

DIALOGUE

Aspect of Dialogue	Assessment		
	Works well	Needs work	Poor
Do you have a good understanding of how dialogue shows differences in ethnic background, social standing, education levels and ages? (If not, go out one day with the specific intention of listening to different rhythms and patterns of speech.)			
Does each of your characters sound like an individual?			
Is it clear who is saying what in each scene?			
Have you over-used speech tags? (These are necessary only if it is otherwise unclear who is speaking.)			
Have you taken into account that most people use contractions in conversation? (e.g.: <i>she's</i> rather than <i>she is</i> ; <i>they're</i> rather than <i>they are</i> , <i>it'll</i> rather than <i>it will</i> etc.)			
Does your dialogue read well aloud? (If it sounds stilted, make some changes.)			
Have you broken up long passages of direct speech with actions, details of the non-viewpoint character's expression or the viewpoint character's thoughts?			
Does each speaker's response flow smoothly from the previous speaker's words? (Unless you are trying to show that one of the speakers is distracted.)			
Have you made sure that quotation marks are used for <i>words that are spoken aloud</i> , not for thoughts?			
Have you checked that your sentence structure is varied – no repetitive patterns; not too many sentences starting with the same word?			
Does your dialogue sound appropriate for the age of each character?			
Have you, where appropriate, indicated a response by showing some body language or a facial expression rather than using words?			
Have you avoided 'info-dumping' in dialogue? (That is, using dialogue unnaturally as a way of filling in the backstory – having one character tell another something they would obviously already know.)			
Have you avoided using dialogue to express YOUR religious, political or social views rather than those of the character?			
Have you woven the viewpoint character's thoughts and emotions into the conversation as it is taking place? (Avoid the 'sandwich technique' – sections of direct speech using only speech tags, followed by paragraphs showing the character thinking or acting.)			
Have you mostly 'shown' the reader the dialogue as it is happening rather than 'reporting' what has been said? (Writers who are uncomfortable with dialogue often resort to this: "He told James what he had seen and then they decided what to do next. Jane came in and offered her opinions. A little later, they all set off..." etc etc)			
Does every passage of dialogue move the story forward or show us something about the character?			