

Train driver aptitude tests

A free prep guide

Paper notes for the tasks UK operators use most: Group Bourdon, vigilance, reaction, and visual search. Print the sheet. Learn the rule. Then sit the same work timed on a computer.

This is independent practice from RailFocus. It is not an official operator paper, and it is not affiliated with train operators or RSSB. A practice mark is not a pass.

How to use this

- Print the 13 Group Bourdon sheets. Each has its own target. Mark every cluster that matches that sheet.
- Check the answer keys only after you finish a sheet.
- Sit a timed version on a computer before assessment day. Paper teaches the look. The clock is the rest of the skill.

Timed practice: www.railfocus.co.uk

What the day is

You sit timed tests at a computer. Applicants usually say aptitude tests. Operators often say psychometric tests. The work is the same: attention, concentration, search, reaction, memory, and judgement. It is not a quiz about trains.

You will not see this PDF on the day. Each operator writes their own battery, timings, instructions, and scoring. Use this to learn the type of task so the wrapper is not new.

The tests that spend attempts

- Group Bourdon. Dense pages of small dot clusters. Mark every group that matches the count for that sheet. Near-misses are the trap.
- Vigilance. A long, dull watch. Respond only to the rare real target. Misses and false clicks both count.
- Reaction. Go on green. Hold on red. Fast is useless on a stop.
- Visual search. A target shape and colour in a busy grid. Empty grids exist. Clicking because the clock is loud is a fail mode.
- Judgement. A short work scene. Pick a safe next step. The dramatic answer is often worse than stop, protect, tell someone.

Group Bourdon

A page of dot clusters. Each sheet has its own target, often 3, 4, 5, or 6. You mark every matching group, not the near-misses, as many as you can and as cleanly as you can, in a short time.

It looks like a children's puzzle. Then the clock starts. Operators care because the job is checking the same kinds of thing, again, without drifting: a dense field, a simple rule, no story to keep you awake.

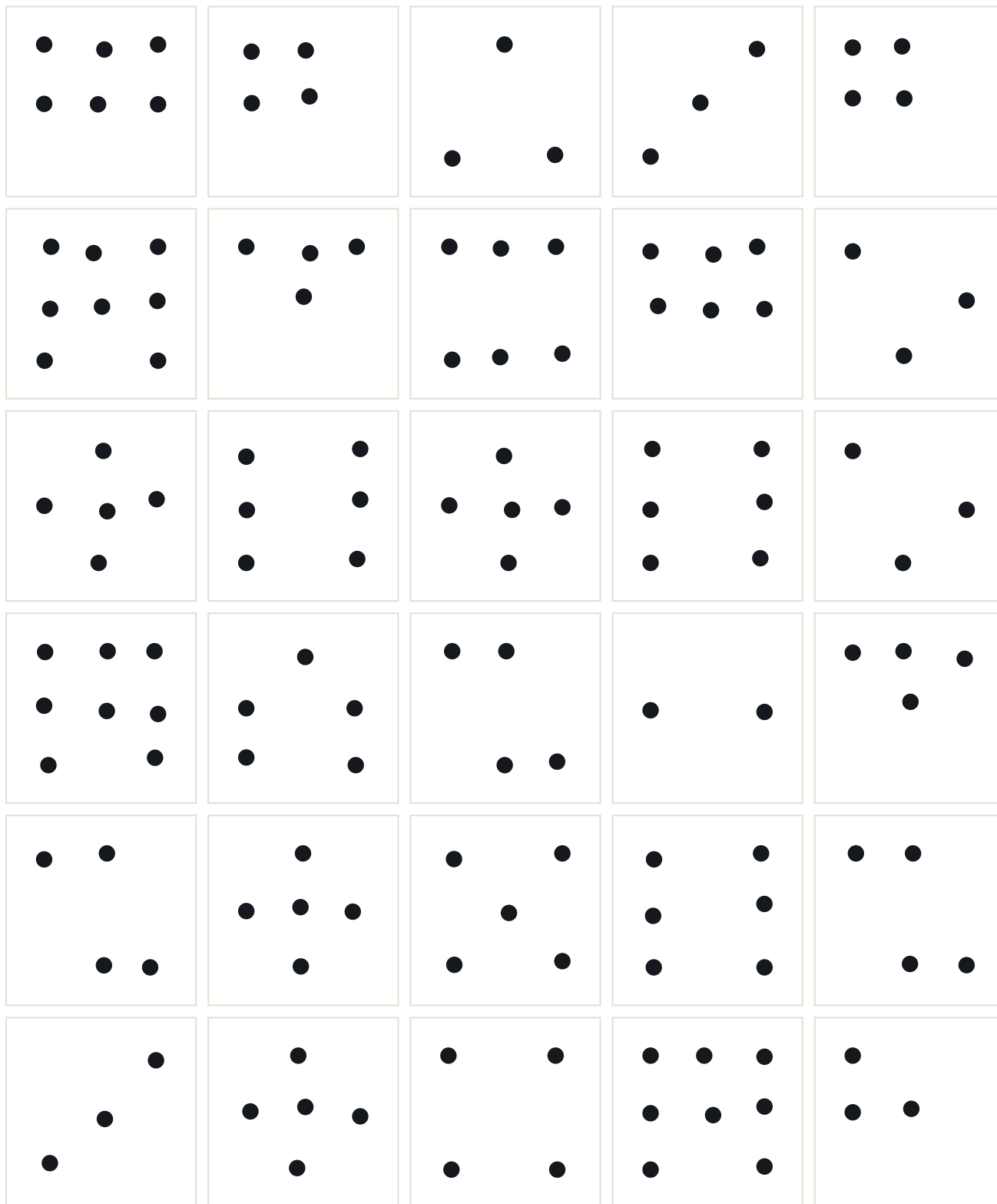
How to mark a sheet

- Read the target for that sheet before you touch a cluster.
- Work a scan path: left to right, top to bottom. Do not dart about hunting easy hits.
- A cluster with one extra dot, or one missing, is the usual trap. Count, then mark.
- Rushing invents matches. Perfection finishes a third of the page. The skill is a sustainable scan.

Paper is slower than the computer version. Use the next pages to learn the look. Then sit 60 seconds timed in the browser, no account needed.

Printable Group Bourdon · Sheet 1 of 13

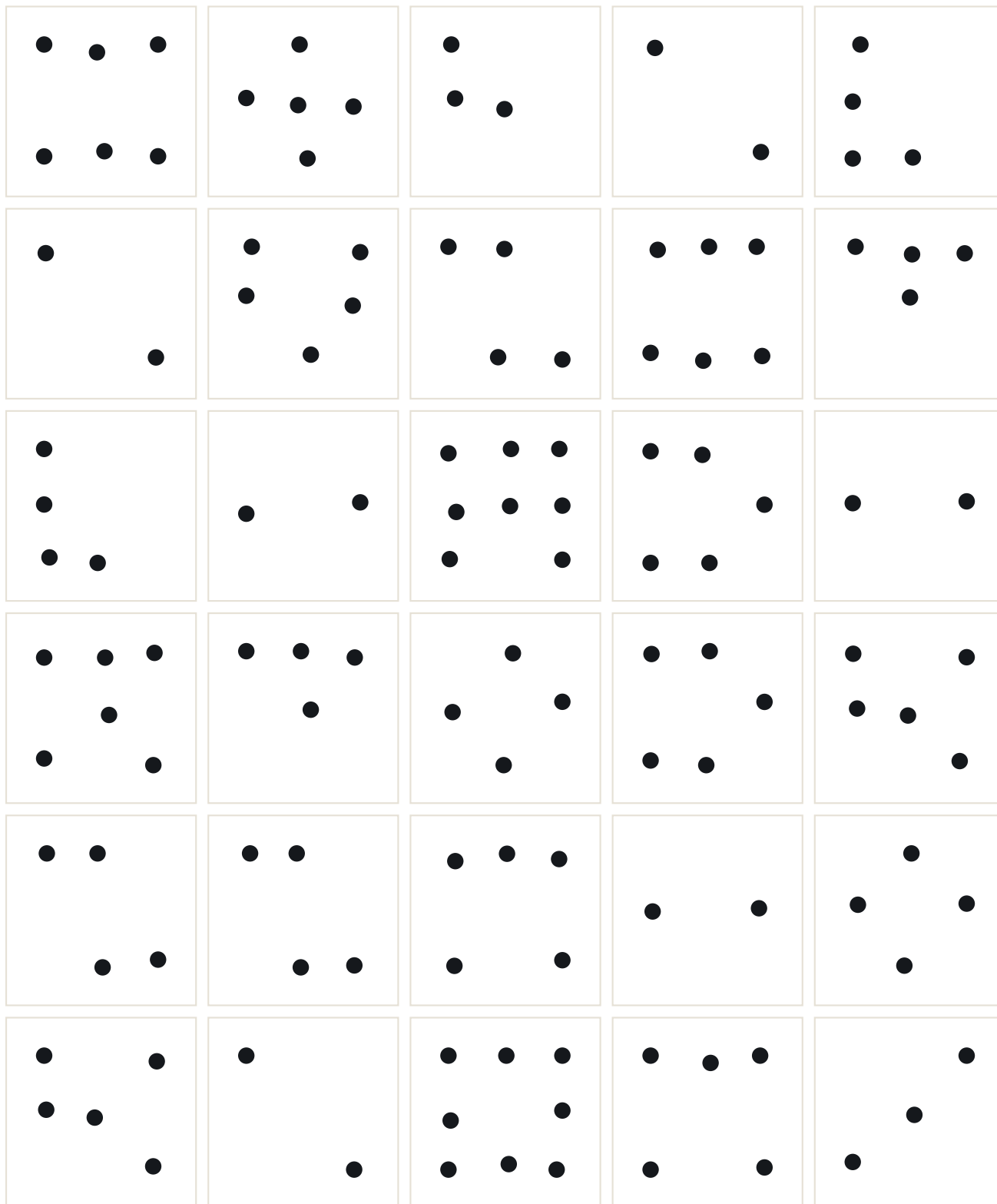
Target for this sheet: 4 dots. Mark every cluster that has exactly 4. Leave the rest. Time yourself if you want. Check the keys after the last sheet, only when you stop.



Work left to right, top to bottom. Do not go back and hunt. Near-miss counts are the trap.

Printable Group Bourdon · Sheet 2 of 13

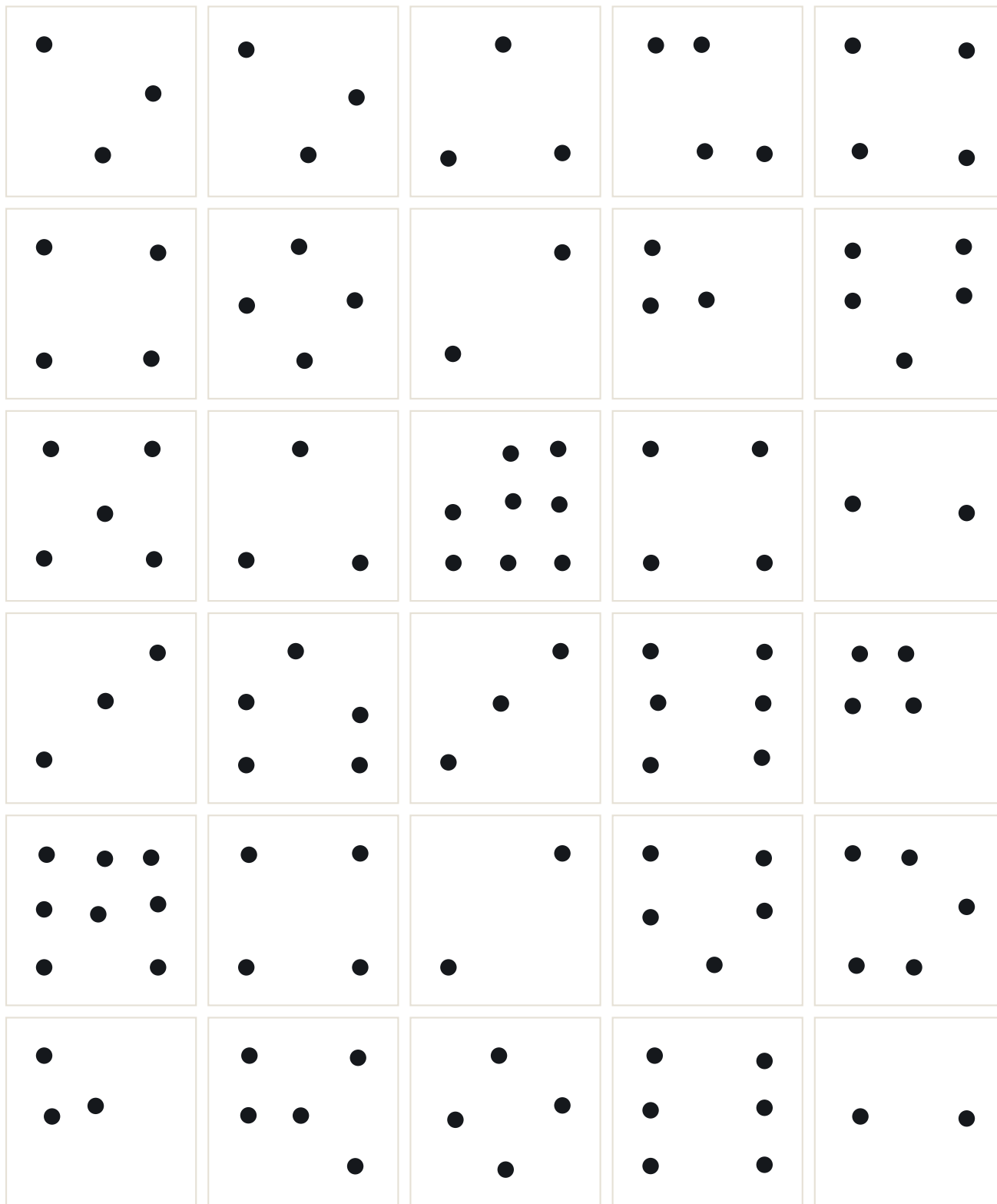
Target for this sheet: 5 dots. Mark every cluster that has exactly 5. Leave the rest. Time yourself if you want. Check the keys after the last sheet, only when you stop.



Work left to right, top to bottom. Do not go back and hunt. Near-miss counts are the trap.

Printable Group Bourdon · Sheet 3 of 13

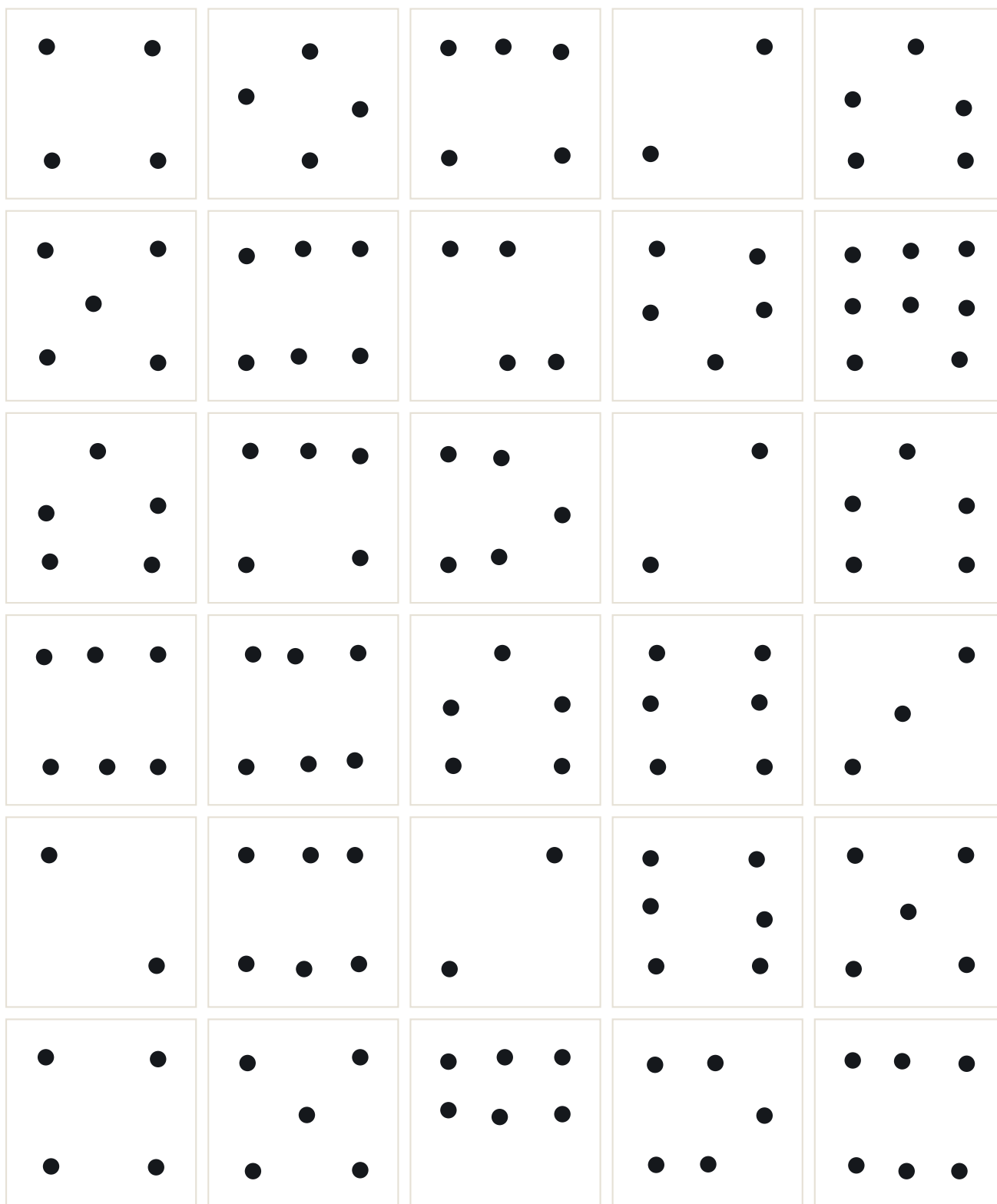
Target for this sheet: 3 dots. Mark every cluster that has exactly 3. Leave the rest. Time yourself if you want. Check the keys after the last sheet, only when you stop.



Work left to right, top to bottom. Do not go back and hunt. Near-miss counts are the trap.

Printable Group Bourdon · Sheet 4 of 13

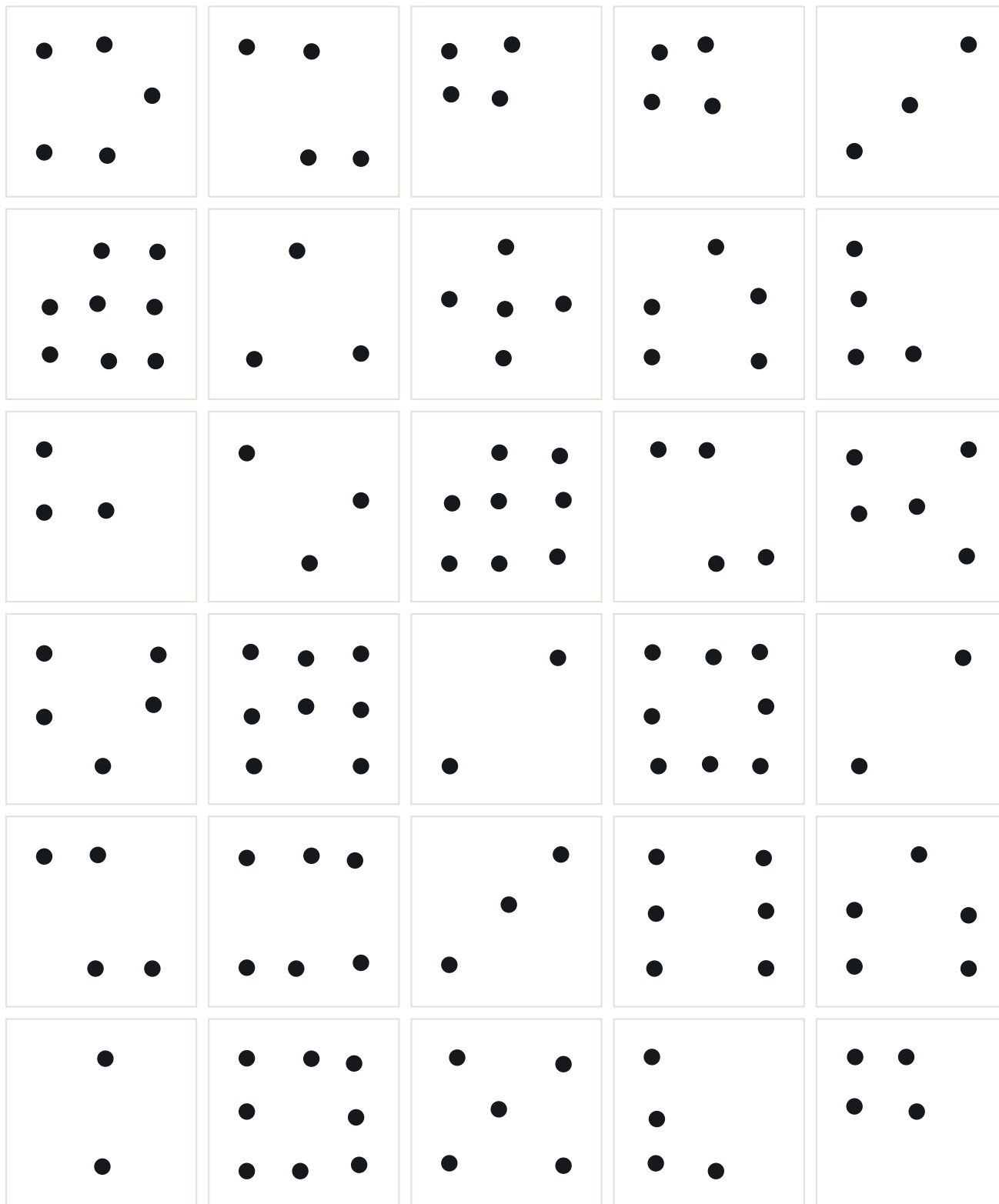
Target for this sheet: 6 dots. Mark every cluster that has exactly 6. Leave the rest. Time yourself if you want. Check the keys after the last sheet, only when you stop.



Work left to right, top to bottom. Do not go back and hunt. Near-miss counts are the trap.

Printable Group Bourdon · Sheet 5 of 13

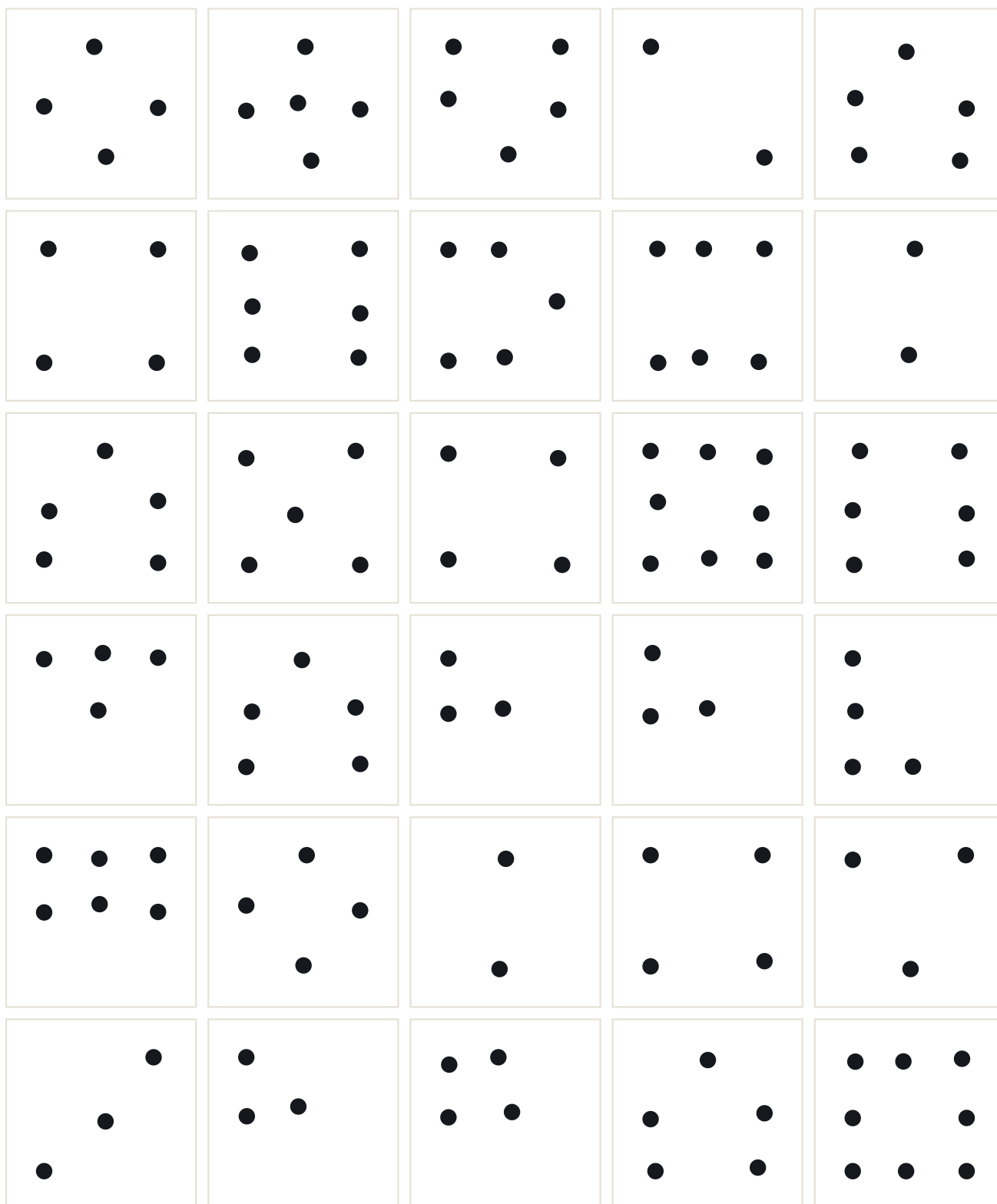
Target for this sheet: 4 dots. Mark every cluster that has exactly 4. Leave the rest. Time yourself if you want. Check the keys after the last sheet, only when you stop.



Work left to right, top to bottom. Do not go back and hunt. Near-miss counts are the trap.

Printable Group Bourdon · Sheet 6 of 13

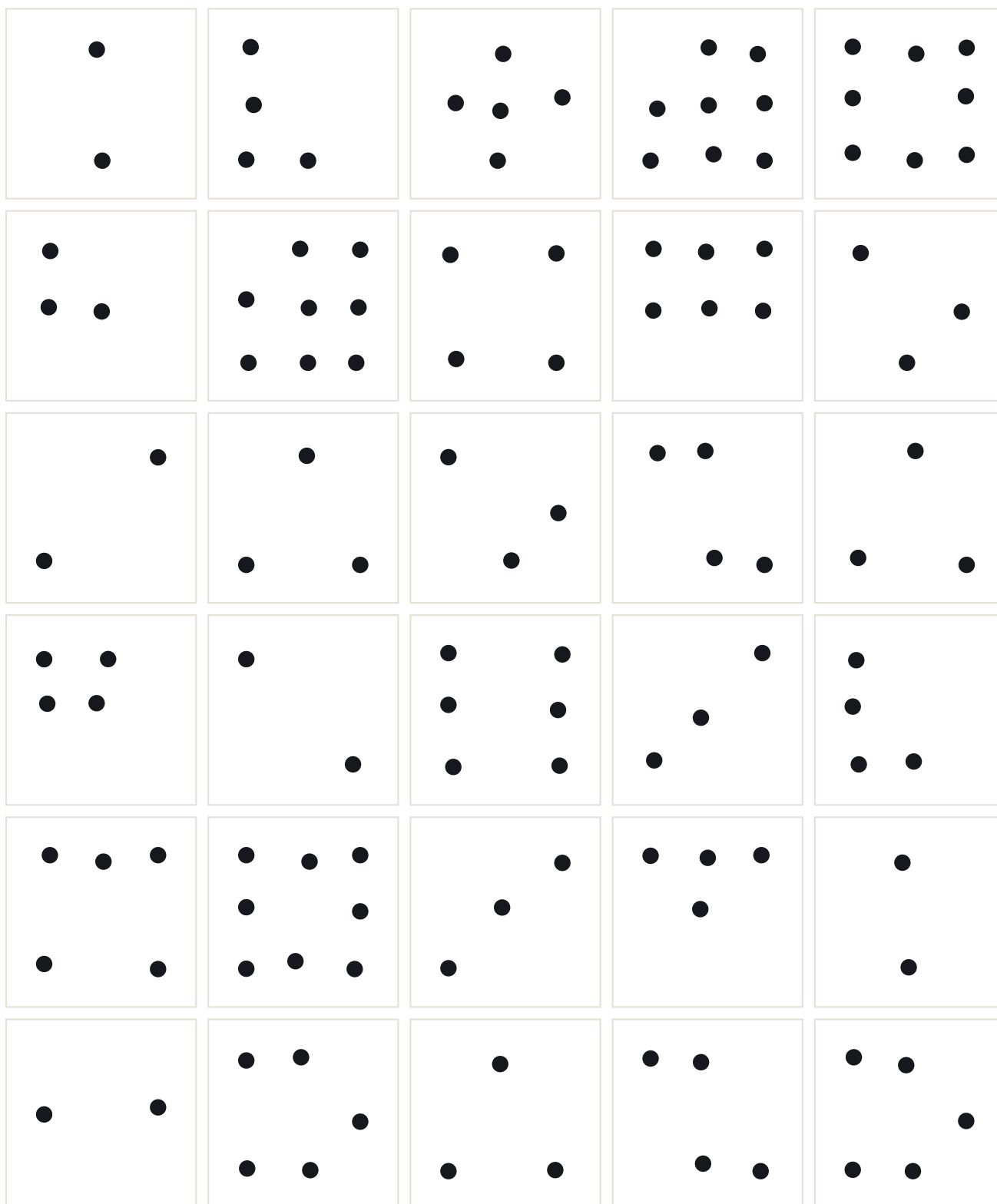
Target for this sheet: 5 dots. Mark every cluster that has exactly 5. Leave the rest. Time yourself if you want. Check the keys after the last sheet, only when you stop.



Work left to right, top to bottom. Do not go back and hunt. Near-miss counts are the trap.

Printable Group Bourdon · Sheet 7 of 13

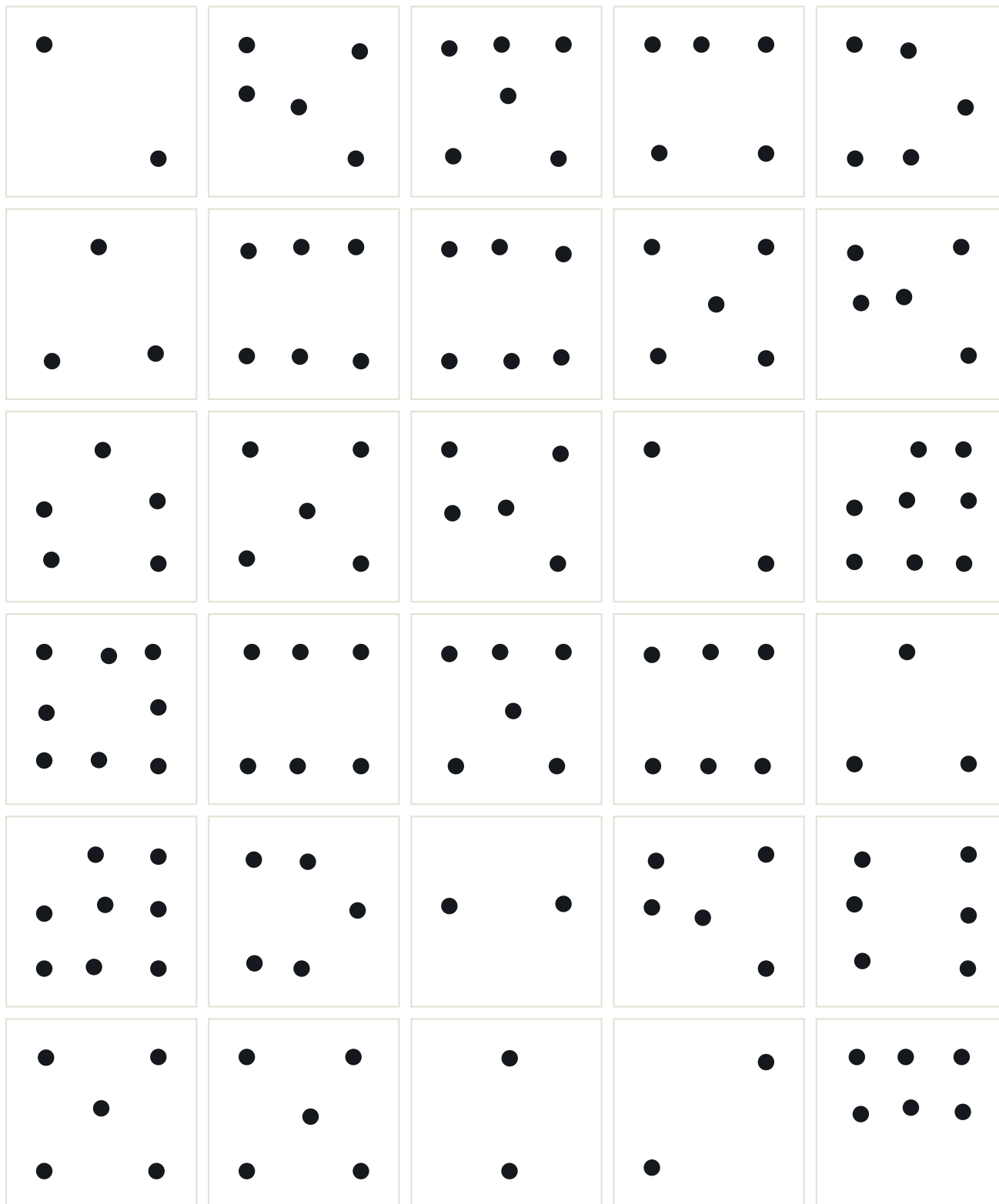
Target for this sheet: 3 dots. Mark every cluster that has exactly 3. Leave the rest. Time yourself if you want. Check the keys after the last sheet, only when you stop.



Work left to right, top to bottom. Do not go back and hunt. Near-miss counts are the trap.

Printable Group Bourdon · Sheet 8 of 13

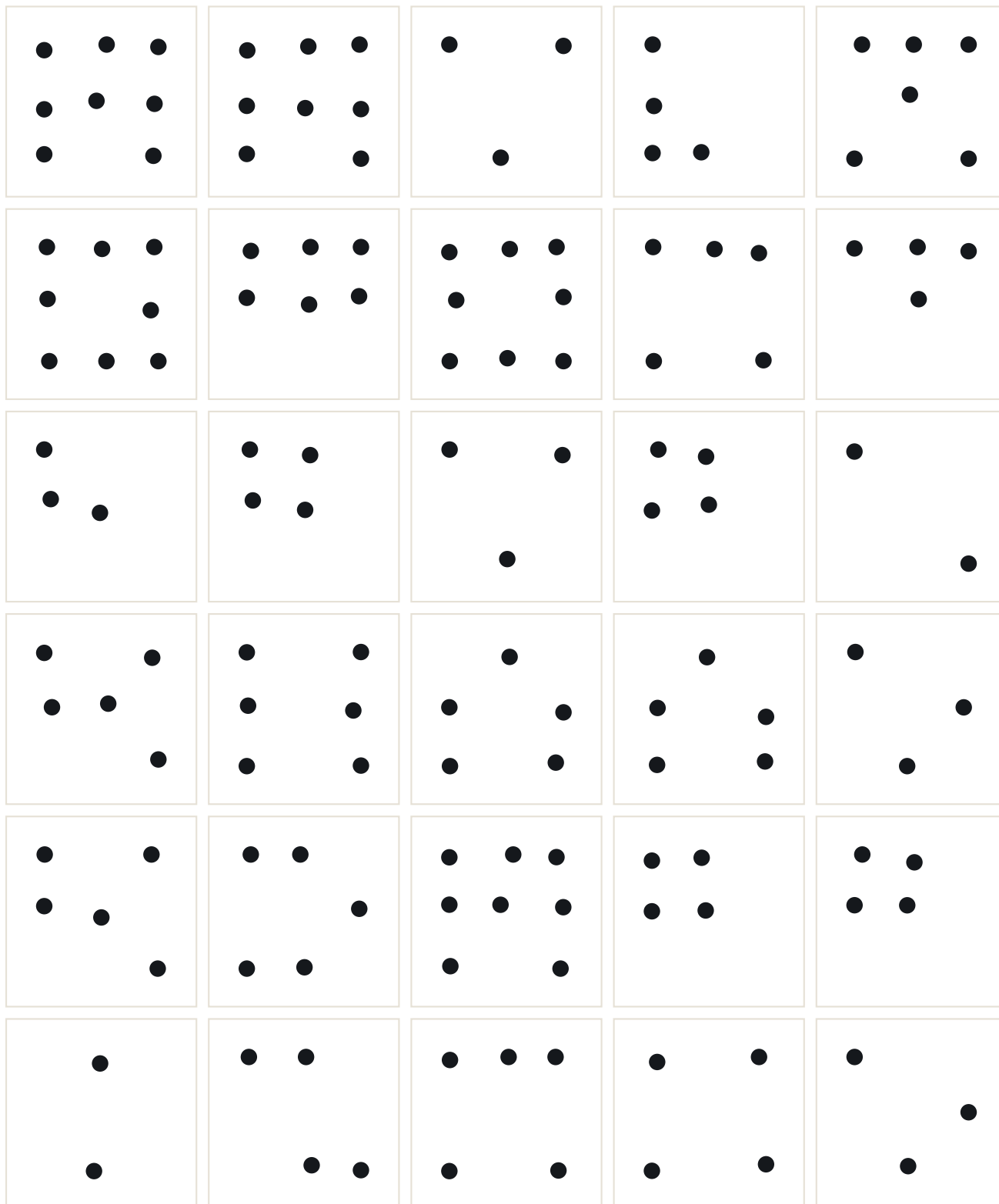
Target for this sheet: 6 dots. Mark every cluster that has exactly 6. Leave the rest. Time yourself if you want. Check the keys after the last sheet, only when you stop.



Work left to right, top to bottom. Do not go back and hunt. Near-miss counts are the trap.

Printable Group Bourdon · Sheet 9 of 13

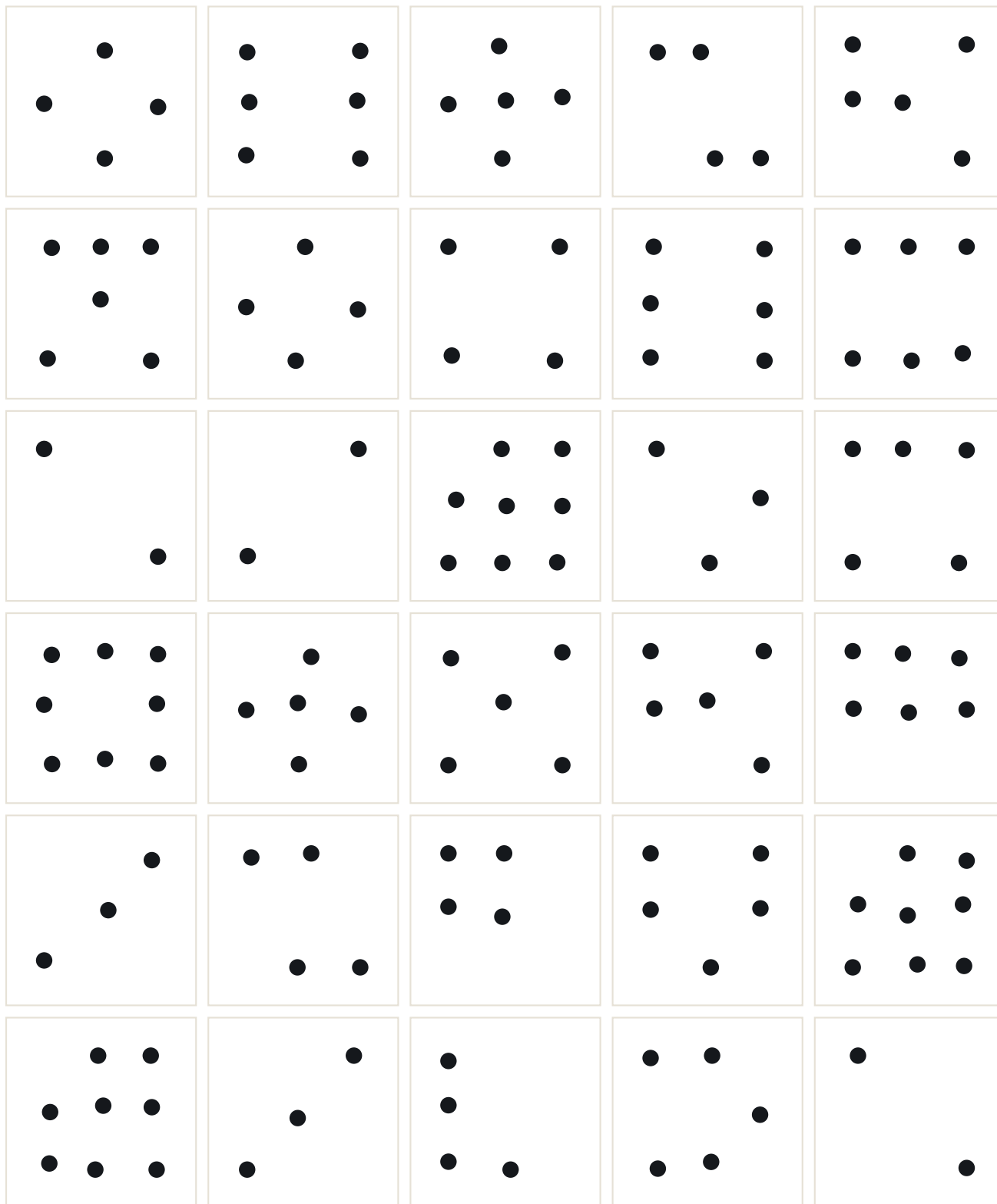
Target for this sheet: 4 dots. Mark every cluster that has exactly 4. Leave the rest. Time yourself if you want. Check the keys after the last sheet, only when you stop.



Work left to right, top to bottom. Do not go back and hunt. Near-miss counts are the trap.

Printable Group Bourdon · Sheet 10 of 13

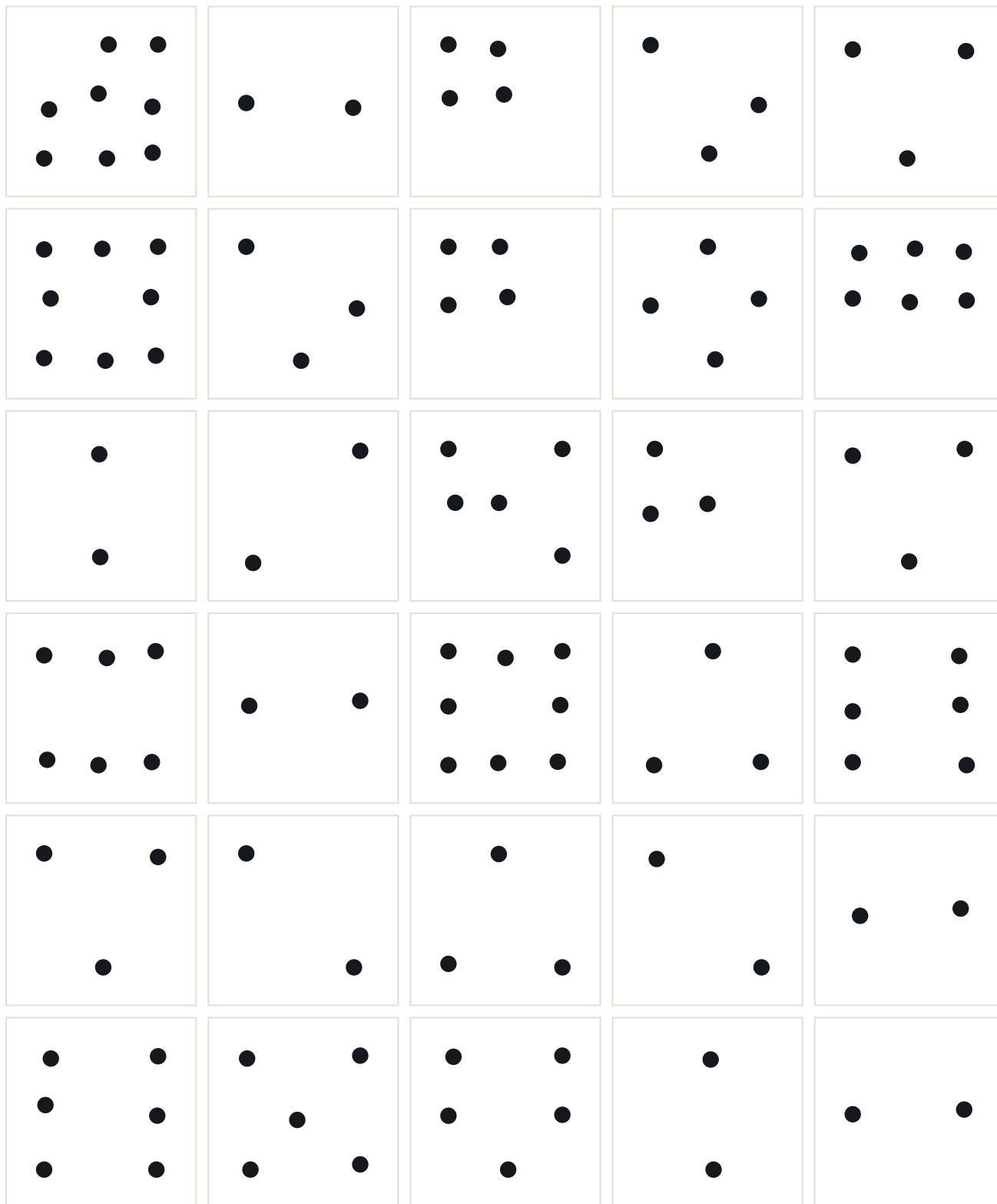
Target for this sheet: 5 dots. Mark every cluster that has exactly 5. Leave the rest. Time yourself if you want. Check the keys after the last sheet, only when you stop.



Work left to right, top to bottom. Do not go back and hunt. Near-miss counts are the trap.

Printable Group Bourdon · Sheet 11 of 13

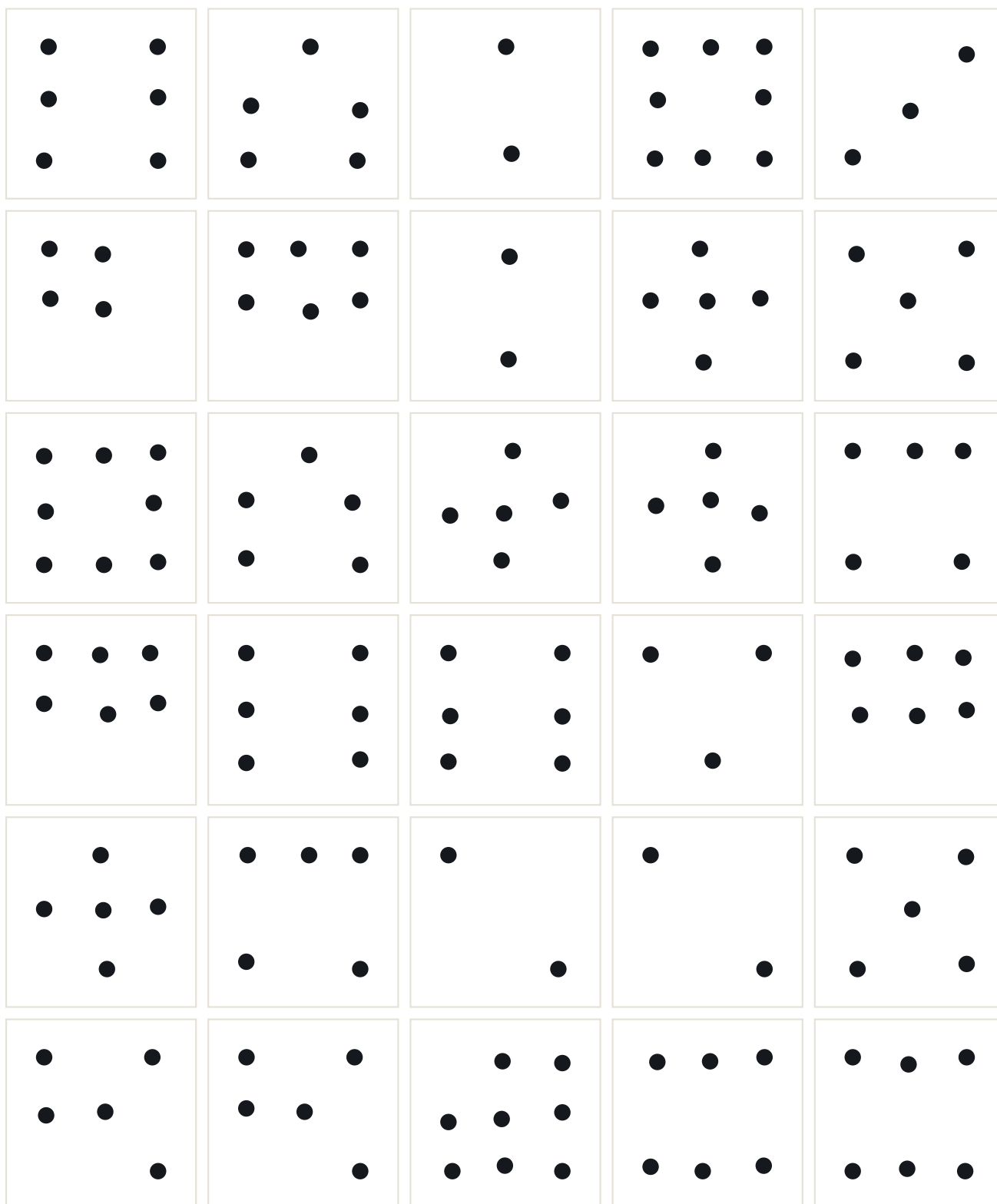
Target for this sheet: 3 dots. Mark every cluster that has exactly 3. Leave the rest. Time yourself if you want. Check the keys after the last sheet, only when you stop.



Work left to right, top to bottom. Do not go back and hunt. Near-miss counts are the trap.

Printable Group Bourdon · Sheet 12 of 13

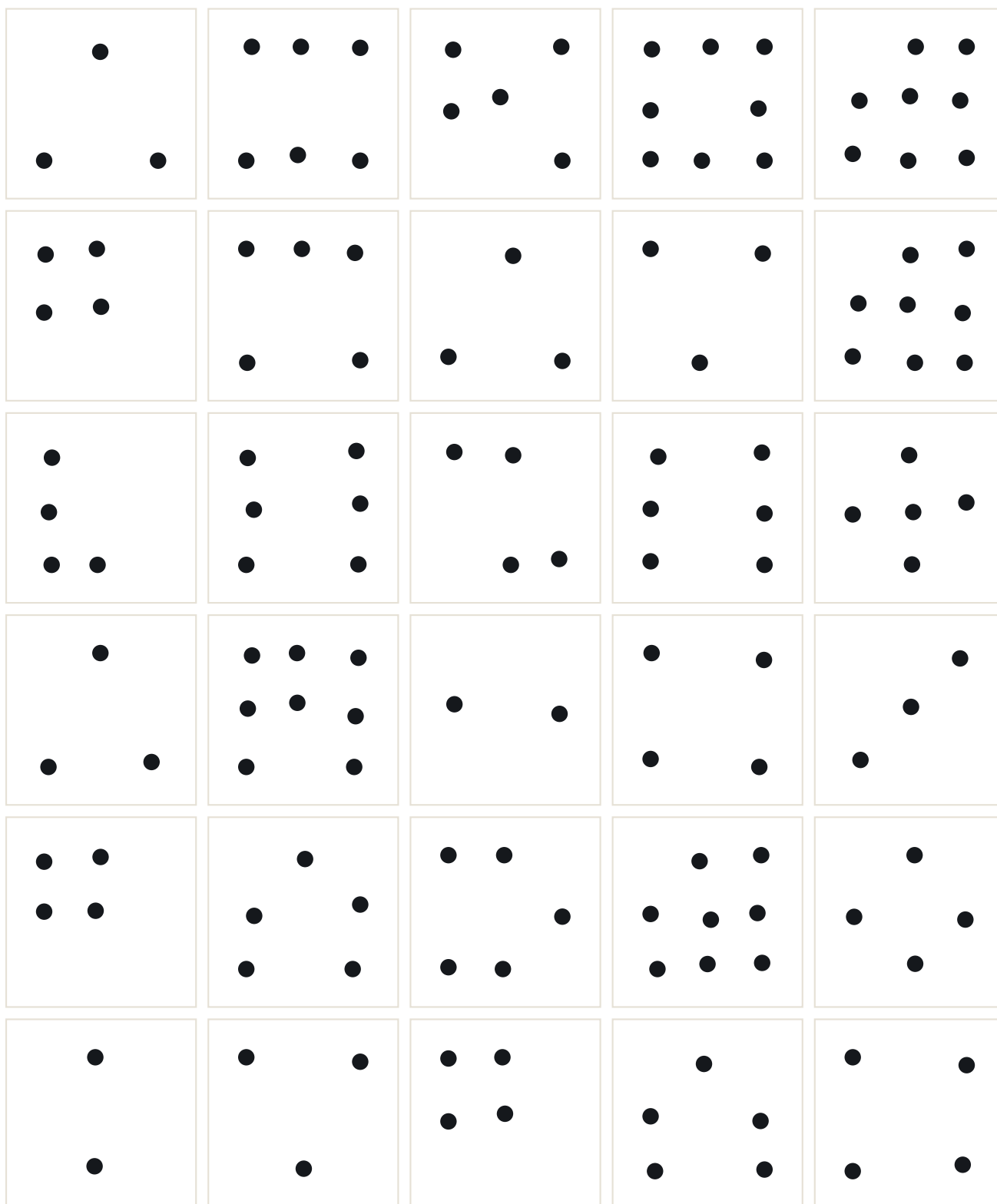
Target for this sheet: 6 dots. Mark every cluster that has exactly 6. Leave the rest. Time yourself if you want. Check the keys after the last sheet, only when you stop.



Work left to right, top to bottom. Do not go back and hunt. Near-miss counts are the trap.

Printable Group Bourdon · Sheet 13 of 13

Target for this sheet: 4 dots. Mark every cluster that has exactly 4. Leave the rest. Time yourself if you want. Check the keys after the last sheet, only when you stop.



Work left to right, top to bottom. Do not go back and hunt. Near-miss counts are the trap.

Answer keys

Rows count from the top. Columns count from the left. Check one sheet at a time.

Sheet 1 · 4 dots · 8 matches

- Row 1, column 2
- Row 1, column 5
- Row 2, column 2
- Row 4, column 3
- Row 4, column 5
- Row 5, column 1
- Row 5, column 5
- Row 6, column 3

Sheet 2 · 5 dots · 8 matches

- Row 1, column 2
- Row 2, column 2
- Row 3, column 4
- Row 4, column 4
- Row 4, column 5
- Row 5, column 3
- Row 6, column 1
- Row 6, column 4

Sheet 3 · 3 dots · 8 matches

- Row 1, column 1
- Row 1, column 2
- Row 1, column 3
- Row 2, column 4
- Row 3, column 2
- Row 4, column 1
- Row 4, column 3
- Row 6, column 1

Sheet 4 · 6 dots · 8 matches

- Row 2, column 2
- Row 4, column 1
- Row 4, column 2
- Row 4, column 4
- Row 5, column 2

- Row 5, column 4
- Row 6, column 3
- Row 6, column 5

Sheet 5 · 4 dots · 8 matches

- Row 1, column 2
- Row 1, column 3
- Row 1, column 4
- Row 2, column 5
- Row 3, column 4
- Row 5, column 1
- Row 6, column 4
- Row 6, column 5

Sheet 6 · 5 dots · 8 matches

- Row 1, column 2
- Row 1, column 3
- Row 1, column 5
- Row 2, column 3
- Row 3, column 1
- Row 3, column 2
- Row 4, column 2
- Row 6, column 4

Sheet 7 · 3 dots · 8 matches

- Row 2, column 1
- Row 2, column 5
- Row 3, column 2
- Row 3, column 3
- Row 3, column 5
- Row 4, column 4
- Row 5, column 3
- Row 6, column 3

Sheet 8 · 6 dots · 8 matches

- Row 1, column 3
- Row 2, column 2
- Row 2, column 3
- Row 4, column 2

- Row 4, column 3
- Row 4, column 4
- Row 5, column 5
- Row 6, column 5

Sheet 9 · 4 dots · 8 matches

- Row 1, column 4
- Row 2, column 5
- Row 3, column 2
- Row 3, column 4
- Row 5, column 4
- Row 5, column 5
- Row 6, column 2
- Row 6, column 4

Sheet 10 · 5 dots · 8 matches

- Row 1, column 3
- Row 1, column 5
- Row 3, column 5
- Row 4, column 2
- Row 4, column 3
- Row 4, column 4
- Row 5, column 4
- Row 6, column 4

Sheet 11 · 3 dots · 8 matches

- Row 1, column 4
- Row 1, column 5
- Row 2, column 2
- Row 3, column 4
- Row 3, column 5
- Row 4, column 4
- Row 5, column 1
- Row 5, column 3

Sheet 12 · 6 dots · 8 matches

- Row 1, column 1
- Row 2, column 2
- Row 4, column 1

- Row 4, column 2
- Row 4, column 3
- Row 4, column 5
- Row 6, column 4
- Row 6, column 5

Sheet 13 · 4 dots · 8 matches

- Row 2, column 1
- Row 3, column 1
- Row 3, column 3
- Row 4, column 4
- Row 5, column 1
- Row 5, column 5
- Row 6, column 3
- Row 6, column 5

If you marked extras, you were inventing matches. If you missed several, slow the scan until the count is automatic, then bring the pace back.

Vigilance

You watch a dull display for a long stretch. Click only on the rare, pure-black target. Grey and near-black do not count. Five minutes is easy. The second half of a long run is the real test.

Reaction

A circle turns green (go) or red (stop). Click green as soon as you see it. Do nothing on red. Most trials are green. The trap is clicking the stop.

Visual search

Each grid shows a shape and colour to find. Click every cell that matches both. A methodical scan beats a heroic stare. False alarms count.

Judgement

You read a short on-shift scene and pick the most appropriate response, then often the least. Selectors look for safety first, reporting problems, and not covering things up to keep the job moving. If two options both look decent, pick the one that protects people and follows the process.

Practise on a computer

Assessment day is almost always a desktop and a mouse. Paper is useful. It is not a substitute for a timed run.

- Sit 60 seconds of Group Bourdon now: www.railfocus.co.uk/try/group-bourdon
- A free account unlocks five modules, including longer Bourdon runs, vigilance, reaction, visual search, and problem solving.
- Plus is prepaid for 3 or 6 months on the website. It does not renew.

A note on scores

There is no published public pass mark for most operator days. Forum figures are gossip. A RailFocus score is practice feedback. It cannot tell you if you would pass. Aim for a scan that still works when you are a bit tired.