The Writer Community's
Introduction To

Writing
Dialogue

1

How to avoid Over-Communication

- Always ask yourself, what is the purpose for this dialogue? Need to know why it is exists to decide whether it is relevant to the story.
- Every bit of dialogue should have a purpose, whether it is developing the character or advancing the story
- Over Communication is something that can be fixed in the edits, include too much to start and then go back and cut the excess.
- Read it out loud to see what works - you can get softwares like Natural Reader who do this for you too.

1

How to avoid Over-Communication

- Some dialogue can just be implied and not spoken or can be shown via actions. You can also use dialogue give more description by the speaker respond through dialogue to something a character has done (like made a face etc.)
- There is no magic, dialogue to prose ratio, but if the dialogue looks like it is taking up too much of the page then it might be time to cut it down. One person in our community recommended going through the conversation and removing every third line of dialogue (within reason)

2

Natural Dialogue

- The big question - should written dialogue mirror spoken dialogue? Real life dialogue is hard to follow when written down, and is full of ums and ahs and stuttering...
- Written dialogue needs to flow - it needs to be natural, but be to the point and have a purpose
    - Try and make it too natural and the dialogue will be rambling and boring
    - Nobody wants to read ums and ahs or small talk
- Natural dialogue come when you know your character's voice. Think about their setting too, a sci fi character will speak very differently to a historical fiction character

2

Natural Dialogue

- You must give your character's distinct voices - they need to "sound" different
- You can do this with differing word choices and slang and varying sentence lengths - for example a professor may use long words and sentences with complicated word choices while a teenager might use short sentences with lots of slang.
- If you are struggling to get into your character's voice, write a short story from their POV
- Short form dialogue is key to creating interesting dialogue to read - if you make it too long and wordy then it will slow the pacing down

3

Unspoken Dialogue

- Unspoken dialogue is everything that is conveys meaning through the character's actions rather than words
  - Facial expressions, eye contact, body language, ow they move around each other, actions towards each other
- Use unspoken dialogue to fill in the gaps between what is being said, allowing the reader to draw their own conclusions
- Unspoken dialogue also reveals the hidden depths of relationships between characters
- If the spoken dialogue is fast paced and full of banter then unspoken dialogue wort be right

3

Unspoken Dialogue

- For slower paced conversations then using unspoken dialogue can give the reader an indication of how the character is feeling about the conversation or situation.
- It is also a great device to show what is being said isn't what is actually what is mean (think, sexual tension)
- Dont over use inner dialogue to make up from lack of spoken dialogue, you can easily over do both - need to balance everything out so that it feels natural

4

Dialogue Tags

- Said is a contentious topic
  - Many people say to avoid it as much as possible as it is bland and overused
  - Others say that it is an invisible tag and should always be used unless you want to convey a certain meaning in the tag (like shouted or whispered)
  - Opt for a balance
- Try not to use too many tags as it can upset the flow of the speech
- In place of dialogue tags, try using actions that tells the read who the speaker is: "I'm not leaving" Sarah moved in front of the door "and you can't make me"
- Too many varied tags can end up seeming overly dramatic or like purple prose, keep them simple and using descriptive tags sparingly and when necessary

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