

Dialogue

Basics

1. A paragraph with dialog consists of:
 - a. what the character is saying
 - b. a tag (optional), limit the verb to either “said” or “asked”
 - c. action/description directly related to what the character is doing/saying
2. Dialog punctuation must be inside the quote marks.
3. If a character’s dialog spans several paragraphs, then only the last paragraph has a closing quote mark.

Example 1

“On this slide,” Professor Harper said, gesturing toward the screen behind her, “is a prime example of the artists’ technique.” She clicked the remote in her hand and the slide changed. “Here, we see a close-up showing the distinctive brush strokes used by this artist.”

A student raised her hand.

“Yes, Stacy?” Professor Harper said.

Tags and Adverbs

<http://www.writing-world.com/fiction/said.shtml>

<http://www.fiction-writers-mentor.com/dialogue-tags.html>

"Go away," he laughed.

Can he really speak that line while laughing? Maybe -- but it might be painful. Readers accept the words said and asked; in fact, they barely notice those words as they read. However, words such as "hollered" and "bawled" often draw their attention away from the dialogue and yank them out of the story. Tags such as ejaculated, bragged, declared, and exclaimed should never be used. They're just too purple and they're falling into the trap of telling-not-showing.

"I think we should go this way," said Jane.

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If you're using pronouns, always put them first, e.g. he said rather than said he.

"I think we should go this way," Jane said, pointing.

Mark nodded. "You're right."

If there are only two people speaking in the scene, you can leave out many - if not most – tags.

"Oh you always do that!" said Clara.

"I do not!"

"You do. Every single time."

"I don't, and I resent you saying that."

Use description instead of tags:

Clara shook her hair back in frustration, "I'm serious, Philip. I can't bear it when you see her."

Avoid adverbs because it's telling rather than showing.

Use of Dialect and Foreign Words

<http://sowrite.us.com/dialect-in-dialogue-how-much-is-too-much/>

1. Translate, using italics
"Ah'd nee lak teh see 'at, laddie," the wary Scot ventured. I'd not like to see that.
2. Add dialect in italics
When Bonatti said, "I don't ever want to see you again, Krepkey," it came out dough nevvah wanna seeyuh.
3. Use dialect only in certain key words or phrases
"I dint mean to offend you, Mr. Tartaglia, I swear." I could barely breath, I was so scared.
He stared at me for a minute with coal-black eyes, and finally smiled. "Fuhgeddaboutit, kid."
4. Use other-character observations for effect
"You may come in, Lieutenant, but I have only a minute to spare before I must leave for a meeting," Meltzkamp said.
He pronounced my title Lute-Nant, but otherwise the old Kraut's English was flawless. I stepped inside.
5. Insert foreign words or phrases in italics, untranslated
The waiter approached us stiffly. "Bonjour, monsieur et madame, welcome to Chez Jacques." We could barely see his eyes behind his uplifted nose. I couldn't read more than a word or two on the linen menu.

Voice

<http://socialpolitan.org/fiction-writing-craft/m/articles/view/Character-Voice-What-Why-Where-and-How>

What is their gender?

What is their educational and/or intelligence level?

What does the dialog show us about the character's personality, goals or emotions?

Give a character habits that indicate an emotional state

Filter perceptions through a character's passions, hobbies or beliefs

Phrasing Emphasis

1.	I never said we should kill him.	Not my fault.
2.	I <i>never</i> said we should kill him.	I didn't suggest this.
3.	I never <i>said</i> we should kill him.	Stop putting words in my mouth.
4.	I never said <i>we</i> should kill him.	I thought we were going to hire a hitman.
5.	I never said we <i>should</i> kill him.	Just because we could isn't a good excuse.
6.	I never said we should <i>kill</i> him.	I suggested we rough him up.
7.	I never said we should kill <i>him</i> .	You killed the wrong person.