

How to Write Great Dialog: Your Book Needs This (How To For You 13)

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How to Write Great Dialog By Dorothy May Mercer ©2014 Mercer Publications & Ministries, Inc. Amazon Reviewers had this to say re: Dorothy May Mercer's "How to for You" Series: "Dorothy May takes you step by step, in meticulous detail, through the process." "She is so neat and well organized, I could room with Dorothy in a tiny stateroom on a long cruise." **"Perfect, succinct explanations with examples** I needed this book! ... concise and to the point, giving you just the information you need, with examples to illustrate the point. ... I know 'what' I want to write, the kind of story I want to tell, but as a self-published author, I'm not always correct with my editing. What I needed was a short, factual, easy to understand guide that would tell me exactly what I needed to know: when to start a new paragraph and writing dialogue (new line or not)? This book has put me back on track..." A bonus gift for you, just for picking up this book. Value \$4.99 Go Here: For a free E book, [go here](#) and click on the title, "Short & Fun Stories." TABLE OF CONTENTS [Introduction](#) [How to Make Your Characters Think](#)

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How To Write Great Dialog By Dorothy May Mercer Introduction Let's assume you have a great idea for a story, maybe you have already written it, but something is missing. You've told the story, exactly as outlined in your mind and proof-read it until you are blue in the face. You've gone backwards and forwards, making sure no quotes are left unclosed, no formatting is missing, and you have used your Word's Review function to spot grammatical errors and misspellings. Perhaps you have finagled a friend or two to read your story and give you their "honest" feedback. Well, their honest opinions ran something like this. "Good research, man." "I like your cover," "How soon will you have it published?" The response was not quite what you were hoping for—polite, but lacking in enthusiasm. Something must be missing. Let's assume that you created a great hero, someone whom your target readers can like, maybe even love. So why didn't they? After all you described him/her, didn't you? Strong, handsome/beautiful independent, not just smart—brilliant. You wanted your readers to identify with this person. Why didn't they? You set up your story-line, (1) hero and heroine meet, (2) attraction happens (3) antagonist is introduced (4) crisis/conflict ensues (5) hero and antagonist clash (6) hero wins, antagonist is vanquished (7) hero gets the girl (8) they live happily ever after. This is perfect! Why didn't your friends love the story and pay it the ultimate compliment, "I couldn't put it down, man. You kept me up all night." For some reason your readers did not identify with your hero/heroine and were not emotionally drawn into the story. Could it be because it was all prose and very little action? Or was there a minimum of necessary prose, plenty of action and very little communication? Maybe your characters didn't talk to each other. Even more important, maybe they didn't even think.

How to Make Your Characters Think

□ Nothing draws your readers "in" more than letting them in on your characters thoughts.

□ Maybe you have described your protagonist and antagonist right down to the specks of color in their eyes, and you have used plenty of action verbs to describe the conflict. That is good. Next, do you need to *tell* how they feel? Do you need to *show* how they feel? Perhaps, but there is more you can do. **Example “ 1 Good: (tell)** This woman made him nervous. **Better: (show)** This woman made him so nervous, sweat beaded on his brow. He inhaled deeply and drummed his fingers on the desk. **Best: (show/tell/think)** From behind his desk, he drummed his fingers, looked up at her and gasped. He thought *Oh my God!*, as sweat beaded on his brow.

□ Now we hear his thoughts. Writers use two ways to indicate thought. One way is to put the thought in quotes, adding the words "he/she thought". **Example “ 2:** He looked at her. "Oh my God!" he thought.

A second way is to put thoughts in italics. **Example “ 3:** He looked at her and thought *Oh my God!*

□ Either way is correct, however, it is best to stick with one way or the other, consistently, in any one story. I prefer the second way, because it saves words and allows thinking to be inserted into the dialog, without the necessity of writing "he/she thought". I use a lot of thinking in my action and dialog. In my opinion, dialog flows along better when thinking is in italics. However, to be clear, the first few times I use the technique, in any story, I also add "he/she thought". After an introduction to the technique, the reader catches on, knowing, in general, italics mean thought. Later in the story, the writer can add he/she thought whenever it is needed for clarification.

Example “ 4: He looked at her. *Oh my God! She's gorgeous.* "Hello beautiful," he smiled, wiping his palms on his pants, hidden beneath the desk.

□ There are times when italics are correctly used for emphasis. I seldom use this, but, it can be done by carefully separating thought passages from italics for emphases. **Example “ 5:** He looked at her. This doll wasn't just hot, she was *hot!* He realized he had better keep hands off, and

then she closed her lips over his. *Oh my God!* The heat hit him like a [fill in the blank].

□ In this example, italics are used to emphasize the word *hot* in the second sentence and to indicate thought in the third sentence.

□ In general, people do not think in complete sentences. **Example 6: Never:** He thought, "This woman is so darned hot that I had better be careful or I am a goner." **Better:** He thought, "This woman is so darned hot. I'd better be careful or I'm a goner." He thought, "Wow, is she hot! Watch it, bud, or you're sunk." **Best:** *Shit. Hold tight. Here we go!* **Dialog Adds Immediacy**

□ Changing a narrative sentence to dialog and adding thought can draw the reader into the scene. **Example 7: Action Narrative:** She sat, doing her makeup. The priceless grandfather clock in the foyer chimed eight melodious rings, announcing it was time to leave. She rose and moved to the stairwell. Her delicate hand rested on the polished rail as she descended the curved staircase. His heart swelled as she came closer, his eyes locked with hers. Longing to take her in his arms, he held out his hand to receive hers. This would be a perfect evening. **Adding Dialog and Thought to the Same Action Narrative:** She leaned closer to her mirror to dash one more bit of rouge on her cheeks. "You look lovely, madam," said the maid, just as the first chime sounded from the foyer. "Oh dear, the grandfather clock is striking," she said. "Hurry," said the maid. "You mustn't be late." "Yes, yes," she said, reaching for her jeweled purse, as her maid held out her wrap. Drawing the fur wrap around her, she hastened to the stairwell, placed one delicate hand on the balustrade and paused for effect. Her handsome beau waited at the foot of the staircase as she placed her tiny slipper on the first step. His astonished gaze made it all worthwhile. *Watch me, you gorgeous hunk,* she thought, as she descended. "Darling, you look beautiful tonight," he said, opening his arms as she stepped closer.

□ In the previous example, we have added dialog and thought to enliven the scene and draw in the reader. **He Said, She Said.**

Great dialog can make all the difference between an average story and a great one! This little book is chock-full of step-by-step instructions, ideas and illustrations, all you need to kick your story up into the best-seller ranks.

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