

Mistake Detective

Choose real or fictional examples. Skip private details; never include passwords, medical information or contact details.

Learning goal: Separate facts from harsh self-talk and use a mistake to plan a next try.

Sam builds a paper bridge and it falls during the test. Sam thinks, “I ruin everything; I should quit.” A detective looks for evidence before reaching a conclusion. Investigate Sam’s mistake, then decide what a useful next try could be.

Your steps

1. Read Sam’s bridge scenario.
2. Separate what happened from what Sam assumed.
3. Find one thing the test taught Sam.
4. Write a supportive, believable thought and a next experiment.

1. Facts or harsh self-talk?

Mark F for an observable fact or T for a thought. Rewrite thoughts as fair observations.

Statement	F / T	Fair observation
The bridge fell in the test.		
I ruin everything.		
This design needs a change.		
I should never build again.		

2. What the evidence tells me

You do not need to know the exact cause yet. Choose something Sam can test.

One possible cause	A question to investigate
What the first try taught Sam	One change for the next bridge

Mistake Detective · Practice & next steps

Continue your ideas from page 1. Write, draw, use symbols or ask someone to scribe. Share only what you choose.

3. A kinder next try

Replace the harsh thought with something truthful, not pretend-perfect.

Supportive replacement thought	Sam's next test
How Sam will notice improvement	A small mistake I can learn from (or use Sam's)

My next step

When a try does not work, I can ask...

Optional stretch · Grades 6–8

List two competing explanations for the failure. Design a fair test that changes only one variable.

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Optional teacher / parent follow-up: Use the fictional case if personal sharing feels uncomfortable. Validate frustration without labeling the learner.