Writing Dialogue

Paragraphs are very important to the flow and comprehension of dialogue. Remember to start a new paragraph each time the speaker changes within the dialogue. This helps the reader know when someone new is speaking (and who it is).

How to Write Dialogue

Here are 5 great ways to make sure your dialogue sounds convincing:

1. **Never use dialogue as an information dump.** Too many writers rely on dialogue for story exposition—that is to say that they relay details about plot or backstory through the things their characters say. The result? Writing that sounds completely fake or is what is often referred to as “on the nose dialogue.” Like this: *“As you know,” Dr. Constance said, “I’m a forensic specialist, trained by the FBI in DNA analysis, so I’ll take this sample back to the lab for testing.*
2. **Use simple dialogue tags.** Fancy dialogue tags like *she denounced* or *he proclaimed* might seem like a good way to show off your writer’s vocabulary, but in truth they draw attention away from your dialogue. *She said* or *he said* is almost always your best choice. Let the characters’ words speak for themselves.
3. **Use dialogue beats to help with story pacing and to convey information or emotion.** Dialogue beats are brief depictions of character action inserted in between dialogue that help bring the scene to life. Like this:*“Nah, I don’t mind,” Dan shrugged his shoulders and grinned as he wiped a dirty bandana across his forehead, “Let’s do this thing.”*
4. **Remember that often less is more.** When you write dialogue look back and see if there are words you can leave out or there is a shorter way to say what you just wrote. People often say things the shortest way possible in real life.
5. **Be careful when writing dialect.** Many writers think that giving a character an accent or a drawl is a great way to make the character come to life—and it can be. But if done in a way that is too heavy handed it can turn your character into a stereotype or a joke. Or even worse, you can offend or annoy readers. So, keep in mind that when it comes to dialect, a little goes a long way.