

Lesson 16 Make Your Characters Speak

Dialogue is the conversation between characters in a story. When a writer uses dialogue in a story, the characters seem more real. Here is what dialogue looks like.

“Has anyone seen Tippy?” Sharon asked. Her parents both shook their heads.

“No, I haven’t seen him, dear,” said Dad.

“Not since supper time,” agreed Mom.

Sharon swallowed. “I think he’s lost,” she squeaked, trying not to cry.

Take a closer look at a line of dialogue.

Quotation marks go before and after the speaker’s exact words.

“No, I haven’t seen him, dear,” said Dad.

A **comma** separates the speaker’s words from the tag line. It goes inside the ending quotation marks.

The **tag line** tells who is speaking.

Dialogue should sound like real people talking. An eight-year-old character should sound like a kid. A king should sound like a king. It wouldn’t seem right to have a king say, “Hi, buddy. What’s up?” would it? A king would probably say, “Hello, young man. How are you today?”

Write a line of dialogue for each character below. Make sure it sounds right based on the information about the character. Remember to use quotation marks, tag lines, and commas.

Mom, an important businesswoman: _____

A young child who is lost in a store: _____

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Dialogue tells us more than what characters say. We learn about characters both by what they say and how they say it. We also learn about a character from what other characters say about him or her. The dialogue can tell us how a character feels, too. Dialogue keeps readers interested and moves the story along.

Read the following lines of dialogue. Then, answer the questions.

“Did you see a book lying on my desk, Mary?” asked Charles.

“Why would I take your old book?” Mary challenged.

“Because you would do anything to have something to read,” Charles answered.

Mary snorted, “Well, I can’t help it if I don’t have any money.”

Charles looked at Mary a long time. “Just give it back to me when you’re done.”

What do you know about Charles from these few lines of dialogue?

What do you know about Mary? _____

How do you think Mary feels? _____

What do you know about the setting? _____

What do you know about the plot? What do you think might happen next?
