

Dialogue

The words that people or fictional characters say to each other

Dialogue is conversation. It is the words that people or fictional characters say to each other. The speaker's exact words are a **direct quotation**. Place **quotation marks** at the beginning and end of the speaker's exact words. Follow these 10 rules when you write dialogue.

Direct quotation

A speaker's exact words

Rule 1 Put quotation marks around the speaker's exact words.

EXAMPLE "Time is money," said Benjamin Franklin.

Quotation marks

The marks (" ") placed at the beginning and end of a direct quotation

Rule 2 Capitalize the first word of a quotation.

EXAMPLE Franklin also said, "Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise."

Rule 3 You may identify the speaker at the beginning of the quotation. Use a comma to separate the speaker from the quotation. Use an end punctuation mark at the end of the quotation.

EXAMPLE Angela said, "I am going to practice."

Rule 4 You may identify the speaker at the end of the quotation. Use a comma to separate the speaker from the quotation. Put the comma inside the quotation marks.

EXAMPLE "I will see you after practice," said Armando.

Rule 5 If the quotation is a question, use a question mark at the end of the quotation. If the speaker's sentence expresses strong feeling, use an exclamation mark.

EXAMPLE "Will I see you after practice?" asked Armando.
"No, I said I would talk to you after dinner!" said Angela.

Rule 6 Put the punctuation mark at the end of the quotation inside the closing quotation mark.

EXAMPLE Angela said, "Practice ends at 5 o'clock."

Activity A Write these sentences on your paper. Punctuate them correctly. Add capital letters as needed.

- 1) What are you doing after school asked Emily.
- 2) Nathan replied I am going to the library.
- 3) Emily said would you get me a book.
- 4) What book do you want he asked.
- 5) She answered I need a book about frogs.

Activity B These quotations have punctuation mistakes. On your paper, write each quotation correctly.

- 1) "Can I help you," Emily said to a customer.
- 2) "Yes, I am looking for a special song" she replied.
- 3) I want a recording of a song my father likes.
- 4) Emily said "I'll help you find it."
- 5) "My manager knows every song ever written".

Rule 7 Start a new paragraph with each new speaker. You do not always need to identify the speaker.

EXAMPLE “Why are you interested in getting a book about frogs?” asked Nathan.
“I have a report due in biology class,” Emily replied.
“I should have guessed.”

Rule 8 The speaker may say several sentences. Use quotation marks only at the beginning and end of the entire speech.

EXAMPLE “I am writing a report about the types of amphibians. I am almost finished, but I need to check a few facts. If you could bring me a book about frogs, I would appreciate it. After band practice, I have to go to work for a couple of hours, so I can’t get to the library.”

Rule 9 When there are quotation marks inside a direct quotation, you use a single quotation mark for the inside quote. You also use single quotation marks around a title when it is written inside a quotation.

EXAMPLE “I love the song ‘You Are My Sunshine,’ ” said Meg.

Rule 10 You can identify the speaker within a quotation. Begin the second part of the sentence with a small letter.

EXAMPLE “I think,” said Emily, “that I have never heard that song before.”

Activity C The quotations have punctuation mistakes. On your paper, write each quotation correctly.

- 1) Emily said. I am looking for a song called “You Belong to My Heart.”
- 2) “Do you know who recorded it” she asked the manager.
- 3) “No,” the manager said, “but we can look on the computer.”
“I am sure we will find it there.”
- 4) “There it is! Emily spotted the name of the song.
- 5) “Thank you for helping me” the customer said.

Indirect quotation

Not a speaker’s exact words; an indirect quotation is often introduced by the word *that*

A quotation can be either direct or indirect. An **indirect quotation** does not use the speaker’s exact words. It is often introduced by the word *that*. You do not use quotation marks in an indirect quote.

EXAMPLE

Indirect Quotation

The customer said that she could not sing at all.

Direct Quotation

The customer said, “I cannot sing at all.”

Activity D Write each of these indirect quotations as a direct quote. You may change the words around in the new sentence.

Example The manager said that the store was not very busy.
“The store is not very busy,” the manager said.

- 1) The manager told Emily that she could leave early.
- 2) Emily thanked her manager.
- 3) She had explained that she was going home to finish her science report.
- 4) Nathan dropped by and told Emily that he had her book on frogs.
- 5) Nathan explained that he was happy to help Emily.

Play

A story told in dialogue that someone wrote to be performed on a stage

A **play** is a story told in dialogue that someone wrote to be performed on a stage. The dialogue does not need quotation marks. It is introduced by the speaker's name followed by a colon (:). Sometimes stage directions, which tell an actor what to do, follow the speaker's name. These directions are placed in parentheses.

EXAMPLE

Manager (*turning to Emily*): You can leave early.

Emily: Thank you.

Emily (*to herself*): I wonder if Nathan was able to get the book I needed.

Activity E On your paper, write the following dialogue in play format.

Example “Mr. Thomas, do we have a test this week?”
asked Nathan.

Nathan: Mr. Thomas, do we have a test this week?

“Yes,” answered Mr. Thomas. “There will be a test on Friday.”

“Is it on Chapter Two or Chapter Three?”

“Both,” replied Mr. Thomas.

“Both!” Nathan exclaimed. “Won’t that be difficult?”

“Not if you start studying now.”

“Will the test be multiple choice?”

Mr. Thomas replied, “Yes, there will be multiple choice and two short essay questions.”

“Thanks, Mr. Thomas,” said Nathan. “I’m going to start studying now!”

Rewrite these sentences so that they are direct quotations.
Use correct punctuation and capitalization.

- 1) Nathan asked Emily to come to his party.
- 2) Emily asked him when it will be.
- 3) He told Emily the party will be on Friday night.
- 4) She said she had to ask her parents first.
- 5) Emily asked her father if she could go to Nathan's party.
- 6) Mr. Watson gave her permission to go.
- 7) Emily thanked her father.
- 8) She told Nathan she could come to his party.
- 9) Nathan told her the party started at 6:30 P.M.
- 10) Emily said that she'd be there.

Write a short story about something that recently happened to you or someone you know. Include some dialogue or some indirect quotations. Be sure to follow the rules for writing dialogue.



Using What You've Learned

Listen to a conversation between two people at home or on television. Write down some of their conversation. Then write the conversation in play format. Use the example on page 360 as a model.

Where to Find It



Grammar References

No one can remember every grammar rule. Grammar reference books provide help with punctuation questions, sentence fragments, run-on sentences, and more.

Suppose you are not sure whether to use a colon or a dash. The punctuation section of a grammar reference lists the rules for using each punctuation mark. Maybe you can't decide whether to use *its* or *it's* in a sentence. A grammar reference gives the meaning of each word. You can find many grammar references in a library. Use the index of the book you choose to find specific topics. For example, looking up *run-on sentences* leads to the following information in one grammar reference:

A **run-on sentence** is two or more sentences written as one without proper punctuation and conjunctions. Use one of the following ways to correct a run-on sentence:

- Make the clauses into separate sentences.
- Connect the clauses with a comma and a coordinating conjunction.
- Make one of the clauses a subordinate clause.

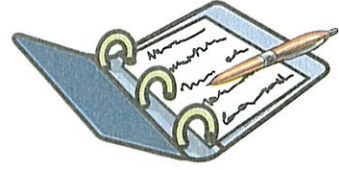
If you use a word processor, your computer probably has a grammar checker. When you run a grammar check, the computer indicates sentences that may have a grammatical error. It suggests changes to make to each sentence. A grammar checker can be helpful in pointing out possible problems. But remember—you are the writer! After a grammar checker points out a possible problem, look it up in a grammar reference. Then you can be sure there is really an error and if so, how to fix it.

- 1) Use the grammar reference entry above to check whether the sentence below is a run-on. If it is, use one of the ways listed in the entry to correct the problem.

The library has many computers it also has a good reference section.

- 2) Proofread something you have written recently. Find a sentence with punctuation, usage, or grammar you are unsure of. Use a grammar reference to find out whether your sentence needs to be corrected. If it does, rewrite the sentence.

Writing Project



Tell a Story Using Dialogue

Adding dialogue to a story creates interest. The characters in the story speak to each other. They seem more real. Read the following story. Then rewrite it to include dialogue. The first few sentences are done for you.

Example Nathan and Armando were walking down the hall to class.
"The school play is in two weeks," said Armando.
"I was thinking of asking Emily to go to the play," replied Nathan.
"Do you think she would go with me?"

Nathan and Armando were walking down the hall to class. The school play was in two weeks. Nathan turned to Armando and said that he was thinking of asking Emily to go to the school play. He asked Armando if he thought Emily would go with him.

Armando shrugged and said that he couldn't think of a reason why she wouldn't go with Nathan. After all, Emily enjoyed the theater, and she and Nathan were friends.

Nathan agreed. It would be fun to see a play with Emily.

Armando nodded. The two continued walking down the hall and Nathan commented that Emily was in his next class.

Nathan asked if it would be a good time to ask Emily then. Armando said he thought that would be a good idea. Then Nathan began looking through his backpack.

Armando asked him what he was looking for. Nathan said that he was making sure that he had two tickets to the play. He didn't want to ask Emily and then not have tickets.

Armando told Nathan that he had better find the tickets quickly because Emily was coming down the hall and waving at them. Just then, Nathan found the tickets. Armando wished Nathan luck and went to his class.

Nathan and Emily greeted each other and walked into English class together. They sat down and took their books out. Then Nathan turned to Emily and asked if she would like to go to the play with him.