

Lesson 10 – Dialogue

Dialogue, or the conversations between characters, is a critical component of a narrative! It helps the reader understand characters, provides excitement, and makes the story more believable. As with a lot of writing, there are rules to incorporating dialogue. Let's go over **6** simple rules to writing dialogue.

Rule 1

Quotation Marks – Always put anything a character says out loud in quotation marks.

Example: My mother asked, “Where did you put your homework?”

Example: “Please be quiet when the baby is sleeping,” Henry implored.

Rule 2

Speaker/Tag – For most quotes, a speaker is needed to indicate who is talking and can be written before or after the quote.

Example: **He said**, “The game was so boring. It ended in a tie.”

Example: “They’re allergic to cats so they won’t be able to come over,” **she explained**.

Rule 3

Punctuation - Commas should be included with the speaker (either before or after depending on location of the quote). If the quote is a statement, question, or exclamation, the punctuation goes inside the quotation marks.

Example: She screamed, “Put your phone away!”

Example: “How else will I know what time it is?” he replied. (Note here that you would not use a comma!)

When a speaker is trailing off, use an ellipsis (...), and when a character is interrupted, use a dash (but –).

Example: She started, “I wanted to...”

Example: “How could —” she tried to ask.

Rule 4

Broken Quote - Mixing up how you quote will keep your narrative interesting. When breaking up a quote, the quotes and narration are separated with commas.

Example: “She just stood there ,” Pete explained , “and just looked so confused.”

Rule 5

New speaker - When a different character speaks, you must start a new paragraph and indent

Example:

She asked, “How was the movie last night?”
“It was ok,” he replied.
“Not good?”
“I mean it was entreating, but I thought it would be better,” he explained. He thought about how he wished she would’ve come with him, because that was what made it better, but he couldn’t bring himself to admit that. Instead, he probed, “Did you have a good night?”
She exclaimed, “Oh, yeah! Great.”

Rule 6

Complete and Incomplete Sentences - Surely, you’ve been told to write in complete sentences, but this is where you get to break the rules! People don’t always talk in complete sentences, so make your dialogue sound real!

Example:

“You good?” he asked.
“Yeah,” she answered.
“Sure?”
“I guess,” she hesitated.
“Ok, well if you need anything...”
“Thanks.”
“Welcome.”

Lesson 11 – Dialogue Practice

Directions: For the following paragraphs. Rewrite the paragraph, following the rules for correct dialogue. Before you rewrite, first **highlight the quotes**

1. I know, I grumbled. A month erasing workbooks. That wasn't the right thing to say. Come with me, Mrs. Dodds said. Wait! Grover yelled. It was me. / pushed her. I stared at him, stunned. I couldn't believe he was trying to cover for me. Mrs. Dodds scared Grover to death. She glared at him so hard his whiskery chin trembled. I don't think so, Mr. Underwood, she said. But— You—will—stay—here. Grover looked at me desperately. It's okay, man, I told him. Thanks for trying. Honey, Mrs. Dodds barked at me. Now. (excerpt from *Percy Jackson*)

Page 10 from *Percy Jackson: The Lightning Thief*

"I know," I grumbled. "A month erasing workbooks."
That wasn't the right thing to say.
"Come with me," Mrs. Dodds said.
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She glared at him so hard his whiskery chin trembled.
"I don't think so, Mr. Underwood," she said.
"But—"
"You—will—stay—here."
Grover looked at me desperately.
"It's okay, man," I told him. "Thanks for trying."
"Honey," Mrs. Dodds barked at me. "Now."

2. Finally I couldn't stand it anymore. I said, Looking for Kindly Ones? Grover nearly jumped out of his seat. Wha—what do you mean? I confessed about eavesdropping on him and Mr. Brunner the night before the exam. Grover's eye twitched. How much did you hear? Oh... not much. What's the summer solstice deadline? He winced. Look, Percy...I was just worried for you, see? I mean, hallucinating about demon math teacher... Grover— And I was telling Mr. Brunner that maybe you were overstressed or something, because there was no such person as Mrs. Dodds, and...(excerpt from *Percy Jackson*)

Page 23 from *Percy Jackson: The Lightning Thief*

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Grover's eye twitched. "How much did you hear?"
"Oh... not much. What's the summer solstice deadline?"

He winced. “Look, Percy...I was just worried for you, see? I mean, hallucinating about demon math teacher...”

“Grover—“

“And I was telling Mr. Brunner that maybe you were overstressed or something, because there was no such person as Mrs. Dodds, and...”

3. I looked over at Grover to say something about this and saw that the blood had drained from his face. His nose was twitching. Grover? I said. Hey, man— Tell me they’re not looking at you. They are, aren’t they? Yeah. Weird, huh? You think those socks would fit me? Not funny, Percy. Not funny at all. The old lady in the middle took out a huge pair of scissors—gold and silver, long-bladed, like shears. I heard Grover catch his breath. We’re getting on the bus, he told me. Come on. What? I said. It’s a thousand degrees in there. Come on! He pried open the door and climbed inside, but I stayed back. Across the road, the old ladies were still watching me. The middle one cut the yarn, and I swear I could hear that *snip* across four lanes of traffic. (excerpt from *Percy Jackson*)

Page 26 from *Percy Jackson: The Lightning Thief*

I looked over at Grover to say something about this and saw that the blood had drained from his face. His nose was twitching.

“Grover?” I said. “Hey, man—“

“Tell me they’re not looking at you. They are, aren’t they?”

“Yeah. Weird, huh? You think those socks would fit me?”

“Not funny, Percy. Not funny at all.”

The old lady in the middle took out a huge pair of scissors—gold and silver, long-bladed, like shears. I heard Grover catch his breath.

“We’re getting on the bus, he told me. Come on.”

“What?” I said. “It’s a thousand degrees in there.”

“Come on!” He pried open the door and climbed inside, but I stayed back.

Across the road, the old ladies were still watching me. The middle one cut the yarn, and I swear I could hear that *snip* across four lanes of traffic.