

Punctuating Dialogue

When you revise dialogue, be sure to punctuate it correctly so that your readers can see who is talking and where a line of dialogue begins or ends. The rules for using quotation marks, commas, and end marks of punctuation are listed below.



1. *Use quotation marks before and after a character's exact words. Place a period inside closing quotation marks.*

"Peter and Esteban are joining us."

2. *Use a comma to set off the speaker's tag (he said) from the beginning of a quotation. Place the comma inside closing quotation marks when the speaker's tag follows the quotation.*

Harry said, "Come on, Ray. It'll be fun."

"Let's go," Gilda said.

3. *Use quotation marks around each part of a divided quotation. Remember to set off the speaker's tag with commas.*

"I'm not sure," said Ray, "that I feel like it."

4. *Place a question mark or an exclamation point inside the quotation marks when it is part of the quotation.*

"When will we be back?" Ray asked.

"Hooray!" said Debbi.

5. *Place a question mark or an exclamation point outside the quotation marks when it is not part of the quotation.*

Did I hear Ray say, "Okay"?

I can't believe he said, "Okay"!

6. *Start a new paragraph when you move from one speaker to another.*

"How long a hike is it?" Ray asked. "I don't know whether I have the energy."

"I think," said Iris, "that it's about seven miles to the top."