

Error Monitoring Strategy Study Guide

Today we are beginning a unit on the Error Monitoring Strategy, a strategy you will use to detect and correct errors in you writing. Most of you will master this strategy in 2 to 3 weeks. Then you will begin to apply it to your course assignments.

Why is it important to find and correct the little errors and mistakes in your writing?

1. Let's say that you meet someone for the first time, and he is dressed very sloppily. His clothes are dirty and wrinkled, his hair isn't clean or combed, and he smells bad. What is your first impression of him as a person?
2. Let's say that you just finished writing a book report for English class and that you hand it in without checking it for errors. What kind of impression might you make on your teacher?
 - Will the teacher pay more attention to what you are saying in your report or to the little mistakes you make?
 - What is the likelihood that you will get an excellent grade on the paper?

Research finds that teachers tend to base their grades for themes and reports on such things as spelling, grammar, and mechanics like punctuation and capitalization, so it is very important that you attend to these things if you want to make a good impression on your teachers and receive high grades on your papers.

3. If you hand in a job application with several errors in the writing, what kind of an impression would this create of you as a potential employee?
4. If you can write clear and clean reports for your employer, how might that benefit you in the long run?
5. If you really liked someone, say a boyfriend or girlfriend, and you wrote that person a letter with several errors in it, what kind of an impression would you make on that person?

Summary. As you can see, learning the Error Monitoring Strategy can help you get better grades in your courses and make a good impression on the people who read your writing. This will pay off in the long run because people will think you try hard and care about your work.

You should use the Error Monitoring Strategy any time you have to write something that other people will read. Your work makes a statement about you as a person, so it is a good idea to make sure your work makes a positive statement about you. Let's think of as many situations as we can that require you to write something that others will see.

- At school
- Job training after graduation
- Education after graduation
- In the community
- At work

Students who have learned the Error Monitoring Strategy have been pleased with the results they have achieved.

	Before Mastery	After Mastery

Errors made in written products || 1 error in every 4 words || 1 error in every 33 words ||

This means that before they began using the Error Monitoring Strategy, these students were making about one error for every four words they wrote. After they mastered the strategy, they were making less than one error in every 33 words. This means that their papers were very clean and neat and that there were rarely any errors. Their grades also improved as a result. Notice the Pretest and Practice and Posttest samples.

Set goals on progress charts.

As we talk about the Error Monitoring Strategy, you will need to take notes on this hand-out.

You have learned a strategy that helps you write complete and correct sentences. What are the steps of that strategy?

The last step in the PENS strategy helps you check your work. What should you check in that last step?

Now that you have mastered sentence structure, it's time that you start attending to some of the little things that are going to help you achieve a polished product. These little things are the careless errors we all make as we write.

Here are listed the four categories in which people make the most mistakes in their writing. What are the four categories of errors?

1. **C**
2. **O**
3. **P**
4. **S**

Part of a cop's work is to be a good detective. That's what you will be--a good detective--when you check your writing for these four categories of errors. Your goal is to detect and correct as many errors as you can find in your work. Thinking of the mnemonic COPS will help you to reach your goal.

We'll discuss each of these four categories of errors so that you are certain of the kinds of errors you should detect.

A **capital letter** should be about twice as big as any of the lower-case letters you write. What words should you be sure to capitalize as you write?

- _____ word of sentence
- Names of:

These are all important words to capitalize. With the exception of the first word in a sentence, the words we have listed are **proper nouns**. A proper noun is the name that belongs to one person, place, or thing or a special group of persons or things.

Proper Noun

All other nouns are called **common nouns**. Common nouns are not capitalized unless they are the first word of a sentence.

Common Noun

For example, you are all teenagers but that isn't the proper noun by which you are personally known. Your proper names are _____, _____, and _____.

This is also true of the place we live. We live in a town, but the proper name of your town is what?

Besides making sure that the first word of each sentence is capitalized, you need to determine whether you have capitalized all the proper nouns in each sentence.

To help you remember to do this, ask yourself two questions related to capitalization as you check each sentence. They are:

1.

2.

Now let's discuss the second type of error that people commonly make.

The **overall appearance** of your written work is far more important than you may realize. It gives people an impression of you as a person. If you don't capitalize or punctuate correctly, they might think that you haven't learned the capitalization and punctuation rules yet; however, if you hand in a messy paper, what do you think their impression of you will be?

It reflects on your personality. There's another important thing to realize. Let's look at one of these messy papers. How do you as a reader feel as you try to read this paper?

This is exactly what happens with your readers. If your paper is messy and hard to read, the reader gets more and more angry as she reads it. How might this hurt your grade on a paper?

It's important to attend to how your papers appear to others.

Let's look at some samples of student writing and make a list of the kinds of errors that writers may make that can take away from the appearance of their papers.

1. _____ Handwriting can be difficult to read if the letters are jumbled or crowded together, if they are not fully formed, and if they don't adhere to the lines on the paper. Try to write carefully, so each letter can be seen.
2. _____ Spacing errors occur when two words or sentences are written right next to each other or are written too far apart from each other. As a general rule, leave one letter space between words and two or three letter spaces between sentences. Do not leave big spaces between the letters of a word (inside a word). If you can't fit a whole word on a line, break it in an appropriate place and use a hyphen.
3. _____ Often a person's writing begins at a different place on each line. This makes the whole paper look bad. It's a good idea to make the first letter of the first word on each line either touch the margin or be placed about one letter space away from the margin. The only exception to this guideline is the first line of each paragraph, which should start about a half of an inch to the right of the margin.
4. _____ These are instances where a word has been crossed out or written over, where a dirty erasure mark has been left, or a word or words that were left out have been written above the writing on a line or down the side of a page. Another kind of messy error occurs when the paper has been ripped, folded, or crumpled. This last kind of error can be avoided by

taking good care of your final draft. How might you do this?

In order to help you remember these four kinds of errors, let's look at the four questions you should ask yourself as you check the **Overall Appearance** of your paper.

1. Is _____ ?
2. Are _____ ?
3. Did _____ ?
4. Are _____ ?

The third type of error that people commonly make involves **punctuation**.

Punctuation includes all the marks you make on your paper that enable the reader to make sense of what you have written. For example, different punctuation marks are used to separate one sentence from another. What are the kinds of punctuation you can use at the end of a sentence?

In conjunction with the Sentence Writing Strategy, some of you have learned how to use two other punctuation marks within sentences. What were they?

There is another common use for the comma - to separate items in a series or list that appears in a sentence. For example, in the sentence, Jane invited Andy Brent Jesse and Cody to her party..... there is a list of items. What is it?

The items in this list should be separated with commas. Where should the commas be placed? Write them in each place.

The main punctuation marks on which we will be focusing in the Error Monitoring Strategy are: periods, question marks, exclamation points, commas, and semicolons.

Do you have any questions about other punctuation marks that you would like to discuss at this point?

In order to help you avoid making punctuation errors, you need to ask yourself two questions.

1. Did _____ ?
2. Did _____ ?

Spelling is the fourth area in which errors are commonly made.

You make a spelling error if you do not spell a word as it should be spelled according to a standard English dictionary. Spelling errors include several kinds of mistakes: when you add additional letters or loops to a word, when you leave out letters, and when you write the letters in the wrong order.

As you check your work for spelling errors, ask yourself these three questions.

1. Does _____ ?
2. Can _____ ?
3. Have _____ ?

Review

What are the four categories of common errors that people make in their writing?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

What is the mnemonic we will use to remember these categories?

Now that we have reviewed the four types of common errors in writing, let's talk about the steps of the Error Monitoring Strategy.

1. Step 1: Write on _____ line using PENS. As you write a rough draft of any paper, be it a paragraph, a book report, a research theme, or whatever, write on every other line as you use the PENS steps. Why do you think it is a good idea to write on every other line? In addition, the PENS steps should help ensure that you have written complete sentences. What procedure do you use to check each sentence after you write it? As you apply this procedure, check to make sure that the sentence makes sense and that no words are missing.
2. Step 2: Read the product for _____. After you have finished the rough draft of a written product, you need to read the whole thing to make sure that each sentence is about the topic and that your written words say exactly what you want them to say. If a sentence does not relate to the topic or say what you want it to say, you have two choices. You can cross it out entirely or change it to address the topic. You should choose one of these options and carry it out in this step.
3. Step 3: Interrogate yourself using the _____ questions. After you have checked the product for meaning, you need to look for all the little errors that can be made. This is where you can use the COPS question. What does interrogate mean? That's exactly what cops do; they interrogate people. You'll be doing the same thing except you'll be interrogating yourself. Ask yourself the COPS questions as you check each sentence. That is, as you look at each sentence, ask yourself the questions we have discussed. If you wish, you can abbreviate the questions somewhat so that you don't have to remember so many questions.
 1. Have I _____?
 2. Have I _____?
 3. Have I _____?
 4. Do the _____?

When you find an error or something you are unsure about, circle it. If you know how to correct the error, write the correction directly above it. For example, if you find a misspelled word, circle it, and write the correct spelling of the word above the misspelled word. If you find a crowded word or a word that you can hardly read, circle it, and write it out correctly. If you find a place where you have left out a punctuation mark, circle the space, and put the punctuation mark above the circle. Every time you find an error, what are the two things you should do?

- 1.
- 2.
4. Step 4: Take the paper to _____ for help. When you check over your paper for errors, you may encounter some things about which you are not sure. For example, you may have used a word that you don't know how to spell and can't find in the dictionary, or you may not be sure whether a word should be capitalized. If this is the case, take your paper to someone and ask that person for help. Sometimes, when you're writing something very important, it is a good idea to have someone else

check your rough draft for you. That way, if you have overlooked any errors, the other person might be able to find them for you.

1. What kind of products would it be important to have someone check for you?
 2. Who might be appropriate people to ask to check your work?
 3. Before you go to someone, it is important that you know what questions you need to ask. Be prepared to ask your questions quickly. Be sensitive to the fact that a teacher or someone else may be busy and may not have a lot of time. How can you determine whether someone may have time to help you?
 4. Let's say that you're not sure whether the word governor should be capitalized. How might you ask someone about that?
 5. Let's say you know that you have difficulty spelling words. Often several words in your paper are misspelled but you can't recognize them. How might you ask someone to help you?
 6. If the other person points out an error to you, circle it, and write the correction above it immediately so that you won't forget it. After the person has answered all your questions, be sure to thank her politely for helping you.
5. Step 5: Execute a _____ copy. Once you have checked your work yourself and asked someone else to check it, you are ready to make your final draft.
- Does anyone know what execute means in this context?
- When you make your final copy, write on every line. If your teacher requires ink, use it for your final draft. Use the kind of ink that can be erased. Take all the time you need to write as neatly as you can, and incorporate all the corrections you made on your rough draft. If you make a mistake, erase it completely without leaving any smudges.
6. Step 6: _____ your paper. Once you have finished your final copy, reread it one last time to make sure everything is as you want it. Be sure that all the corrections have been made as you intended and that you didn't make a careless error like leaving out a word as you recopied. If you did make an error, figure out the neatest way to correct it and do that before you hand in the paper. Your paper should be neat and free of errors. It should be something that you can be proud of when you hand it in.

Is there an easy way for us to remember the ERROR MONITORING steps?

When you have mastered this strategy, you are well on your way to being an excellent writer because you will be able to integrate the Sentence Writing Strategy and Error Monitoring into one group of six steps. The word WRITER will help you remember the six steps. Any time you sit down to write, think, "I am a good WRITER," and you'll be able to remember quickly the six steps.

Review

Steps

- W
- R
- I
- T
- E
- R

COPS Questions

Capitalization

- C
- C

Overall appearance

- H
- S
- M
- M

Punctuation

- E
- C

Spelling

- L
- S
- U

Thanks to Terry Freese, SIM Trainer and teacher from Rocky Comfort, Missouri, for contributing this study guide to SIM Trainer Resources on the KU-CRL Web site.