

SOME TECHNIQUES FOR SELF-CRITIQUE OF PRACTICE WORK (by Don King)

BASIC RULE: Don't "practice your mistakes"... Critique your work often, no less than every couple of lines of writing, and preferably after each line.

1. Be tough on yourself – a letter is either right or it's wrong... "kinda OK" doesn't work.

2. base your critique on the criteria you have available – not on what "doesn't look right"

- The exemplar(s) - The basic elements of letter forms: x-height, body shape, slant, pen angle, relative height of ascenders and descenders.

- The quality of the pen strokes: clean, sharp edges on both sides, well-defined terminals, clean, well-shaped joins and branches, correct white spaces within and around the letters, interliteral spaces that are in balance with the spaces inside the letters.

- Entry and exit serifs

3. Concentrate on one criteria at a time: Go through and identify all the letters with improper x-height, then all the shapes, then the slants, etc., etc. This will help you to...

4. Identify patterns and repetitions of errors (E.G.: all the f's too upright; top-heavy e's, etc.)

5. Identify those letters that aren't right and annotate them (a red pen is good for this.): Don't just depend on your memory to help you in the next try.

6. As you write the next line, refer constantly back to your red marks. Repeating the same words will facilitate the process; this is where abecedarian sentences can play effective role.

7. Sometimes, going back to your double-pencil or 4mm work sheets and reviewing them will help to identify where your problem is.

8. If you find yourself repeating the same problems and you can't figure out why, ASK. The longer you keep repeating the error, like any other bad habit, the more you'll implant a bad pattern into your brain.

