

PUNCTUATING CONVERSATION

Quotation marks began in ancient Greek texts as two curved lines that represented the lips of a person speaking. One curved line was placed at the beginning, as if the writer were saying, "I'm telling you something someone else said." The other curved line came at the end, to say, "I've finished writing the words that came out of the other person's mouth."

- Quotation marks are placed before the first word of a quote and after the punctuation that follows the last word.

EX: The teacher said, "In this class there will be no talking, chewing, breathing, unnecessary eye movements, or tap dancing."

- A quoted remark begins with a capital letter: it's the speaker's first word.

EX: I questioned, "Are you up on the furniture again, you bad dog?" She was driving me crazy. I hollered, "Get down now!"

- A quote is separated from the "he said" part or explanatory phrase with a *comma* OR a *question mark* OR an *exclamation point*, but *never* with a period. A period would create two sentences and a full stop.

EX: "I just finished reading *I Am the Cheese*," she remarked.

"So what did you think of it?" I asked.

"It was excellent!" she effused.

I agreed, "I loved it, too."

Note: The punctuation that follows a quoted remark belongs inside the closing quotation marks. It's part of the sentence and shows *how* the speaker said what he or she said. Also note that the first word of the explanatory phrase is *not* capitalized when it follows the quote: "Beggin' Strips® are my favorite snack," she said.

- In writing dialogue—two or more people having a conversation—begin a new paragraph *each time* you alternate or change speakers.

EX: "I wish today were Friday," she said. "I've been looking forward to it for months now."

"How come?" he asked.

"Because finally, *finally*, I'm supposed to get my braces taken off. At least that's what my orthodontist promised."

What is dialogue?

Dialogue is the conversation between two or more characters in a story.

When writing dialogue what should you remember?

1. Dialogue can help to create images for the reader to “show” the reader what is happening instead of “telling” them what is happening.

2. Dialogue shows the personality and “voice” of the speaker. When you write dialogue, it should sound natural like everyday conversation. For example, an eleven-year-old will not sound like an adult when they speak.

“Oh, my gosh! I just stuck my hand into my locker and there was something slimy in there. It was so gross!”

“My goodness! When I placed my hand into my locker to retrieve my belongings, there was a slimy object inside. It offended my delicate sensibilities!”

Are there any “rules” for writing dialogue?

Well, maybe just a few that you'll need for now... we'll learn more during another mini-lesson.

- **Indent each time a different person speaks.**
- **Make the words sound like everyday conversation.**
- **Put the exact words of a speaker in quotation marks.**
- **Set off the quoted words from the rest of the sentence by using a comma.**

Jen asked, “Do you have after school help?”

“Not today,” Mrs. L. replied, “but maybe tomorrow.”

“Not today,” Mrs. L. replied. “Maybe tomorrow.”

- **At the end of the quoted words, put a period, comma or exclamation point **INSIDE** the quotation marks.**

“I’m home,” my mother exclaimed.

“That’s great!” I answered.