

Analyzing Your Math Test Responses

There are four main types of errors people make on math tests, sometimes more than one type in a problem. Go through your test with four different colored highlighters, markers or colored pencils, and mark the following:

Calculation Errors: Use yellow (or choose a specific color that you will use consistently) to mark problems in which your error(s) were calculations anywhere in your solving processes. You can mark just the problem number, or the actual place the calculation error(s) occurred.

Attention to Detail: Use blue (or choose a specific color that you will use consistently) to mark errors that make you want to hit yourself. For example, you forgot a negative, you forgot to bring down a number, or you did multiplication when you should have done subtraction. Mark anything where you made a mistake that you wouldn't have if you'd been paying attention. You can mark just the problem number, or the actual place where the attention to detail error(s) occurred.

Process Errors: Use green (or choose a specific color that you will use consistently) to mark errors where you didn't know how to solve the problem or made a mistake in doing the process. This includes things like not getting an LCD to add fractions, forgetting how to do long polynomial division, errors in order of operations, etc. These could be attention to detail errors, but how you feel about them is different. You can mark just the problem number, or the actual place the process error(s) occurred.

Language Errors: Use pink (or choose a specific color that you will use consistently) to mark problems in which you didn't know what a word meant. This can include forgetting what "domain" means, what the "absolute value" signs do, or the difference between "factor" and "multiple" when it affects your answer to the problem. You can mark just the problem number, or the actual place the language error(s) occurred.

Now look over your paper. Which color(s) do you see the most? This tells us where to focus our strategies.

- Calculation errors - use a multiplication chart or calculator consistently.
- Attention to detail errors - use re-checks, diligence and some strategies specific to your learning style (colors, organizing space, etc).
- Process errors - strategies specific to your learning style
- Language errors - focus on learning math language and on strategies to retain the meanings.