















Dialogue Do's & Don'ts

THE
SCRIPT
READER

Nailing dialogue is tricky. Use this quick checklist of Do's and Don'ts to ensure your dialogue is effective and necessary. These aren't rigid rules, by any means, but hopefully they'll help you avoid some common dialogue errors.

	CHARACTER-SPECIFIC: Express each character's unique personality so that we can recognize someone via their lines alone.		MISPLACE VOICES: Don't have characters speak in ways that don't fit their established characters.
	ADVANCE THE PLOT: Dialogue should move the plot forward by revealing new info.		AVOID REPETITION: Don't waste time telling us something we already know, unless it's key information or part of a running gag.
	REVEAL CHARACTER: Use dialogue to hint at character traits, backstory, motivations, etc.		AVOID FLAT CHARACTERS: Don't write dialogue that doesn't reveal anything about the character.
	MAINTAIN AUTHENTICITY: Keep dialogue natural and believable.		AVOID ROBOTIC DIALOGUE: Avoid overly formal or stilted dialogue that sounds unnatural (unless that's a character trait).
	CREATE CONFLICT: Use dialogue to introduce or escalate conflict or tension.		AVOID CHIT-CHAT: Yes, it's natural, but chit-chat slows the pace and can be easily cut.
	USE SUBTEXT: Let the audience read between the lines. What's being said without being said?		AVOID ON-THE-NOSE DIALOGUE: Being overt or direct all the time isn't how people talk.
	BREVITY: Cut the fluff and get to the point.		AVOID WORDINESS: Don't let your dialogue become too wordy or be a mouthful to deliver.

Dialogue Do's & Don'ts

THE
SCRIPT
READER

Nailing dialogue is tricky. Use this quick checklist of Do's and Don'ts to ensure your dialogue is effective and necessary. These aren't rigid rules, by any means, but hopefully they'll help you avoid some common dialogue errors.

✓	CHARACTER-SPECIFIC: Express each character's unique personality so that we can recognize someone via their lines alone.	✗	MISPLACE VOICES: Don't have characters speak in ways that don't fit their established characters.
✓	ADVANCE THE PLOT: Dialogue should move the plot forward by revealing new info.	✗	AVOID REPETITION: Don't waste time telling us something we already know, unless it's key information or part of a running gag.
✓	REVEAL CHARACTER: Use dialogue to hint at character traits, backstory, motivations, etc.	✗	AVOID FLAT CHARACTERS: Don't write dialogue that doesn't reveal anything about the character.
✓	MAINTAIN AUTHENTICITY: Keep dialogue natural and believable.	✗	AVOID ROBOTIC DIALOGUE: Avoid overly formal or stilted dialogue that sounds unnatural (unless that's a character trait).
✓	CREATE CONFLICT: Use dialogue to introduce or escalate conflict or tension.	✗	AVOID CHIT-CHAT: Yes, it's natural, but chit-chat slows the pace and can be easily cut.
✓	USE SUBTEXT: Let the audience read between the lines. What's being said without being said?	✗	AVOID ON-THE-NOSE DIALOGUE: Being overt or direct all the time isn't how people talk.
✓	BREVITY: Cut the fluff and get to the point.	✗	AVOID WORDINESS: Don't let your dialogue become too wordy or be a mouthful to deliver.