

Your ultimate

“Oops!” - System



or how to avoid mistakes forever...



Simply go through your “Oops”-System and keep it updated!

1. You need:

- Index cards and a box
- 4 sections divided by tabs (*Karteikartenreiter*)
- Coloured pencils, a ruler
- School book, grammar book, dictionaries (E-E; E-G/G_E), PC¹

2. Prepare four sections:

- **L = Language/Vocabulary** → here you will store words with “diehard” spelling mistakes.
- **G = Grammar** → here you will collect sentences and phrases with grammar mistakes, e.g. if-clauses; tenses; word order; negation;...
- **S = Style** → here you will file cards which help you to improve your style, e.g. to use a varied (*abwechslungsreich*) vocabulary. You will create a collection of “better expressions”, formal aspects (structure in paragraphs,...), the right register and more.
- **I = Idiomaticity** → this is a somewhat mixed section, mainly for practising idioms and chunks that are typical of English, often different from German or false friends (e.g. German “ins Kino gehen” – E : no “in” but : “to go to the cinema”.)

3. The System:

- What is an “oops”-mistake? It is a mistake that is really hard on you. Either you have made that mistake because you were absolutely sure to be right – but weren’t. Or your teacher makes you aware of a structure, spelling, etc. that he/she thinks might have become a permanent mistake and should be erased from your “brain” as soon and thoroughly as possible. Or both ☺.
- You will add any mistakes that your teacher has marked with the “oops-signs” in your written products.
- You will also add mistakes from your oral performance either when your teacher tells you to (after having corrected you during lessons) or on your own account (e.g. you feel like there was an “oops” – mistake in what you have just said to the teacher or in a peer activity you have realized that you got something wrong.)
- The system is meant for more and more flexible self-study, self-organisation and self-monitoring. It is your trustworthy companion for your future English-learning career if you keep it alive, up-to-date and use it actively.

¹ recommended but not obligatory
Dr. Karola Schallhorn RP K für ZPG 9/10 (Dez. 2017)

4. How to use the system:

You will practise in different ways. This is the classical way of doing so:

1. Find the “enemy” (look at what your teacher has marked as incorrect, recognize what is wrong) and pin it down on the card².
2. Cross out the mistake and practise the correct version. Use any mark-up system to visualize what is right and what is wrong (different size of letters, colours...)
3. Write down the correct version.
4. Practise the correct version. Here it is up to you to find the method that helps you most.

Here are some recommendations:

Marking signs	What to do about:
O ³ L/ OR ⁴ Language	<p>Wrong word (OL) / wrong spelling (OR) Write down the sentence with the correct word. Add the explanation or some kind of crib/mnemonic (<i>Eselsbrücke</i>) or German might help: e.g. “Parents *educate their children to good citizens” “Parents raise their children to be good citizens”</p> <p>to educate → only at school! (Bildung) to raise children/ to bring up (elterliche Erziehung)</p> <p>Spelling mistakes: Do “drill” training. Use the correct word in 2 -3 sentences that you can keep in mind as a “crib”/“mnemonic”, e.g. *prove→ “I’ll prove that my English is getting better in the next text. The next test will be the proof”. Verb = One “o” Noun = Two “oo” double “o” /the word “noun” has an “o” so “the proof” is the one with the additional “o”....</p>
OG Grammar	<p>Find the rule(s) in your grammar skill files (back of your book) or an extra grammar book. You might use more than one card for dealing with grammar problems and “drilling” the right structure. In “bad cases” you might also do more exercises in a special folder.</p>
OS Style	<p>For boring sentences like “I think...”, “he said...” collect a variety of other terms or – sometimes even better - leave them out. If your register was wrong: find different ways of expressing your opinion, attitude etc.</p>
OI Idiomacy	<p>There can be many different sources of mistakes in idiomacy (the way the English people express themselves). First check: Have you learnt the lexical item as a chunk with its accompanying preposition or the collocation? (e.g. to rely + on s.o./sth...) Sometimes German influences us and we have to be aware of tricky collocations like: G: “Auf dem Bild kann ich einen Baum sehen”. → E : “In the picture I can see a tree”. Practise the idiomatic phrase by simple re-writing either the same sentence or sentences you find easy to remember. Sayings, proverbs : Look up the correct version – and in future be careful: if you want to use a German proverb it might not be the same (or not EXACTLY the same) in English-or it might not exist at all, make sure before you use it.</p>

² Only writing down the correct version is of course a good way. But it might not have the effect of totally erasing a mistake and in the actual situation be ready at the tip of your brain to remind you of doing the right thing. So in this system you had better copy your mistake in a way that makes it very clear to you that it is wrong. And in a much bigger, or more colourful or impressive way stress the right version to make it memorable.

³ The ‘O’ stands for ‘oops’.

⁴ OR – R from German „Rechtschreibung“ (OO looks odd, and OS is already taken for Style...)