


Don't Drown in Red Ink									
									
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
			Sept. 13	date	date	date	date	date	date
This bar graph belongs to <span style="color: red;">name of student.</span>			It shows how well I'm doing at getting rid of my most frequent error.						
The name of my most frequent error is <span style="color: red;">error name goes here.</span>			My teacher flags it as number <span style="color: red;"># goes here.</span>						
My goal is to have no more than <span style="color: red;">how many</span> of these errors in <span style="color: red;">how many</span> words by <span style="color: red;">what date.</span>									

**NOTES: Decide what features of this chart you want to copy and what you want to delete or modify. Then make your own chart in a spreadsheet or using the table function of a word processing program. A chart that matches your course objectives will save you and your students time and frustration in the long run.**

The graphic can be replaced by a digital photo of the student to help personalize the chart.

A reasonable goal should be agreed upon by teacher and student. The goal should challenge the student, but not frustrate him/her. Read about giving feedback on writing mechanics [here](#) and [here](#).

After you have established baseline performance for your students, decide on the number of errors you will count in a paper. Stop counting at your cut-off point.

Do not demand zero errors. Don't let students set that aim either. Mechanics are just one small part of writing. If you insist on mechanical perfection, students will not pay attention to other aspects of writing.

The horizontal red stripe is the "drown line." Adjust it so that the blocks below the line show the highest number of errors you will accept without penalizing the student's grade. See the grade cap discussion under giving feedback.

If you penalize students for more than 3 errors, it makes no difference whether they have 4 or 44. Counting every error wastes your time and discourages students.

The red fill on the chart shows that the student had at least four more errors on his Sept. 13 paper than the teacher says are acceptable. If the student's goal is reasonable and the student makes a reasonable effort to do the work, the graph should show a significant decrease in the number of errors by the date set. If the student doesn't meet the objective negotiate a longer time to meet it. It is better to give longer time than to let the student think he cannot succeed.

I recommend you write out the "test conditions" under which students will demonstrate their ability to write without resorting to their habitual error. There is a big difference between writing in class in 40 minutes without making a comma splice and writing at home over three days without making a comma splice.

Students can graph their progress directly in the computer file using the Fill function to color the blocks. Or they can keep their record on a print copy of the chart to fill in on the computer later.