

### Basic Rules for Writing Dialogue:

- ♣ For now, only one character can speak in a single paragraph. If a new person speaks, start a new one. (See Page 40.)
- ♣ If you want to identify who said a quote, end the quote with a comma, close the punctuation marks, and identify. Ex. **“Dialogue,” says Mr. Sylvester.**
- ♣ If your sentence ends with an exclamation point (!) or a question mark (?), you don't need the comma. Use a lower case letter for the she said/said she. Ex. **“Cannibals?” suggested Rainsford.**
- ♣ Within that one paragraph, a character's dialogue can be interrupted by some physical description: **“For the hunter,” amended Whitney. “Not for the jaguar.”**
- ♣ To continue an interrupted sentence: **“You've got good eyes,” said Whitney, with a laugh, “and I've seen you pick off a moose. . .”** (\*\*note the use of commas and lack of a capitalized “A” in and.
- ♣ Don't forget to indent every new paragraph.

**You try it!** On a separate sheet of paper, translate this script into story dialogue. Include identifiers such as , *said Jack*.

Jack: Your car's such a mess. When you gonna wash that thing?

Lauren: Umm, I'm waiting for the rain to do that for me.

Jack: Good thinking. It'll seem like you got a new paint job.

Lauren: From tan to white! But I'll miss this shade of tan. It's so natural.

Jack: You are so strange!

### Tips to Writing Better Dialogue:

- ♣ Save the small talk! Not every quote a character says has to be delivered as dialogue. Sometimes you can simply summarize things a character tells another. Ex. John told the cashier to keep the change.
- ♣ Dialogue is a chance for the writer to reveal the character's personality. Does the character speak standard English? Some slang? Maybe they leave certain words out when they speak? The word choices you make should be interesting and reveal personality traits.
- ♣ Try to give different characters different voices when you write dialogue.
- ♣ Instead of always using the common: *“Blah blah,” said Stephanie.* Try to use more accurate words that make your dialogue more exciting. Sample words could be: replied, asked, whispered, yelled, screamed, remarked, muttered, mumbled, etc.
- ♣ Don't be afraid to have your characters actually stutter in their dialogue, or have other characters interrupt each other. You can end a quote with a dash—if you want him/her to be interrupted.

**Try it again:** On that sheet of paper you used earlier, write a new dialogue that begins with the quote: **“Hey, how's it going?” Dana asked.** Pretend you are a character in the story and make up **at least 6 lines** of dialogue to continue your conversation with Dana. Remember the rules, and remember the tips!

For more help and practice go online and check out:  
<http://mrbraiman.home.att.net/page25.html>