

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.

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

"Peter and Esteban are joining us."

- 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.

- 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."

- 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.

- 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"!

- 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."

Practice Punctuating Dialogue

Revise each sentence below, adding quotation marks and other punctuation where necessary.

Sample The view from up here is absolutely amazing Iris exclaimed.

Revision "The view from up here is absolutely amazing," Iris exclaimed.

1. Now you know why I couldn't wait to get here said Esteban.

2. Wouldn't it be wonderful to stay and watch the sunset Peter asked.

3. I'd love to do that said Gilda but we forgot to bring flashlights to guide us back down.

4. Maybe you forgot to bring a flashlight said Carol. I never go hiking without one.

5. Hooray cheered Gilda. Does that mean we can stay?

6. Maybe we should ask Harry said Ray. He's the one who has to carry two backpacks.

7. Oh, right said Harry. You know as well as I do that the race was a tie.

8. Did someone say it was a tie?

9. Ray, how can you say that? You were a mile behind me!

10. Tan said I'm starving! Lets eat first and argue later, okay?
