

How to Write Dialogue

Here are 10 tips for how to write dialogue:

1. Say the **dialogue** out loud.
2. Cut small talk when **writing dialogue**.
3. Keep your **dialogue** brief and impactful.
4. Give each character a unique voice.
5. Add world-appropriate slang.
6. Be consistent with the characters' voices.
7. Remember who they're speaking to.
8. Avoid long **dialogue** paragraphs.

Here are the main rules for writing dialogue:

1. **Each speaker gets a new paragraph.** Every time someone speaks, you show this by creating a new paragraph. Yes, even if your characters are only saying one word, they get new paragraphs.

"We were having a lovely dinner," Michael prompted.

Doug made a short, chortling sound. "Yeah, until he showed up."

"What's the matter with Scott coming around?" I asked, rather astonished.

Michael dropped his fork and aimed daggers at me. "Are you kidding me, Jill? He's a miserable, sarcastic punk."

I blinked at him, astonished. "Well, yes," I said. "I know that, but you two always carry on with him like you're best friends."

2. **Each paragraph is indented.** The only exception for this is if it's the start of a chapter or after a scene break, where the first line is never indented, including with dialogue.
3. **Punctuation for what's said goes *inside* the quotation marks.** Any time the punctuation is a part of the person speaking, they go inside the quotes so the reader knows how the dialogue is said.
4. **Long speeches with several paragraphs don't have end quotations.** You'll see more on this below, but overall, if one character is speaking for so long they have separate paragraphs, the quotation marks on the end are removed, but you start the next paragraph with them.
5. **Use single quotes if the person speaking is quoting someone.** If you have a character who says, "Man, I know you love it when girls say, 'I'm fine.'" The single quotes indicate what someone else says.

