



USING DIALOGUE

*These guidelines will help you format
and punctuate dialogue properly.*



FORMAT

- ❖ Begin a new paragraph every time the speaker changes.
- ❖ Unless an action accompanies a quotation, begin a new paragraph when you move out of dialogue and into action.

Example...

SARAH “Peter called to tell me Donna has been arrested,” Sarah burst out as I walked in.

NARRATOR “Donna...arrested?” I was astonished. Donna was mouse-like, anything but likely to be in trouble with the police. “What has she done?”

Sarah was distraught, eyes puffed and red from crying. Wadded tissue piled onto the table next to her chair. She and Donna had been closest friends until Peter, Donna’s husband, was transferred to another city. Though they had not kept in close touch, the bond was still there when one of them was in trouble. “She went out shopping,” she said, trying at last to speak clearly. “And she stole...she stole...” **SARAH**

“Well, for heaven’s sake,” I said, “thousands of people shoplift. So why all of this excessive drama?” **NARRATOR**

(adapted from Dick Francis, Twice Shy)

PUNCTUATION

❖ Enclose direct quotations, the words a person says, in quotation marks.

❖ Ex:

"Mr. President, you have a reputation as a quiet man," said Coolidge's dinner companion. "I have wagered a dollar that I can get you to say more than three words."

"You lose, madam," replied the President.

❖ Remember that quotation marks always appear in pairs.

PUNCTUATION

- ❖ Do not use quotation marks for indirect quotations (statements that summarize or paraphrase a person's remarks).

Our instructor told us that we should follow several punctuation rules when we use dialogue.

- ❖ One clue that you're using an indirect quotation: such statements often begin with *that*.

PUNCTUATION


❖ We use single quotation marks (on a computer, use the apostrophe) when the speaker uses a quotation.

"Come on, let's stop fooling around," Jim said. He thought he'd try charming her with his college education, "Remember what Andrew Marvell said, 'Had we but world enough and time, this coyness, lady, were no crime.'"

PUNCTUATION

❖ Commas and periods always appear inside quotation marks, even if they are not part of the person's remarks.

He was so humorless that someone once suggested that he "laughed only by appointment."



PUNCTUATION

❖ Question marks, semicolons, and exclamation points appear inside quotation marks only if they are part of the person's remarks.

Martha asked, "Do you not see what my sister is doing?"

Wasn't it Richard Nixon who proclaimed, "I am not a crook"?

PUNCTUATION

- ❖ When a quotation extends beyond a paragraph, begin each new paragraph with a quotation mark.
- ❖ Do not put a quotation mark at the end of a paragraph until the end of the quotation.

Example...

"It was two years ago, the summer that my daughters gave up their Afros and had their hair straightened, that I decided to watch every Shirley Temple film available on video with them. This included nineteen Twentieth Century Fox films that were made during her heyday--1934 to 1938--and several short Baby Burlesks."

→ "Perhaps I associate my children's change in hairstyle with our Shirley Temple phase because so much was made of Temple's hair, her curls, during her years of stardom. My daughters liked Temple's hair very much."

(adapted from Gerald Early, "Black like ...Shirley Temple?")



FUNCTIONS FOR DIALOGUE

- ❖ Provide Information
- ❖ Describe a place or character
- ❖ Create a sense of time
- ❖ Reveal a character's thoughts
- ❖ Move the story forward
- ❖ Summarize what has happened
- ❖ Create a sense of place
- ❖ Create conflict or suspense