

Formatting Dialogue

“All dialogue should appear inside double quotation marks – like this.”

Dialogue begins with open quotation marks (“) and ends with closed quotation marks (”).



Each character speaks on a new line:

“Are you okay?”

“Yes, I’m fine.”

“Are you sure?”

“Very sure, please stop asking.”



“If your character’s dialogue covers more than one paragraph, only use closed quotation marks at the end of the very last paragraph of dialogue.

“But do put open quotation marks at the beginning of *every* paragraph.

“Like this example.”



Punctuation marks come before closed quotation marks:

.” ?” ,” ✓

”. ”? ”, ✗



If your dialogue is followed by *s/he said*, change the full stop to a comma (,) and put the full stop at the end:

“Thank you for doing that,” she said.



With a question mark or exclamation mark do not use a capital *S/He*:

“Are you going shopping?” she asked. ✓

“Are you going shopping?” She asked. ✗

But do use a capital if going straight into action:

“Are you going shopping?” He reached for his wallet.



If you wish to add description after *s/he said*, add another comma and place the full stop at the end of the descriptive:

“Thank you for doing that,” she said, mysteriously.

“You’re welcome,” he replied, pausing to shake her hand.



If you want to continue to add more dialogue after action, start with fresh quotation marks on the same line if it’s the same character speaking:

“You’re welcome,” he replied, pausing to shake her hand. “Is there anything else I can do for you?”



If you want to interrupt a sentence with action, use two sets of quotation marks separated by commas:

“It isn’t easy,” she hiccupped, “being fabulous.”

“Have you ever,” he coughed, “thought of giving up smoking?”

[**Note:** employ this technique sparingly. Using it once or twice is effective. Using it all the time becomes difficult for the reader.]



Keep things clean. If dialogue is followed by a large amount of description, or the description is not related to the person speaking, start a separate paragraph:

“Let’s go to the beach,” Clara suggested. “It’s a lovely day.” Out in the Indian Ocean, dark clouds were brewing. They had been at sea too long and were growing bored. One particular thundercloud suggested they should spend the day at the beach.

“That sounds like a splendid idea,” Henry said. ✘

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