

## The stapling protocol

---

Since my "stapling protocol" has infiltrated the underground here, I choose to post it to my website, [trialsmeinertsway.com](http://trialsmeinertsway.com), along with the letter accompanying it. In coordinating centers, aside from counting, stapling is among the most important things people do.

The triggering point for the protocol was a mailing from the Dean's office in late 2004 with an attachment carelessly stapled. I figured that if the Medical School was number one in US News and World Report that here, in the School of Public Health, we should be number one in stapling.

Alas, I cannot tell if my efforts have paid dividends because Dr. Sommer stepped down from his post soon after he got the protocol and the new Dean has gone green so paper has disappeared.

Friday, 5 November 2004

Alfred Sommer, MD, MHS  
Dean, Bloomberg School of Public Health  
Johns Hopkins University  
615 North Wolfe Street, Room W1041  
Baltimore, MD

Dear Al:

Attached is a Stapling protocol for your office. I am also providing a stapler for you to practice on. I hope it serves you well.

Regards,

Curtis L. Meinert, PhD  
Professor

### Enclosure

Stapling protocol  
Swingline electric stapler

### Distribution

Curtis Meinert  
Center file  
Snowball file  
Chronologic file

# Stapling protocol

---

Whereas:

- 1 Stapling is a learned skill
- 2 Practice makes perfect
- 3 Sloppy stapling reflects badly on the entire operation
- 4 Slop begets slop
- 5 The Dean's Office sets the standards for the School

Therefore, it follows that you, Al Sommer, as head stapler of the Institution, have the potential of bringing the entire Institution down if slop in stapling in your office is contagious and ultimately affects all operations of the School. Hence, it is imperative that you and everyone else in your Office follow a strict stapling protocol.

- 1 Ensure that all persons, starting with yourself, prior to commencing the act of stapling, assume the proper stapling position (see PPM # 679). Do not attempt to staple from a prone position, when seated on the floor, when under one's desk, while talking on the phone, while surfing on the web, or while doing one's nails.
- 2 Ensure pages are aligned before stapling. Note: "Alignment" is one of the more difficult jobs of stapling. Do not expect new hires to do this without training!
- 3 Staplers, like people, have limits. Know that limit and do not exceed it. Note: Almost certain indicators of "limit violations" include cursing, the need to "stand" on the stapler, or "hammering".
- 4 Instruct each employee each day (prior to going for coffee and donuts and before "chatting" on the phone) to check their stapling instruments (PPM # 489 for checklist and for monthly maintenance schedule); if low on staples, restock immediately. Note: Do not attempt to save money by using the last staple before restocking. Numerous surveys show that the # 1 cause of bent staples is "low staplers".
- 5 Make certain the stapler is resting on a hard, dense, level surface before use. Under no circumstances should one hold the stapler when stapling (see OSHA circular # 44 for warnings of serious injury resulting from such practices).
- 6 Warn new hires as to requirements for stapling and that they are subject to immediate dismissal if they are caught using paper clips in lieu of staples.
- 7 Have all new hires complete a stapling training course prior to IRB and HIPPA training.
- 8 Equip all desks and work areas with the same stapler (see PPM # 179 for acceptable brands and models) Note: Failure to provide a person with a stapler may make it difficult to fire such a person for using paper clips if they file a grievance with HR. Also, even if provided with a stapler, you are at risk of the "devil made me do it" defense if the person had access to paper clips. Therefore it is strongly recommended that you do a sweep to confiscate all paper clips! **Note of caution:** If you are inclined to issue an encyclical requiring all faculty to use a common stapler my advice is "don't do it". It could result in an uprising if seen as an unwarranted infringement of their "academic freedom".
- 9 Produce a stapling template for distribution to every person in the Office; said template to indicate the proper location and position of staples (for more details see PPM # 7).
- 10 Designate a staple monitor; said person is required to report protocol violations to you.
- 11 Designate a "stapler at large"; said person to have responsibility for staplers in common work areas; person should be warned that any empty stapler will be grounds for immediate dismissal.

Remember: A group that staples together, stays together!

Happy stapling and have a Nice Day!