

Dialogue Exercises Worksheet



If you're struggling with dialogue, pick one or more of the following prompts for a free-writing session. Don't overthink it—just go with the one that speaks to you in the moment.

1. Make Characters More Distinct

Go to a public place and eavesdrop on conversations. Make a list of the different speaking styles, rhythms, and patterns of people's speech. Use some for existing characters and see how it changes the scene.

2. Opposites

Create two characters with opposite backgrounds (e.g. one is wealthy and privileged, the other is poor and disadvantaged), and write a scene where they must navigate a social situation together.

3. Disagreement

Write a scene where two characters disagree, conveying their emotions through the dialogue, body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice. Then do it again, but swap their positions and have them debate the other character's view.

4. Storytell through Dialogue

Take a scene from one of your stories and rewrite it using only dialogue. Rely on the conversation to move the action forward.

5. Amp up the Tension

Pick one of your scenes and rewrite the dialogue to heighten the tension and conflict between characters. Do it again and see if you can raise it even more.

6. Tighten a Scene

Take an existing dialogue-heavy scene and cut out any unnecessary words or phrases from the dialogue. Read it out loud and listen to how it flows. Then cut it down again and note the differences. Keep cutting and analyze how the various amounts of dialogue change the scene. What works best for your story and style of writing?

7. Fill in the Backstory

Take an entire section of backstory and see if you can drop it into a conversation. Avoid the 'as you know Bob' infodump mistake by using context clues and trusting your reader to fill in the blanks.

8. Go Full-Speed

Try rewriting a scene of slow dialogue by removing all dialogue tags and descriptions so that the only text is what's between the quotes. Then, add back in one or two tags—but only if necessary.

9. Summarize

Try rewriting a scene of boring dialogue by summing it all up in a single sentence of description. (*I.e. She went on to explain how the gizmo worked, even though none of us truly understood.*)