

Note on Dialogue

Do you understand dialogue use?"

"I do now!" he replied.

name:

Date:

The use of dialogue is an important part of most narrative stories. By including speech, writers can add realism through the use of slang or colloquialisms that would otherwise be avoided in your more formal writing. The talk between characters also creates immediacy and a sense of action that enlivens the plot. Of course, a story should not be composed entirely of dialogue.

Punctuating dialogue properly helps guide the reader through the story and keeps the identity of the speaker clear in everyone's minds. Follow these simple rules to proofread your use of quotation marks and dialogue.

1. Quotation marks (" ... ") go around the words being spoken.

"I think we should leave," said Adam.

2. A Comma (,) separates the words being spoken from the rest of the sentence and is included inside the quotation marks.

(See above example)

3. When a quotation mark ends a sentence, place the period inside the quotation marks.

Alex answered, "In a minute."

4. Exclamation points and question marks should only go inside the quotation marks if they are a part of the quotation.

"Do you think we should leave? " said Adam.

Alex answered, "In a minute."

"Well," Ryan yelled, "I'm all set!"

5. Always capitalize the first letter of the first word in a quotation.

6. Write dialogue against the left margin, starting a new line for each speaker. You may notice that this does not happen in some books, but it is a good strategy for keeping the order of speakers straight in a longer conversation.

Suggestions:

1. Avoid using the same identifier (she said / he said) every time. Try these:

- responded...	- cried...	- replied...	- asked ...
- queried ...	- added ...	- answered ...	- begged ...
- growled ...	- hissed ...	- joked ...	- wailed ...

2. If you must use "...said ...", modify it with an adverb, as in **"What do you think?" he said, slyly.**

Dialogue Exercises 1.0

name:

date:

Arrange the following groups of sentences into proper dialogue. You will have to add quotation marks and any extra punctuation that is needed. Write your answers in the spaces provided below.

Use the Note on Dialogue and Page 15 of the Grade 6 spelling text to help make your decisions.

1. You're awfully quiet, Terry said. Just thinking. And trying not to pester him with questions. About what? About school, I lied. I didn't want him to know what I'd really been thinking about.

- from "Run" by Eric Walters.

2. At the edge of these cliffs was a most unusual sight - the wreck of a small sailboat. An old man was sitting among the broken timbers, smoking a pipe. He seemed to be reading my mind when he said Odd, isn't it? Yes, I answered. How did it get here? Waves carried it up during a storm. Really? I said. It doesn't seem the waves could ever get that high.

- from "The Wreck of the Zephyr" by Chris Van Allsburg

3. One day the River, gliding sleepily, looked and saw the stars in the night sky. What is that? wondered the River in a sleepy voice. What's what, where? asked Hyena, who happened to be nearby. Up there with the many eyes, replied the sleepy River. That is the night sky, Hyena answered and went on his way. Oh how I wish I could go to the sky, said the River, sighing as it fell asleep.

From "The River that Went to the Sky", by Kasiya Phiri

Dialogue Exercises 2.0

name:

date:

Arrange the following groups of sentences into proper dialogue. You will have to add quotation marks and any extra punctuation that is needed. Write your answers in your Spelling notebook.

Use the Note on Dialogue and Page 15 of the Grade 6 spelling text to help make your decisions.

1.

It was a lovely late summer day, and Father wanted me to come with him. Where are we going? I asked. To the Abbinks. I'm going to talk to them about hiding. Be careful, Rachel warned, and don't ride through town. I know, I know, Father said impatiently. I knew too. There were German soldiers in town. Now we couldn't ride bikes anymore. We should have turned our bike in, but Father had refused. Let's go, Annie, Father had said.

-- From The Upstairs Room, by Johanna Reiss.

2.

Supper was finished in the Neufeld home when Grandfather drew Peter beside his chair and suggested that they talk together while the others finished their packing. There is nothing I can do to help with my useless legs, Grandfather joked with the family, but I never tire of talking. Perhaps you can spare Peter and let him listen to me. The others were too busy to answer. Push my chair in the far corner, Peter, into the shadows. Peter was puzzled, but obeyed. I want to talk with you about Otto.

-- From Days of Terror, by Barbara Smucker.

3.

Well, now, Mr. Summers said soberly, guess we better get started, get this over with, so's we can get back to work. Anybody ain't here? Dunbar, several people said, Dunbar, Dunbar. Mr. Summers consulted his list. Clyde Dunbar, he said. That's right. He's broke his leg, hasn't he? Who's drawing for him? Me, I guess, a woman said, and Mr. Summers turned to look at her. Wife draws for her husband, Mr. Summers said. Don't have a grown boy to do it for you, Janey? Although Mr. Summers and everybody in the village knew the answer perfectly well, it was the business of the official of the lottery to ask such questions formally. Mr. Summers waited with an expression of polite interest while Mrs. Dunbar answered. Horace's not but sixteen yet, Mrs. Dunbar said regretfully. Guess I gotta fill in for the old man this year.

-- From The Lottery, by Shirley Jackson.

Dialogue In-class Practice

- Remember that too much dialogue can make a story hard to follow.
- A little dialogue makes a story interesting.

Last weekend I spent 10 hours on research said Jack. Incredible said Erik it's impressive that you spent so much time on school work! Who said anything about studying replied Jack I put my Library books under the mattress when I went to bed!

"Last weekend I spent 10 hours on research," said Jack.

"Incredible!" said Erik. "It's impressive that you spent so much time on school work!"

"Who said anything about studying?" replied Jack. "I put my Library books under the mattress when I went to bed!"

What do you notice about the first letter of the first word in each quotation?