

Dialogue Writing – A How to Guide



What is Dialogue?

Dialogue is what a character or characters say in a written text.
Sometimes it is called speech.

Authors use speech to help break up long pieces of text, to help move the story along, develop the character and make them more interesting for the reader.



How to Write Dialogue

Dialogue needs:

A punctuation mark (, . ? or !) at the end of the sentence before the closing speech mark.

Speech marks at the beginning and end of the character's words, e.g. "Quick, get the bucket!"

The punctuation mark will depend on what happens next in your sentence.

A new line for each new character speaking.

How to Write Dialogue

One way to write dialogue is to use this formula:

“Speech”

+

verb/adverb

+

character's name

Ew it's all over me screeched Jesse

“Ew, it's all over me,” screeched Jesse.

I'm telling on you sneered Tamara to her brother

“I'm telling on you,” sneered Tamara to her brother.

You better clean that up or there will be trouble raged Mum

“You better clean that up or there will be trouble,” raged Mum.

When combining speech with the verb and the character, use a comma (,) before the closing speech mark. This shows that although the speech has finished, the sentence is continuing.

How to Write Dialogue

You can also use this formula in reverse, so it looks like:

character's name

+

verb/adverb

+

“Speech”

Jesse screeched ew it's all over me

Jesse screeched, “Ew, it's all over me.”

Tamara sneered to her brother I'm telling on you

Tamara sneered to her brother, “I'm telling on you.”

Mum raged you better clean that up or there will be trouble

Mum raged, “You better clean that up or there will be trouble.”

When using this formula in reverse, a comma goes before the opening speech mark.
At the end of the speech, use a punctuation mark to end the sentence.

Writing Dialogue Mid Paragraph

You can include dialogue in the middle of a paragraph.

Jett walked into the kitchen and noticed something astray. “How did that happen?” he remarked and went closer to investigate it.

For this you will need:

- Speech marks around what the character says.
- The punctuation mark that best represents how the character says the dialogue or the type of dialogue they have used.

For the above example, Jett is asking himself a question, so at the end of his speech there would be a question mark.

Writing Dialogue Mid Paragraph

Have a look at this example. What punctuation mark do you think would be best suited to this?

Sasha walked into her room and found her baby brother going through all of her most precious things. “Argh, Leroy! Get out of here, you little brat” she screamed angrily.

What do you think? Would you use a comma (,), full stop (.), question mark (?) or exclamation mark (!)?

“Argh, Leroy! Get out of here, you little brat!” she screamed angrily.

An exclamation mark would work best here as Sasha is very angry.

Writing Dialogue Between Characters

When you have more than one character having a conversation, it can get very difficult to follow if it isn't set out properly.

To help the reader, follow these easy tips!

- Start the speech of each new character on a new line.
- Identify who has spoken by using the verb + character format. You can do this either before or after the dialogue.
- Make sure that the speech has meaning and that it doesn't turn your writing into a conversation.

Final Tips for Dialogue Writing

When writing dialogue, always remember:

- Speech marks wrap around the words being said.
- A punctuation mark needs to be before the closing speech mark if the sentence is continuing.
- A punctuation mark needs to be before the opening speech mark if the sentence has started and speech will be mid sentence.
- Choose the appropriate punctuation mark to represent how the character is speaking.



