

## Co:Writer SOLO (Win or Mac)

### Creating a Custom Word Prediction Environment

#### Introduction

Co:Writer SOLO is a full featured word prediction program that offers struggling writers accurate prediction based on the integration of several dictionaries. Teachers can manage their students' preferences and create custom prediction environments that suit the specific needs of each writer by adjusting the rules by which the predicted words are displayed and selected. Co:Writer SOLO can be used with any of the programs in the SOLO package and most word processing or text input programs.

#### Case Study

Co:Writer SOLO works well for students who have beginning literacy skills but who have difficulty with written output. Co:Writer SOLO benefits students who:

- have physical limitations that make keyboarding difficult – word prediction can significantly reduce the number of keystrokes needed for written output
- have learning difficulties – Co:Writer can accommodate evolving spelling approaches and the auditory feedback supports students who have difficulty with reading comprehension or visual discrimination
- have motivational issues – Co:Writer's auditory feedback often motivates reluctant writers because they get immediate feedback as they type making it easier to catch errors and create better sentences

To use Co:Writer SOLO, students should have some ability to:

- type the first one or two letters of the word, even if it is a phonetic attempt
- read through or listen to a word list and select the intended word
- maintain focus on their own ideas as they construct their sentences
- track back and forth from word list to the sentence as it is constructed

Greg, a Grade 4 student, was beginning to experience difficulty keeping up with the written output demands of an early intermediate curriculum. His reading comprehension was at a mid Grade 2 level, but he was writing at an early Grade 2 level. His team wanted to find a writing support that would help him with spelling, grammar and enable him to create more complex, age appropriate sentences. They installed Co:Writer SOLO on the classroom computer, intending to use it with the Microsoft Word program already installed.

Once the team had learned how to customize the prediction environment, Greg's Special Education Assistant introduced the program to him in a slow and systematic manner. She began by introducing him to the interface, using a simple writing task of describing his weekend activities (a highly motivating topic). She worked with him over several lessons on several writing tasks to fine tune the prediction options to suit his style of reading and writing. Once he had become comfortable with the Co:Writer environment,

she introduced the first significant writing assignment – a response paragraph to a piece of textual material on the Haida. Before the lesson, she had created a Haida Topic Dictionary containing many of the vocabulary words from the text being studied. She demonstrated how to activate the Topic Dictionary and Greg was able to write a response paragraph which approached standard spelling and grammar and contained far more detail than if he had written it without the prediction support.

Greg is continuing to use the program for both personal and content writing and his team is reporting excellent improvement in his overall written output.

## Learning Objectives

Completion of this tutorial will give you experience with the following:

- Launching Co:Writer as a “Teacher” and creating a New Writer file
- Adjusting the New Writers Settings to create a custom prediction interface
- Changing the Main Dictionary to suit the New Writer’s writing ability
- Customizing the Co:Writer palette

## Installing Co:Writer SOLO

Before beginning this tutorial, please refer to the Installation instructions that came with your Co:Writer SOLO program.

## Starting the Program

1. Launch Co:Writer SOLO by selecting it from your “**All Programs**” list under the “**Start**” menu (Windows) or by double-clicking the Co:Writer icon in your “**Applications**” folder or clicking on the Co:Writer icon in your Dock (Mac).

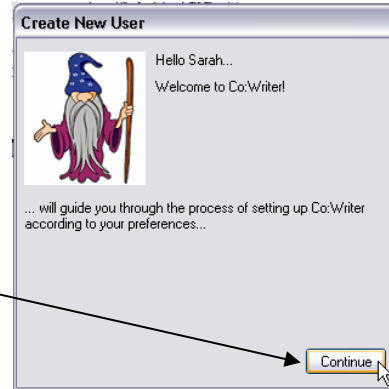
## Creating a New Writer

1. When Co:Writer SOLO starts up, you will see a screen which will allow you to log into the program as a teacher, log into the program as a student, or create a new writer. Create a new writer by clicking on the “**New Writer**” button.

2. Type in a name for your new writer and click “**OK**”.

3. The “**New User**” Wizard will open up. This wizard will guide you through the process of creating the initial settings for your new writer.

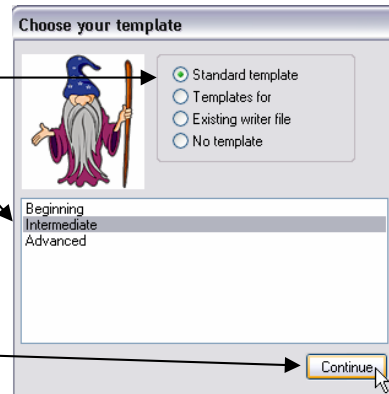
Click “**Continue**”.



4. Choose an intermediate writing template for your new writer by selecting the radio button next to “**Standard template**” and “**Intermediate**”.

By clicking on “**Templates for**” you can see custom set ups for different learning challenges. You can also duplicate an existing writing template by choosing “**Existing writer file**”.

Click “**Continue**”.



5. You are going to now work through several customization options to suit your new writer by clicking on the small radio buttons at the bottom of the wizard window. Once you have made your choice on each window, click the next radio button to proceed to the end. You can always go back to a previous window by clicking the back arrows. Here are the options:

- a. **Co:Writer window**
  - a. **Word window** – a small prediction window “floats” near the cursor in the word processor
  - b. **Sentence window** – a larger prediction window sits on top of the word processor – the student constructs the sentence in this window and then sends the text to the word processor
  - c. **Paragraph window** – a larger prediction window that sits on top of the word processor – the student constructs several sentences and then sends the entire text to the word processor



- b. Support Level**
  - a. You can choose to have words predicted all the time or only when the student needs prediction support (the student would press the “right” keyboard arrow to call up the guesses when needed)
- c. Writing Level**
  - a. You can make an initial determination of whether your new writer is a Beginning, Intermediate or Advanced writer. This establishes the main prediction dictionary that will be used.
- d. Spelling**
  - a. You can choose “Flexible Spelling” if your new writer tends to use phonetic spelling. This means that if your writer types “nife” then “knife” will be predicted.
- e. Number of Guesses**
  - a. You can choose the number of guesses that will be presented to your student. This is an issue of balance – between higher number of guesses being more accurate but taking longer for the writer to scan – five guesses is average
- f. Select Guesses by Number?**
  - a. You can choose to “Show” or “Hide” numbers next to the guesses – by showing numbers, students can select words by pressing the corresponding number on the keyboard
- g. Text Size**
  - a. You can choose a small or large text size for the prediction list.
- h. Colors**
  - a. You can choose from a variety of text and background colors for the prediction window. Click the forward arrow to see the combinations.

Click “**Finish**” when you have worked through the various New User setting options. You have now set up a New Writer – the Co:Writer prediction environment will open up according to the choices you made when you selected the user options.

## The Co:Writer SOLO Window and Palette

When Co:Writer SOLO is active, you should see the Palette in the upper right hand side of your screen and the Prediction Window either at the bottom of your screen or floating on top of your word processor.



Co:Writer Palette

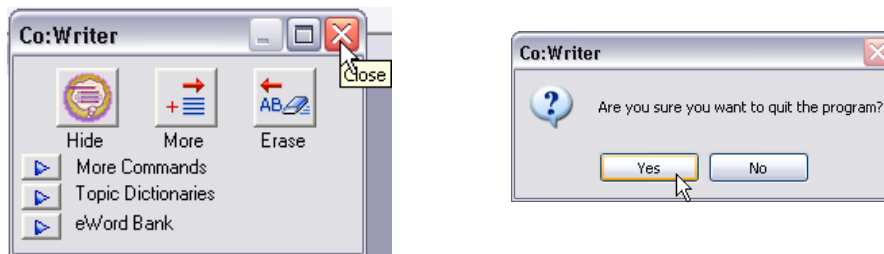


Co:Writer Prediction Window

The Co:Writer Palette contains buttons and tools which the writer can use while they are working with Co:Writer to adjust the predictions, access Topic Dictionaries and view the eWord Bank (these will be explained later).

The Co:Writer Prediction Window is where the predicted word list appears as the writer is typing his or her sentence.

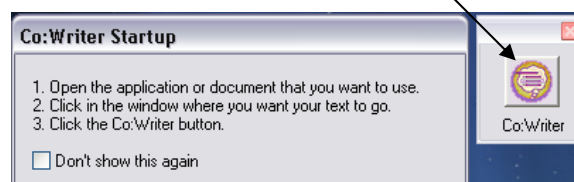
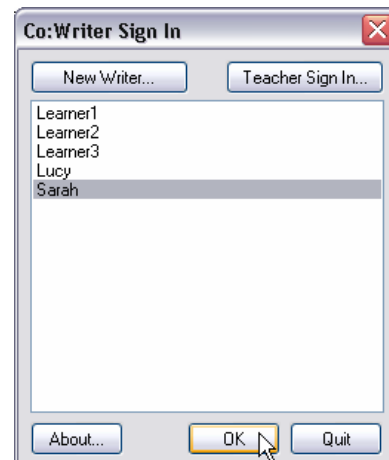
To proceed with the tutorial, **Quit** Co:Writer SOLO at this point so you can go through the program start up sequence and see how it works for student writers. Quit Co:Writer by clicking the **red close X** in the upper right corner of the Co:Writer Palette. You will be prompted to confirm that you want to quit. Click **Yes**.



## Using Co:Writer SOLO as a Student Writer

For the next part of the tutorial, you are going to be using Co:Writer as the New Writer that you created above.

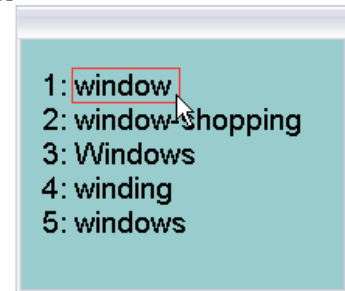
1. Launch Co:Writer SOLO from your **Start – All Programs** menu (Windows) or from your **Applications** folder or System Dock (Macintosh).
2. A Sign In window will open – here you can sign in as any of the students on the list or as the teacher. Right now, sign in as the new writer you created above. Highlight that student's name and click **OK**.
3. A window will open asking you to open the word processing application or document that you want to use. Once you have opened the application or document, insert your cursor where you want your text to enter, and then click the **Co:Writer button** to the right of this Start up window to wake up or activate Co:Writer.



4. You will see the Co:Writer Palette and Prediction Window open up on top of your word processor application.
5. Now you can try to type some sentences in Co:Writer SOLO. If you are using a **“Sentence”** or **“Paragraph”** window your sentence will build in the window. If you are using the **“Word”** window, your sentence builds right in your word processor.



This is a word windo



As you type a sentence, you should also hear the words being spoken aloud. You can select words in the prediction list by clicking on them with your mouse, by typing the number next to the word you want or by using your keyboard down arrow to navigate to the word you want and then clicking the spacebar to select it.

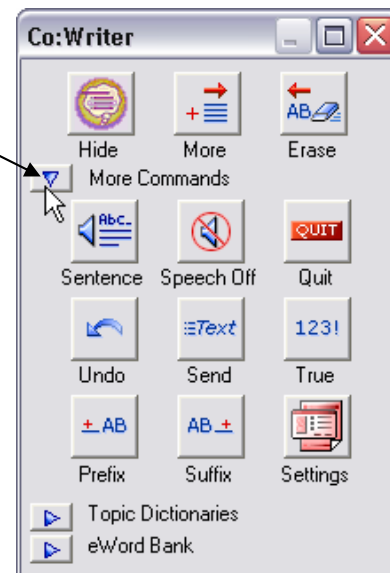
If you are using a **“Sentence”** or **“Paragraph”** window, you can send the text to your word processor by clicking **“Enter”** on your keyboard or by typing an end punctuation mark (period, question mark, exclamation point).

Practice typing and sending text using Co:Writer. Try phonetic spellings, unique words and so on to test the accuracy of the prediction.

6. The Co:Writer Palette contains tools and commands that will help your writer when using the program. You can see the full list of commands in the Palette by clicking the drop down arrow next to **“More Commands”** on the Palette.

When you created the new writer, you did not customize the palette, so you should see a full complement of commands. The list contains buttons that allow the writer to:

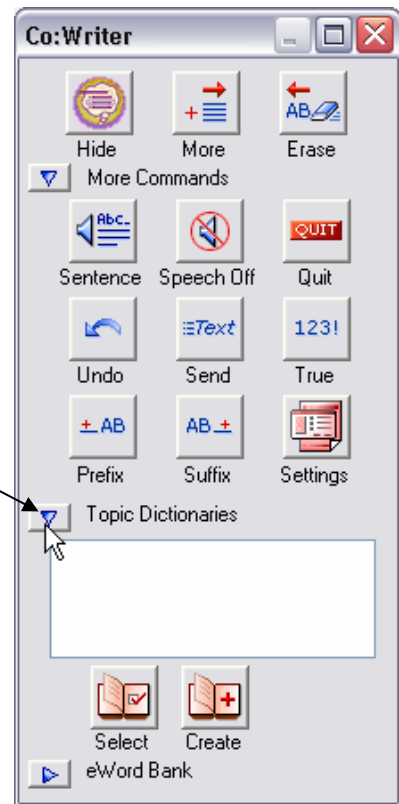
- Speak the sentence aloud
- Turn speech off
- Quit the program
- Undo the last command
- Send text to the word processor
- Enter “True” typing mode (so you can type actual numbers without selecting the word associated with that number)



- Select Prefixes and Suffixes
- Adjust the Co:Writer settings

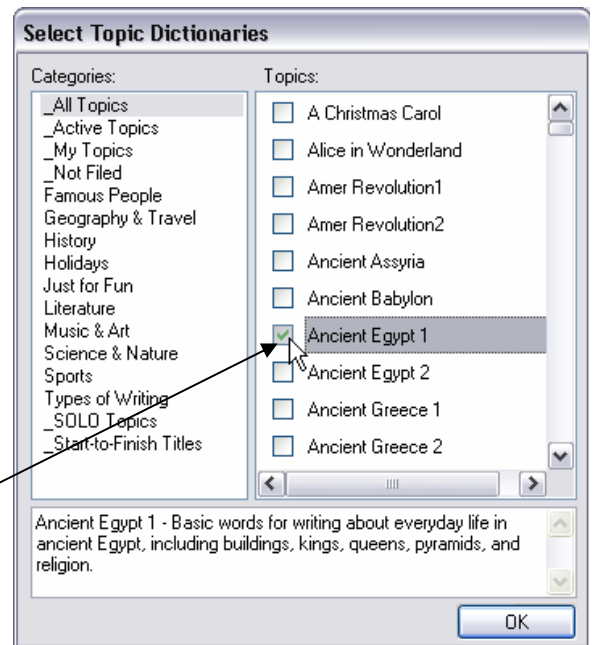
7. The Co:Writer Palette can also provide access to the program's Topic Dictionaries. Click the drop down arrow next to **"Topic Dictionaries"** to find buttons that allow your writer to select or create a topic dictionary.

Click the **"Select"** button to see a list of available topic dictionaries.



The **"Select Topic Dictionaries"** window contains a list of dictionary categories on the left and a list of specific topic dictionaries in the highlighted category on the right.

- To read a summary of the dictionary, click on the dictionary name once to highlight it. A description appears at the bottom of the window.
- To select a dictionary, click in the select box next to the dictionary name and then click **"OK"**.



You will see that the dictionary has now appeared in the Topic Dictionary list on the Co:Writer Palette. You can have up to 10 Topic Dictionaries active at any one time. You can also create your own Topic Dictionaries – one of the most useful features of the program – and this is described in some detail in the "Managing Co:Writer SOLO Dictionaries" tutorial and demonstrations.

- The eWord Bank at the bottom of the Co:Writer Palette gives your writer a list of the 20 most frequently used words from the Topic Dictionary or dictionaries that the writer has selected for use. This is similar to a “word wall” that might be visible in a classroom.

Writers can select which type of vocabulary they want to see by clicking the “Parts of Speech” drop down menu at the very bottom of the Co:Writer Palette.



It would be a good idea at this point to spend some time exploring the features and functions that were introduced in this section of the tutorial. Remember that you are experiencing the program as a writer, not as a teacher. In the final section of this tutorial, you will log into the program as a “Teacher” so you can make setting adjustments for specific students.

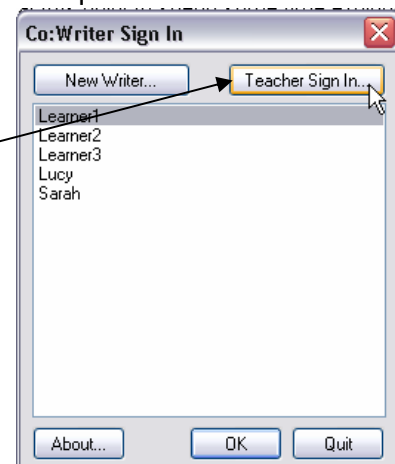
## Adjusting the Student Writer Settings

Each student writer will have a unique set of needs in terms of the Co:Writer prediction environment. The student writer that you have been exploring would be one that is very competent using computers and the Co:Writer SOLO program since their Co:Writer Palette gives them full access to all aspects of the program. However, this is not likely to be the case for most students, certainly when they first begin using the program.

For this reason, you will undoubtedly want to go in and adjust your student writer’s settings – when they first begin using the program and as they become more proficient with using the various features.

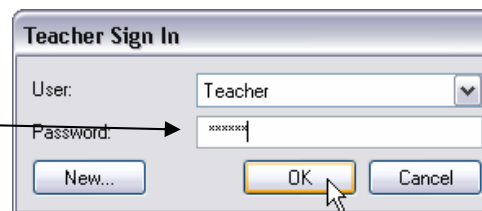
If you are still logged in as your student writer, quit Co:Writer by clicking the “Quit” button on the Palette or by clicking the “red close box” in the upper right hand corner of the Palette. Click “Yes” when prompted to confirm that you want to quit.

- Re-launch Co:Writer from your “**All Programs**” list (Windows) or from your “**Applications**” folder or System Dock (Macintosh).
- When the Sign In window opens, click the “**Teacher Sign In**” button.

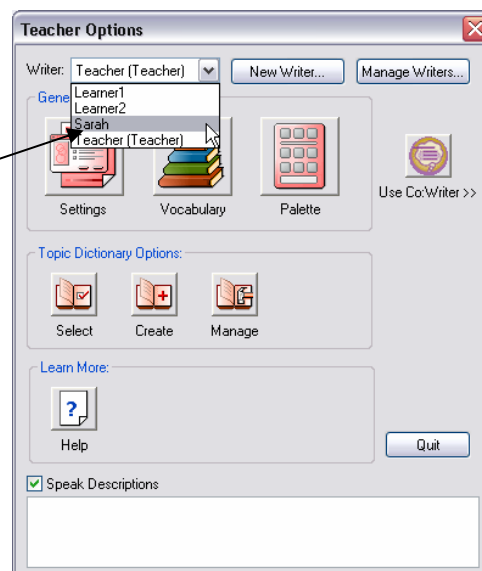


- With **“Teacher”** identified now as the user, type in the default teacher password – **“school”**.

Click **“OK”**.



- The Teacher Options window will open up. Choose the writer who you will be adjusting the settings for by clicking the drop down menu next to **“Writer”** and selecting the writer’s name from the list.



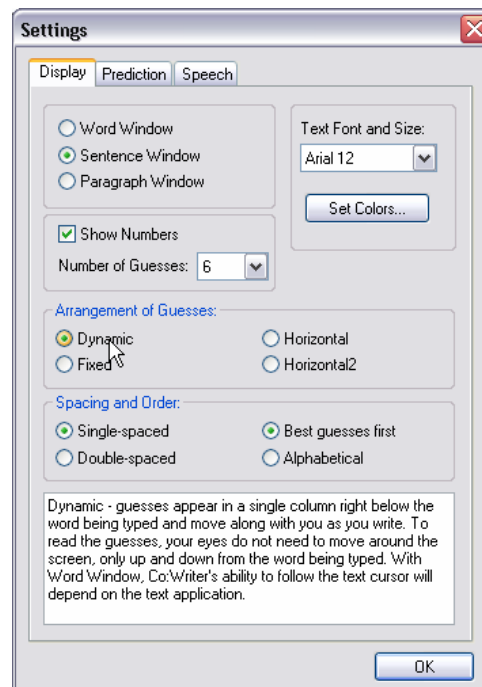
- There are three main areas on the Teacher Options window – **General Options**, **Topic Dictionary Options** and **Learn More (Help)**.

Here are brief descriptions of what can be changed in each the two most used areas:

### General Options

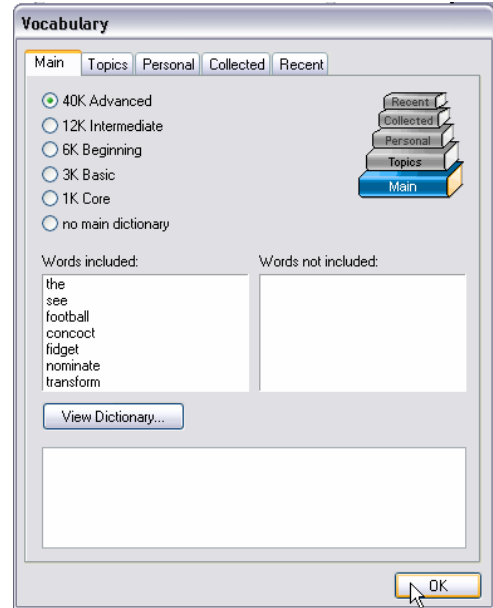
- **Settings**

- The Settings button allows you to adjust many aspects of the Prediction environment including how the guesses are displayed, on what parameters the predictions are made, and the speech or auditory feedback features.
- To see what each feature or option does, simply roll your cursor over the name of the option and a description will appear at the bottom of the window.
- For each feature or option, you must consider how its setting will affect the student writer’s use of the program. For example, some students will work better with a sentence window with 5 guesses and flexible spelling. Establishing the appropriate settings for each student writer takes some time initially and “trial and error” is often necessary to get a good match.



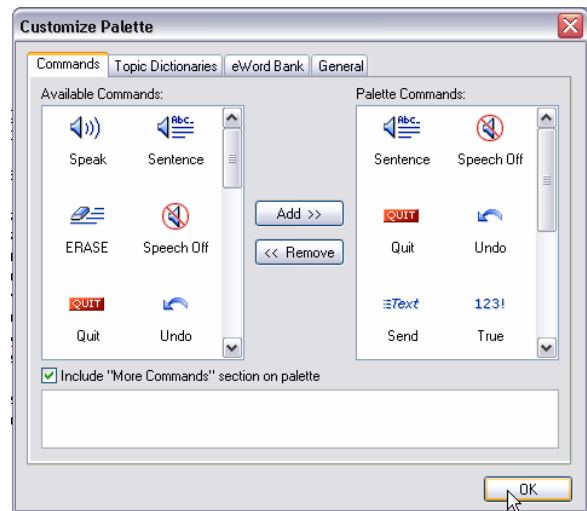
- **Vocabulary**

- The **Vocabulary** button gives you the ability to select and make adjustments to the all important prediction dictionaries on which the word prediction is based.
- From this window you can select the **Main** Dictionary, select and create **Topic** Dictionaries, create and edit **Personal** and **Collected** dictionaries and set the manner in which Co:Writer learns the writer’s unique vocabulary.
- This aspect of the Co:Writer SOLO is very important and the effective management of dictionaries requires a tutorial on its own. When you are ready, please refer to the “Managing Co:Writer SOLO Dictionaries” tutorial and demonstrations.



- **Palette**

- The **Palette** button gives you the ability to customize the writer’s palette. It is important to carefully consider what tools and commands you will make available to your writer in their Co:Writer Palette.
- From the “**Customize Palette**” window, you can select which Commands you want to add or remove from the writer’s palette, whether you want the writer to access or create their own Topic Dictionaries, whether or not you want the writer to see the eWord bank, and even if you want them to see the palette at all.
- Generally speaking, it is recommended that you begin slowly, with very limited access to the Palette’s options and commands. Introducing the options slowly over time, provides the best possible chance of successfully integrating the Co:Writer program into your student’s writing process.



### Topic Dictionary Options

- The Topic Dictionary options allows you, the teacher, to select, create, and manage these dictionaries for your writer. This, again, is covered in detail in the “Managing Co:Writer SOLO Dictionaries” tutorial and demonstrations.

6. From the Teacher Options window, you can also create a “**New Writer...**” and “**Manage Writers**” by clicking on these buttons at the top of the window.
7. When you have finished exploring and establishing the Teacher Options for your new student writer, click the “**Quit**” button to exit the program. The options you have selected are saved automatically.

At this point, you should be comfortable creating a new student writer, helping your student writer use the Co:Writer SOLO program to support his or her written output, and setting up the various prediction options to customize the word prediction environment for that new writer.

When you feel ready, you could proceed to complete the follow up “Managing Co:Writer SOLO Dictionaries” tutorial to learn how to maximize the accuracy of the word prediction for your student writers.