Toolkit Focus: Dialogue

To create dialogue that sounds real, reflects character and moves action forwards, you might want to:

EYFS	Year 1 & Year 2	Year 3 & Year 4	Year 5 & Year 6
• Use puppets and make up funny voices when playing • Role-play different characters • Read aloud using different voices for characters • On story maps, draw simple speech inside speech bubbles • Notice speech marks in shared reading • When the sound is turned down in films, discuss what they might be saying • Use wordless picture books and discuss what a character might say	• Choose and decide how a character feels, thinks or behaves and show this through what they say, *e.g. "I'm scared!"* • Use speech verbs powerfully to show how speaker feels, e.g., hissed, squealed, roared, whispered. • Use said plus and adverb to show how the speaker feels, *e.g. he said nervously.* **Basic Speech punctuation rules introduced:** • Write what is said, starting with a capital letter, and the punctuation inside a speech bubble. • Burst the bubble to leave inverted commas (speech marks) around what is said. • Start a new line for each speaker. • Start spoken words with a capital letter. • If the sentence ends with speech, put a full stop or ! or ? inside the speech marks. If the sentence continues, end the speech with a comma.	• Use only a few exchanges • Tag on what a character is doing while speaking in the reporting clause, just like stage direction, *e.g. "No," he hissed, shaking his head.* • Use correct speech punctuation rules. Use the speech sandwich to help secure basic speech punctuation rules: *Inverted commas (speech marks) are equivalent to the bread, capital letters and punctuation are the butter and the spoken words are the jam (or your favourite filling). The sandwich itself sits on a plate that identifies the person speaking,* • Use dialogue to suggest how a character feels, thinks or what they are like and to move actions forwards. • Use expressions, catchphrases or colloquialisms of speech, *e.g. "Crazy cats," she muttered. "We need to nip it in the bud!" suggested George.* • Experiment with non-standard English, dialect and idiolect, *e.g. "When we gonna get 'ome, Mom?" asked Bella.*	• Speech is controlled and used to move the action or plot on. • Vary speech patterned between characters. Be controlled and consistent with this and use it to portray character traits, e.g. have one character consistently speak standard 'Queen's English' while another has a strong dialect or use if idioms/colloquialisms. • Add to the speech sandwich by adding in the listener's reaction, *e.g. "Hello," said John, waving to his friend. Tim gasped.* • Also add in something else that is needed to keep the action moving forwards, *e.g. "Hello," said John, waving to his friend. Tim gasped. Coming down the road was an elephant.* • Complete with what the listener says, and allow this to move on the action *e.g. "Hello," said John, waving to his friend. Tim gasped. Coming down the road was an elephant. "Run for it!" squealed Tim.* • Use indirect speech to keep dialogue concise, *e.g. "I think we should leave," Lara suggested. Simon agreed.* • Put the speaker before or after what is said or in between, e.g. *Sam said, "So let's go."* *"So, let's go," said Sam.* *"So," said Sam, "Let's go."* **Remember**: Start the speech with a capital letter. Use commas to separate the reporting clause and the spoken clause, including in split speech, (unless splitting two sentences of speech, e.g. "Where did they go?" asked Sam. "Did they leave me?"). End the sentence with a full stop (or ? or ! if the sentence ends with the speech) • Ensure children are secure with the basic speech punctuation rules, including new lines for new speakers.

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Useful ideas for teaching dialogue – always co-construct the toolkit with the class

TalkforWriting

Model all aspects of the toolkit and display examples on washing lines.

N/R	Y1/2 As in N/R plus:	Y3/4 As in Y1/2 plus:	Y5/6 As in Y3/4 plus:
• Provide role-play spaces, costumes, hats and objects/toys to encourage role-play and re-enacting of stories • Provide puppets and play with children • Use picture books and big books – read aloud together with expression, emphasising who says what and how – discuss how characters feel and how we know • Read together using voices to match how a character feels • Discuss what character might be thinking and what they might do or say next • Use Post-its in Big Books or on screen to add in dialogue • Capture what children say on laminated speech bubbles & provide for play	• Focus on dialogue in reading and work out simple rules • Display dialogue rules and examples on washing lines and on support cards • Rehearse dialogue in shared writing but keep it limited • Draw cartoons with speech bubbles for stories • Practice turning speech bubbles into dialogue • Use Post-its to innovate on speech verbs, adding in adverbs or changing what is said • Change a character's personality and then alter what they say	• Add ideas to class dialogue rules by reading quality literature, display, model in shared writing and practise • Use paired drama to develop what is said and how it is said with expression mirroring how a character feels plus a simple action, e.g. *pointing at the chair* • Model in pairs what character A says + the reply from character B; then add in stage directions for both • Collect expressions from books but also from listening in to other people speaking • Make lists of idioms and everyday expressions	• Notice in reading how other characters or the author, reflect on a main character • In drama, use the game 'gossip' or 'spies' to develop the idea of other characters commenting on a key character • Identify in reading and model in shared writing how the listener reacts; use drama to explore how reactions can be 'shown'; • Explore dialogue in quality books and add extra ideas to the class dialogue rules and tips • Innovate on extracts of dialogue from novels, using same style as author • Innovate from novels by changing how a character feels, using 'show not tell' and altering what they say – can a partner guess how your character feels?