

## Tips for Writing Dialogue

### 1. Listen to How People Talk.

Having a sense of natural speech patterns is essential to good dialogue. Start to pay attention to the expressions that people use and the music of everyday conversation.

### 2. Dialogue Is Not *Exactly* like Real Speech.

But dialogue should *read* like real speech. How do you accomplish that? Alfred Hitchcock said that a good story was "life, with the dull parts taken out." This very much applies to dialogue. A transcription of a conversation would be completely boring to read. Edit out the filler words and unessential dialogue — that is, the dialogue that doesn't contribute to the plot in some way.

### 3. Don't Provide Too Much Info at Once.

It should not be obvious to the reader that they're being fed important facts. Let the story unfold naturally. You don't have to tell the reader everything up front, and you can trust him or her to remember details from earlier in the story.

### 4. Break Up Dialogue with Action.

Remind your reader that your characters are physical human beings by grounding their dialogue in the physical world. Physical details also help break up the words on the page: long periods of dialogue are easier for the reader's eye when broken up by description. (And vice versa, for that matter.)

### 5. Don't Overdo Dialogue Tags.

Veering too much beyond "he said/she said" only draws attention to the tags — and you want the reader's attention centered on your brilliant dialogue, not your ability to think of synonyms for "said."