

Checklist: Writing Snappy Dialogue

Use this checklist to review and refine your dialogue step by step — from planning to writing to final editing. Go through each question and mark *Yes* or *No* to identify areas that need improvement.

Cluster A: Before Writing

Question	Yes ☐	No ☐
I know why this dialogue exists in my scene – to advance the plot, develop character, or build tension.		
I know each character's goal: what do they want to achieve?		
I have identified possible conflicts between the characters' intentions.		
I understand the relationships between the characters (past, power dynamics, secrets).		
I've defined the fears or hopes that influence their conversation.		

Cluster B: While Writing

Question	Yes ☐	No ☐
Each character has a clear objective – there is friction or contrast.		
I use conflicts, fears, lies, or secrets to create tension.		
There is subtext – the characters don't say everything they mean.		
The dialogue sounds natural but not realistic – no unnecessary small talk.		
I pay attention to pacing and rhythm: short exchanges for energy, pauses for depth.		
I vary dialogue tags ("said," "asked," "remarked") and replace them with action where possible.		
I cut adverbs and filler words if they add no value.		
I use metaphors or comparisons only if they fit the character's voice.		
I follow the basic punctuation rules for dialogue: no period before a tag, question/exclamation marks stay inside, comma after quotation marks.		
None of the thoughts are formulated in quotation marks.		

Cluster C: During Revision

Question	Yes ☐	No ☐
I review pacing and silence – is there balance between movement and stillness?		
I cut anything that doesn't move the story or emotion forward.		
I read the dialogue aloud to test rhythm and authenticity.		
I check for subtext – does the unspoken meaning come through?		
I make sure every scene changes something – tone, power, or emotion.		
I tested my scene with the exercises: – Page 99 Exercise for creative integration. – Bare Dialogue Exercise to refine rhythm and flow.		
In the end, I have dialogue that carries emotion, conflict, and narrative		



drive.		
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Evaluation

- **Many Yes answers across all sections** → Your dialogue is vivid, believable, and technically solid.
- **Many Yes while writing but fewer during revision** → Read your scenes aloud and focus on rhythm and subtext.
- **Many No answers** → Revisit your scenes step by step. Strengthen intentions, conflicts, and the power of silence.

Finding the Right Balance in Revision

Ask yourself:

- Does every line of dialogue move the story forward or reveal something new?
- Do your characters sound unique — or all the same?
- Does each scene include tension, subtext, or emotion?
- Are you using silence, pacing, and language deliberately?

This is how you lay the foundation for dialogue that sounds authentic, resonates emotionally, and keeps readers engaged. For more detailed guidance, see the related article:

> [Writing Snappy Dialogue – Bring Your Characters to Life](#)

