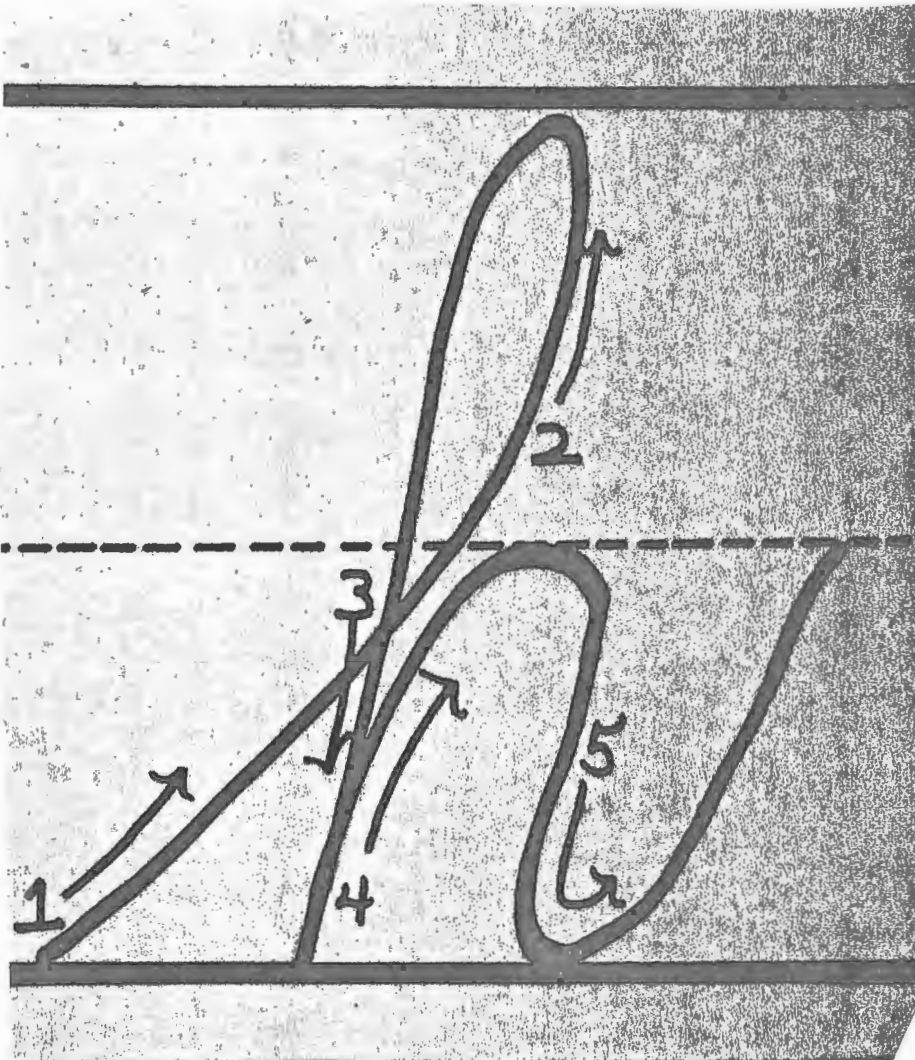
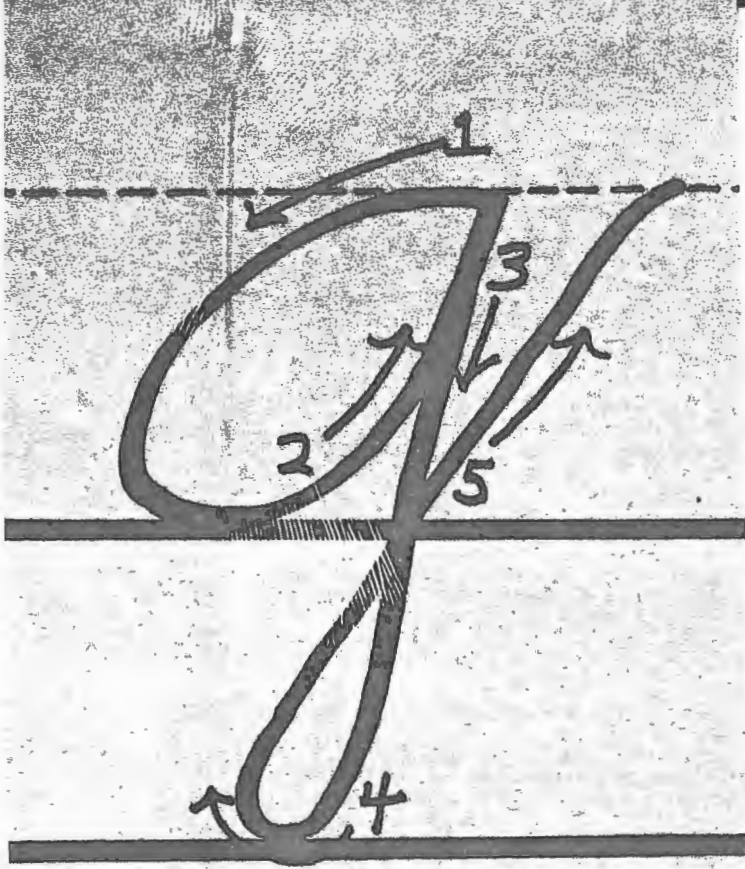
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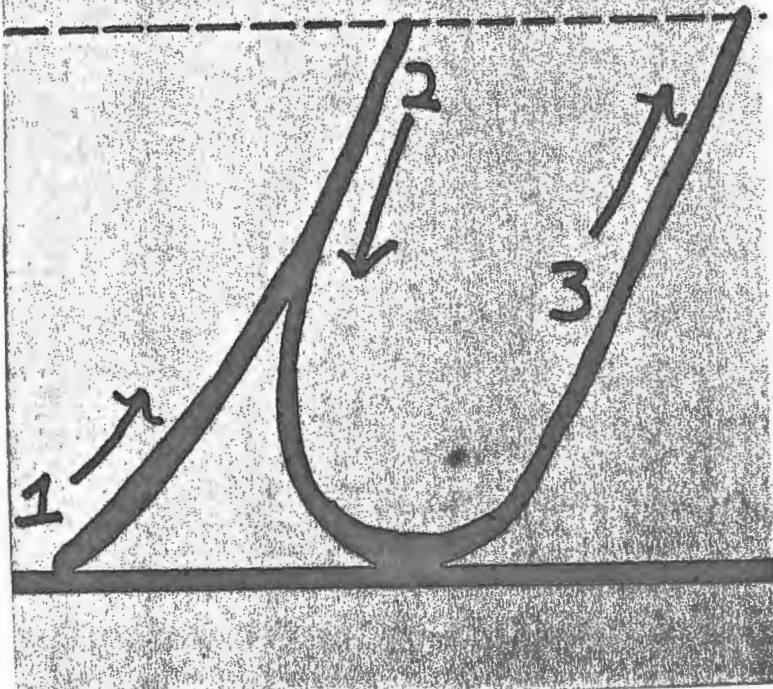




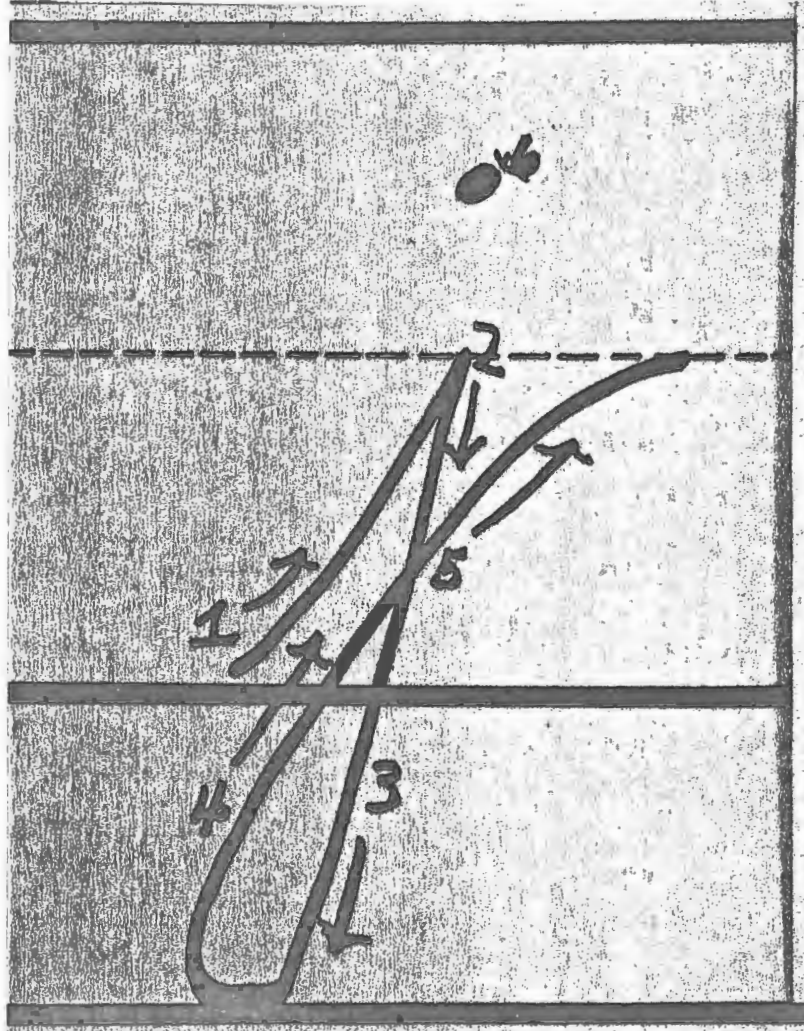


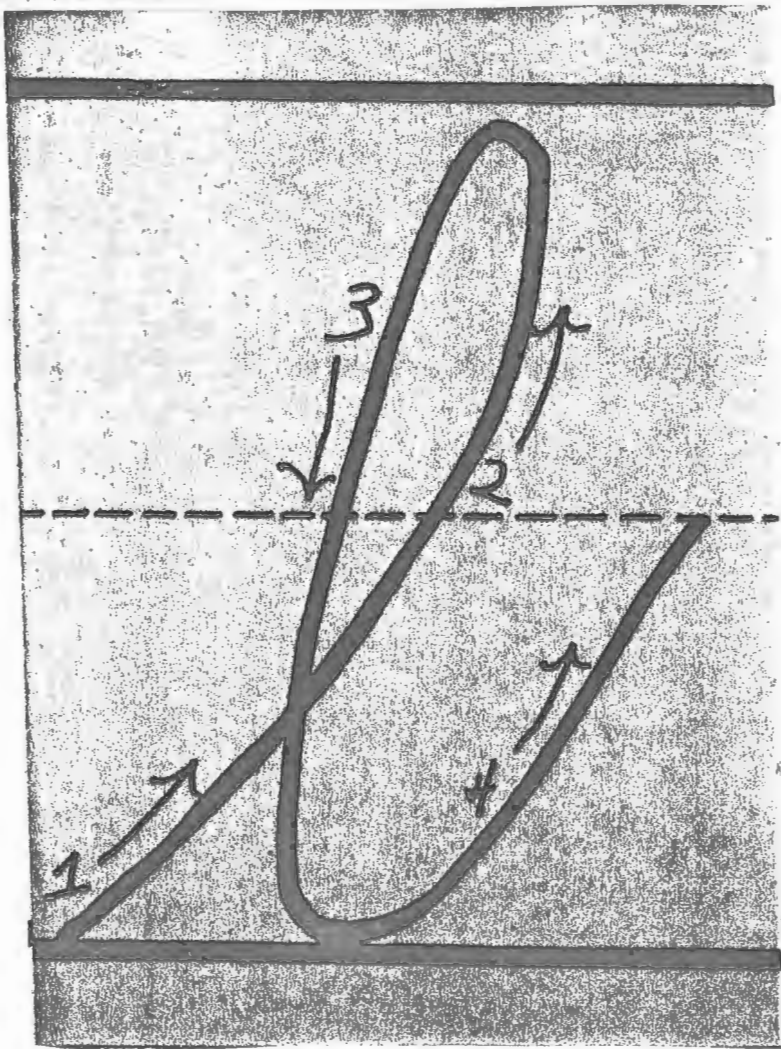
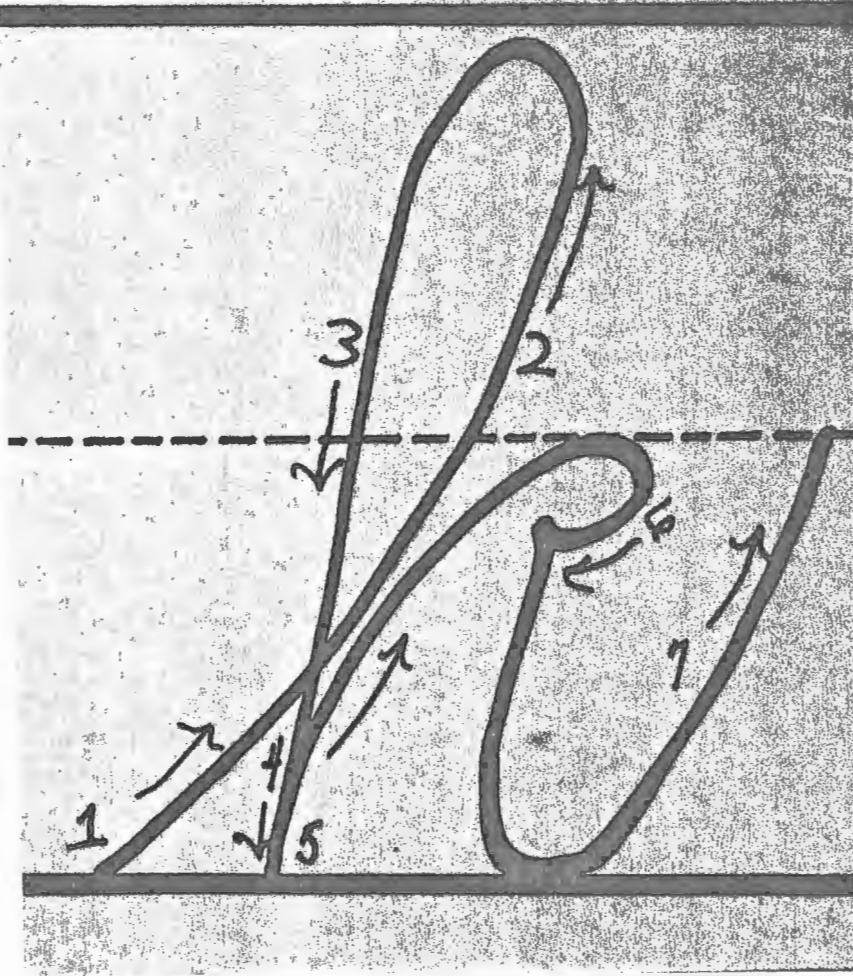


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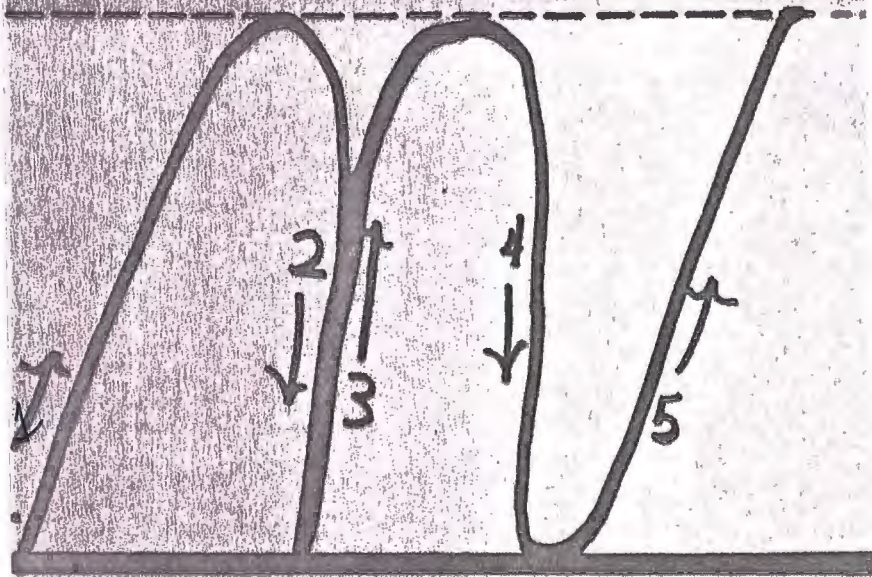
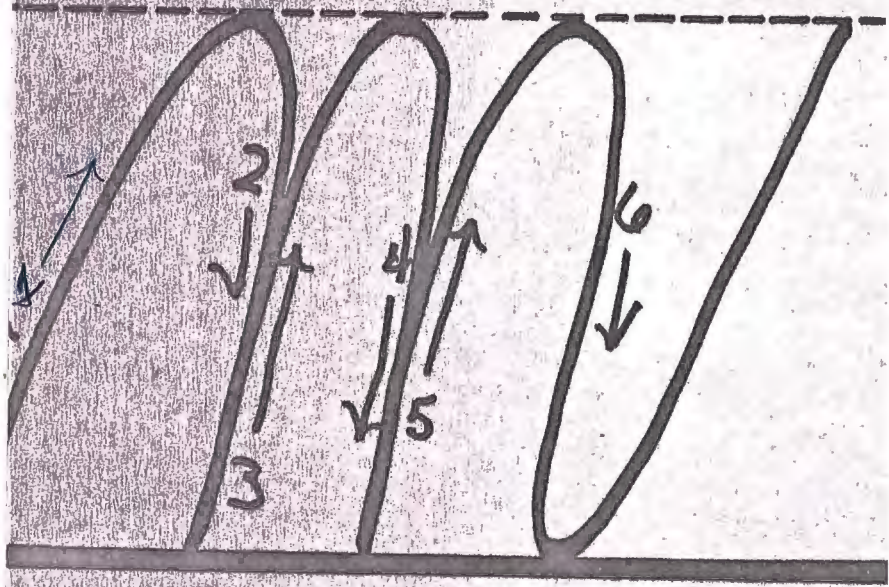


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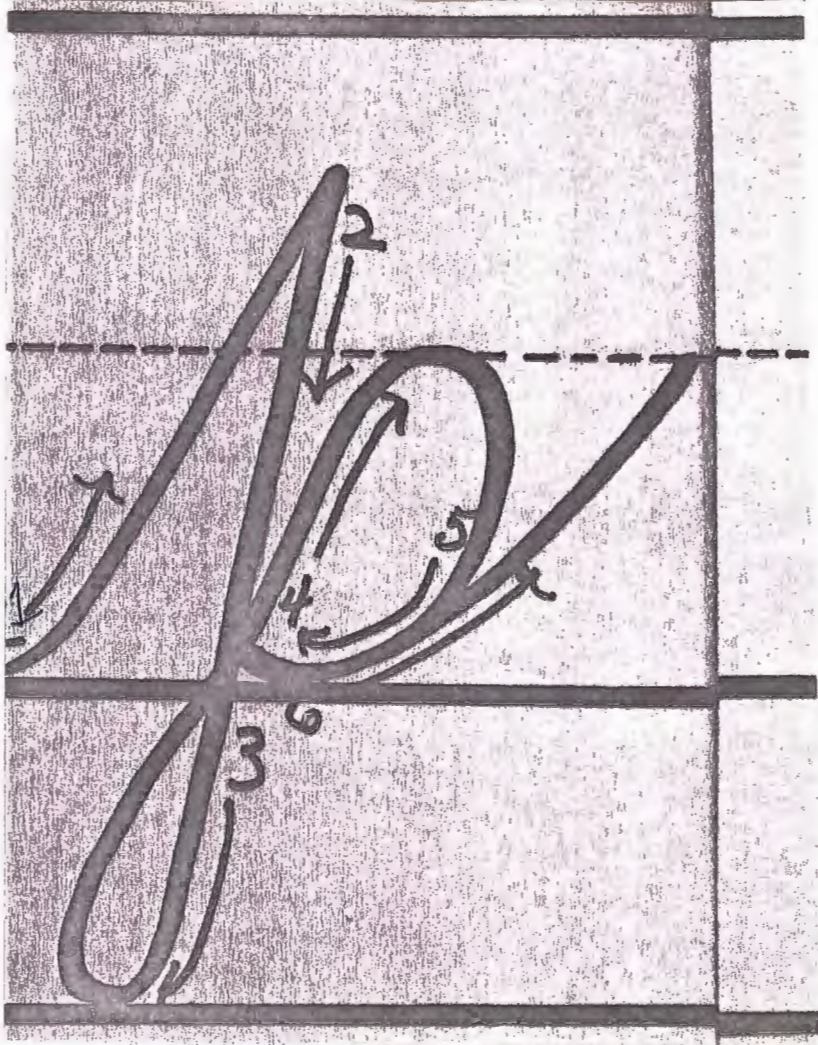
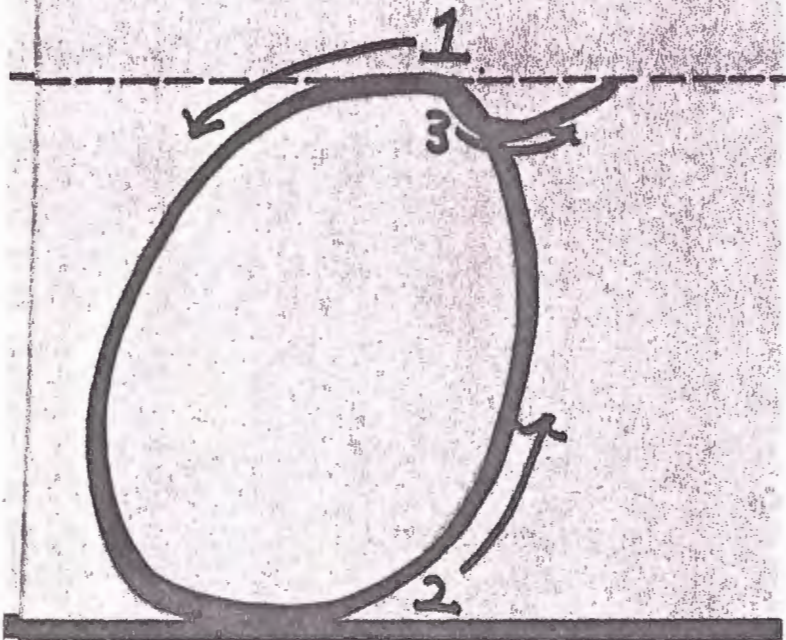




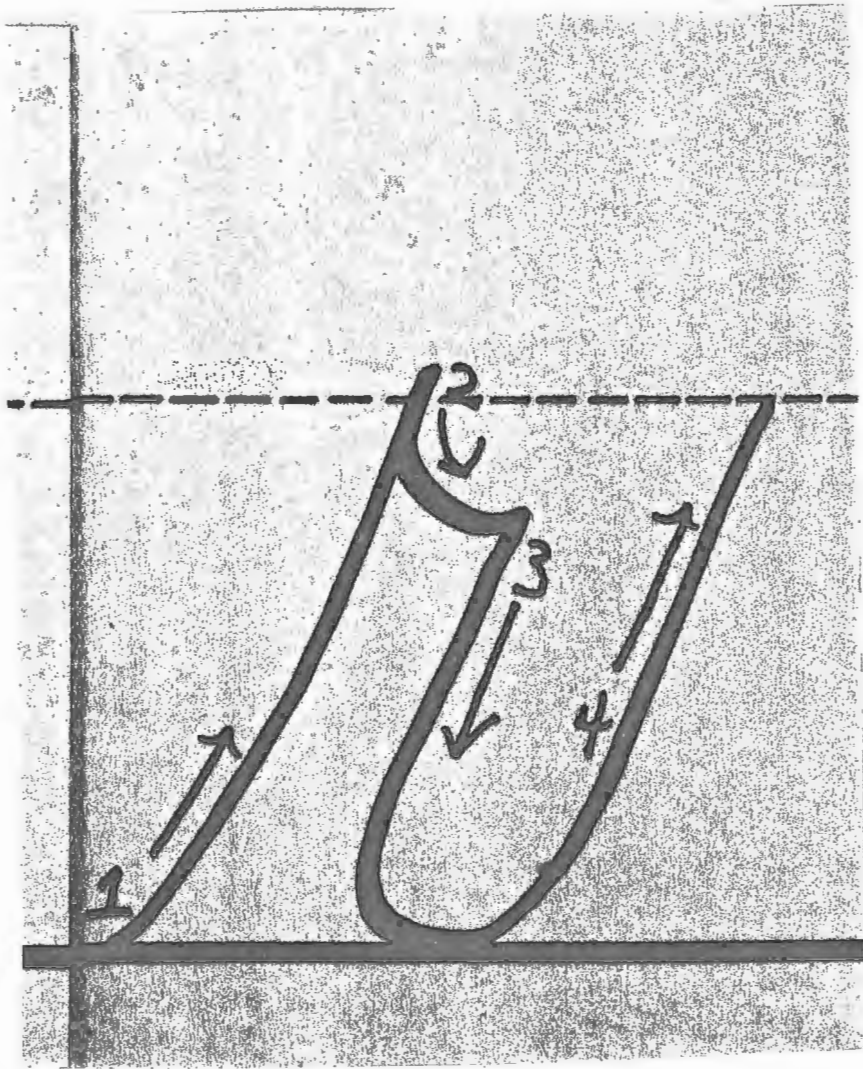
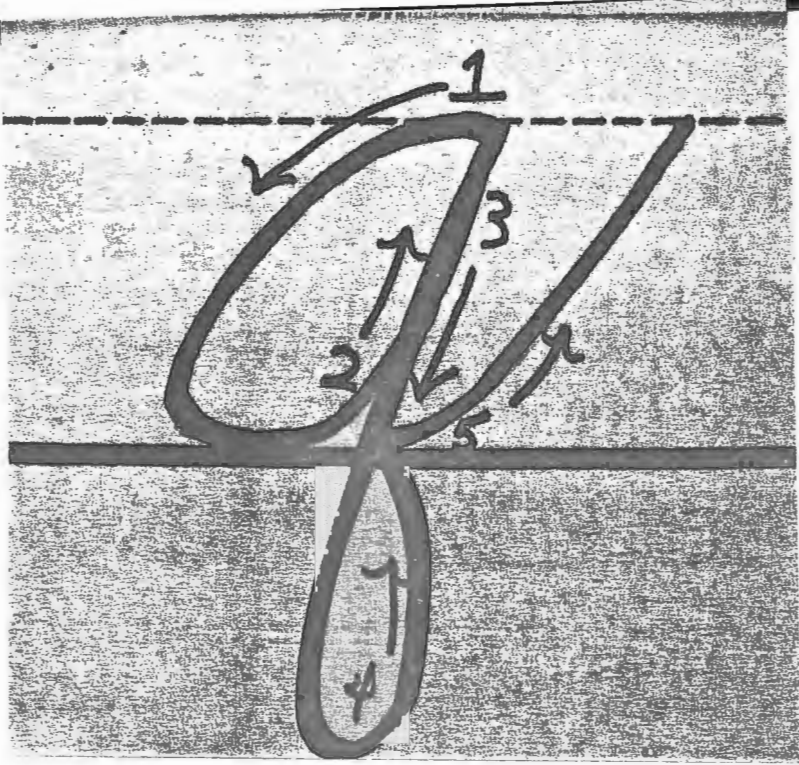


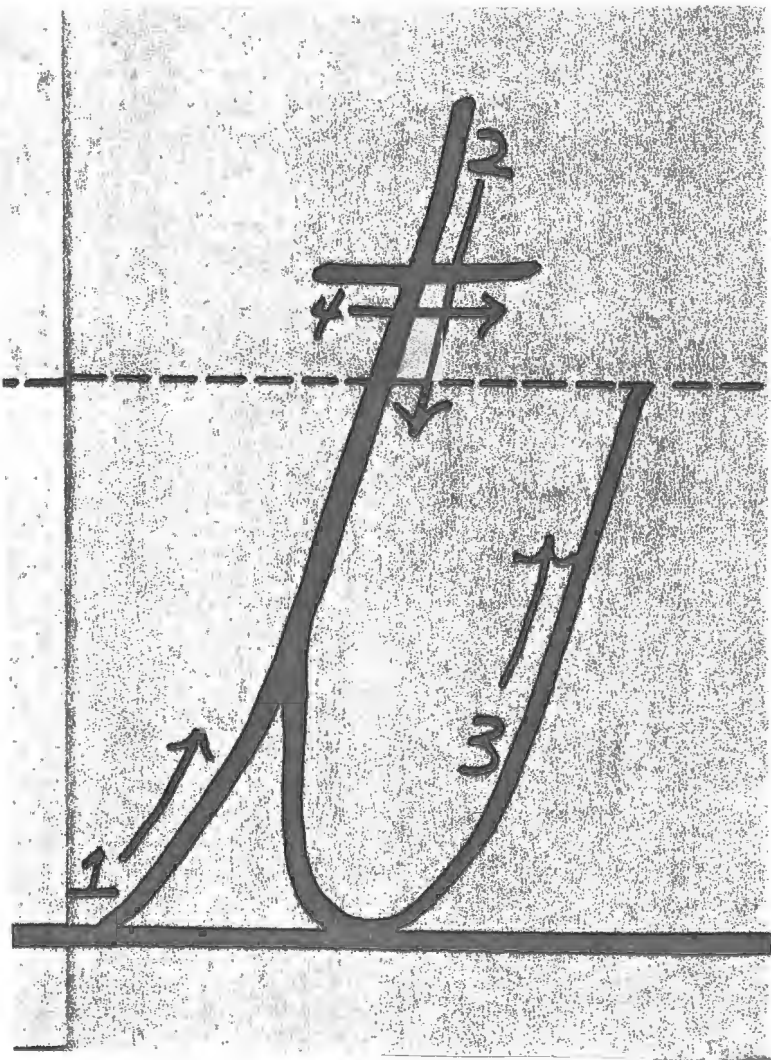
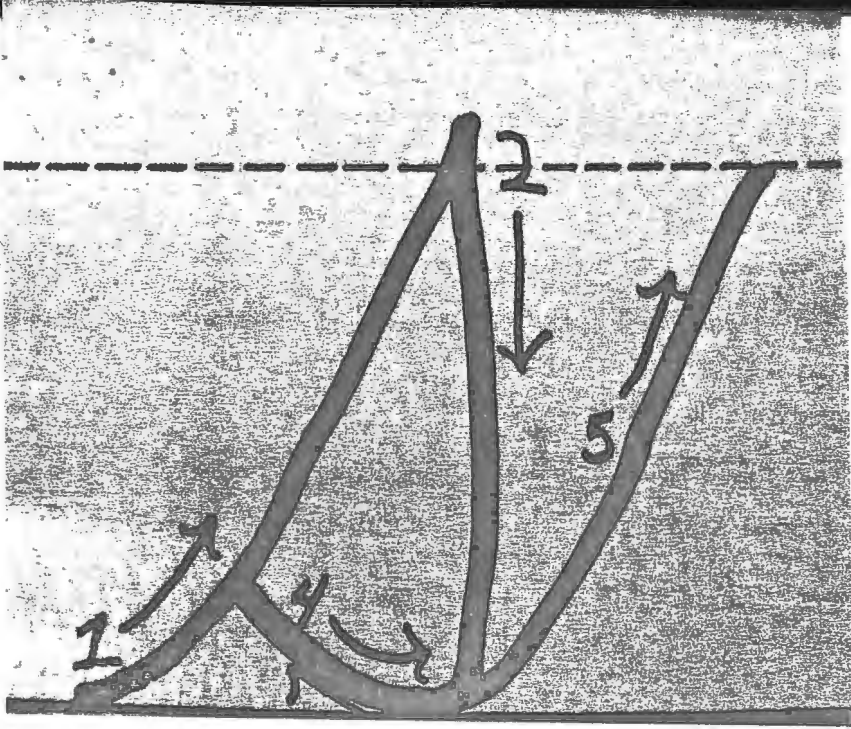


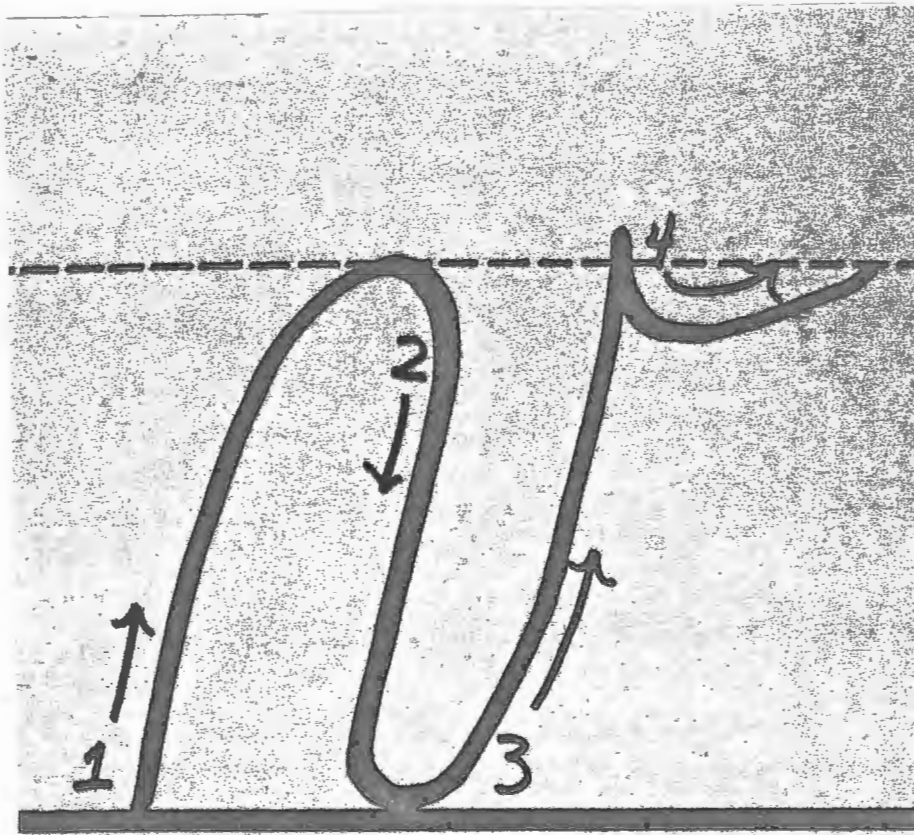
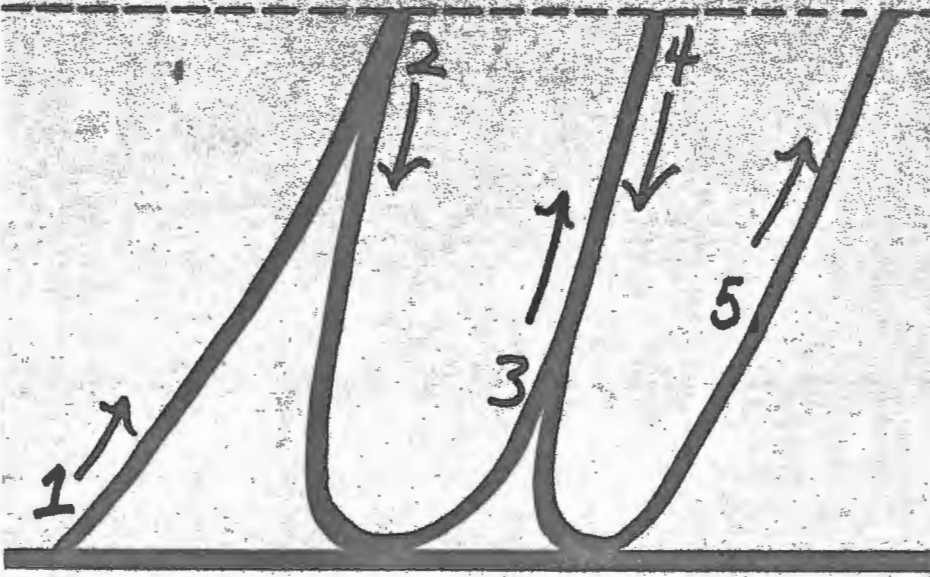




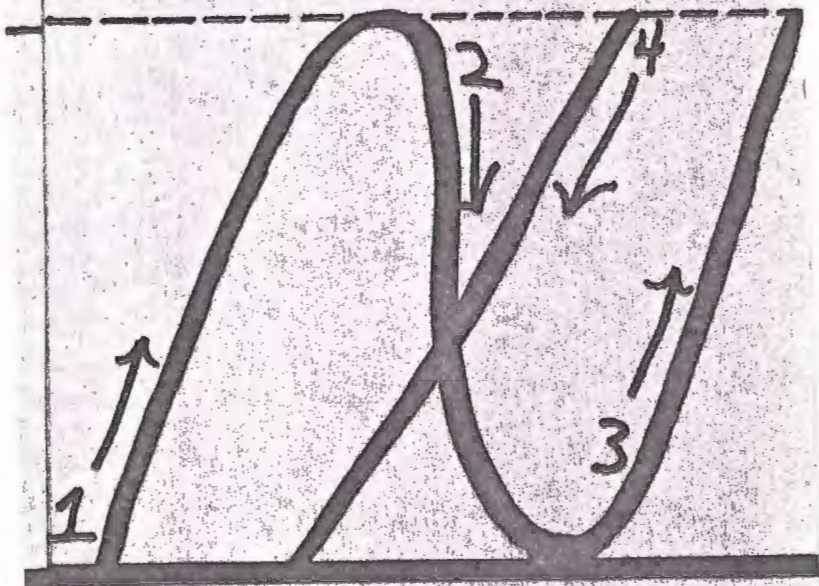
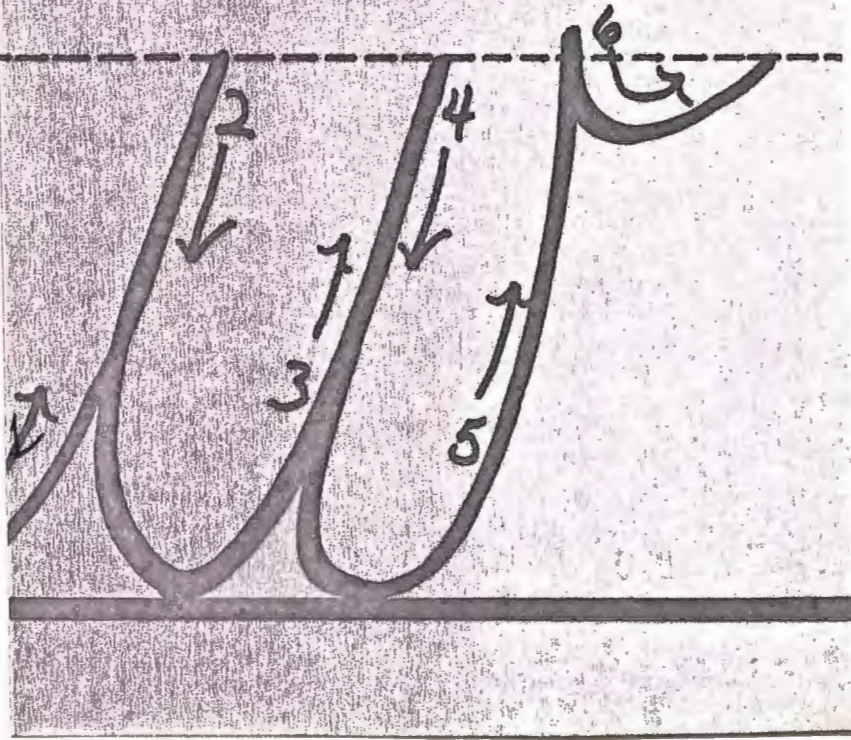


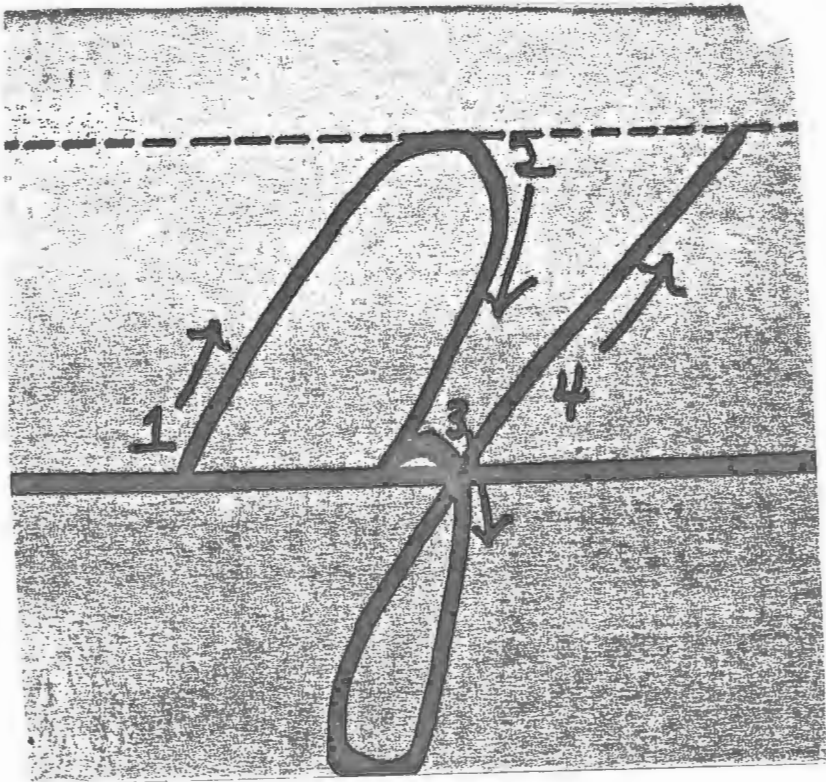
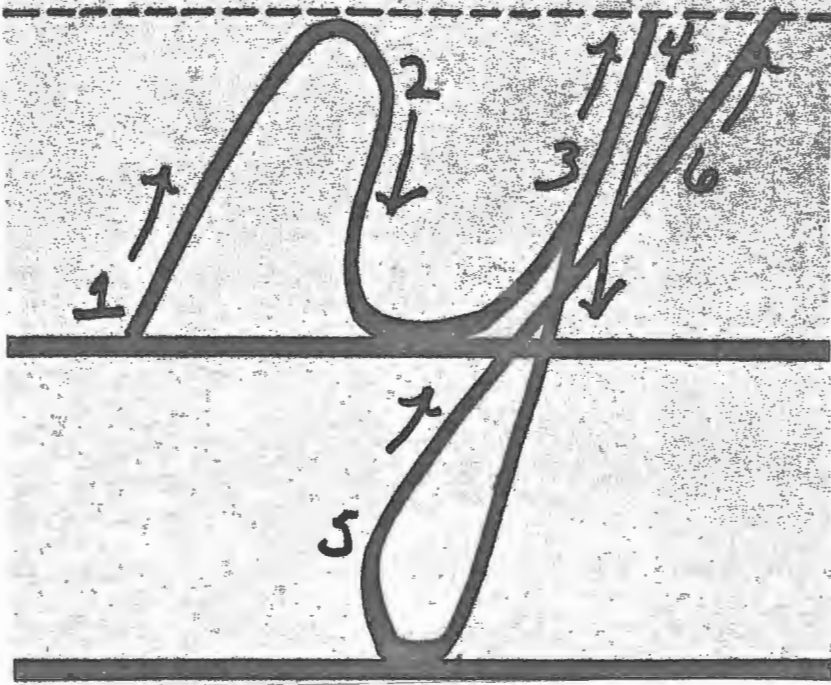














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