



# Dialogue

Dialogue is one of the quickest ways to bring a scene to life. It reveals character, creates movement, and gives the reader a sense of immediacy. But it works best when it feels natural, purposeful, and true to the people speaking.

## A Quick Example

### **Bad (flat, explanatory, unnatural):**

*“I am very angry with you,” John said. “You have betrayed my trust and now I must leave.”*

### **Better (natural, emotional, character-driven):**

John slammed the drawer shut. “You knew I’d find out. What did you think was going to happen?”

The second version shows emotion through action, tone, and implication, not through stiff explanation.

## Let Characters Speak in Their Own Voice

Each character should sound like themselves. Think about:

- vocabulary
- rhythm
- confidence or hesitancy
- humour or bluntness
- how directly they speak

A nervous character won’t speak like a confident one. A teenager won’t speak like a judge. Let their voice reflect who they are.

## **Keep Dialogue Natural**

Real speech is messy, but written dialogue shouldn't be. Aim for:

- short exchanges
- interruptions
- unfinished thoughts
- people talking around the point
- characters not always answering the question

Natural doesn't mean copying real conversation word-for-word. It means capturing the *essence* of how people speak.

## **Maintain the Flow**

In a long stretch of dialogue, you don't need to tag every line with "he said" or "she said." Use:

- occasional tags ("she said")
- action beats ("he folded his arms")
- shifts in tone or topic

These keep the reader oriented without breaking the rhythm.

If two characters are speaking clearly, you can let several lines run without tags. The reader will follow. Too many tags can eliminate the dynamism.

## **Use Dialogue to Reveal, Not Explain**

Dialogue works best when it:

- shows conflict
- reveals emotion
- deepens relationships
- moves the story forward
- exposes what characters want or fear

Avoid using dialogue to dump information the characters already know. If it sounds like two people reading from a briefing document, it's a sign to rewrite.

## A Quick Exercise

Write a short exchange between two characters who disagree about something small - where to eat, who should make the tea, whether the window should stay open.

Focus on:

- their voices
- their rhythms
- what they *don't* say
- how their personalities shape the argument

Small disagreements often reveal the most.