

Dialogue writing exercises

01 / Requests and replies

Use your own scene or the starter provided. These exercises accompany the five in the guide. Type short answers or print the sheet, and save a copy after filling.

1. Write the request underneath the words

Choose six lines of dialogue from your own draft.

Name what each speaker wants the other to do. Rewrite two lines as a request, refusal or delay, then write the response.

Your version

Check: Does the next reply now have something specific to respond to?

2. Keep one fact and remove the explanation

Starter: "I'm angry because you took the letter, and now I can't trust you."

Keep the fact that a letter was taken. Write a line and its reply without angry, because or trust. Try a request such as: Put it back where you found it.

Your version

Check: Is the exchange understandable without the emotional explanation?

Dialogue writing exercises

02 / Voice and resistance

Use your own scene or the starter provided. These exercises accompany the five in the guide. Type short answers or print the sheet, and save a copy after filling.

3. Give three people the same problem

A room must be emptied before someone arrives.

Write one line each for a careful clerk, an impatient sibling and a shopkeeper protecting a friend. Give them different tactics.

Your version

Check: After hiding the roles, what distinguishes the voices beyond synonyms for leave?

4. Interrupt at the point of resistance

Someone asks for an apology and receives practical instructions instead.

Write four lines. Add one physical event only where it changes what can be said next. Compare with the version without the event.

Your version

Check: Does the interruption force a choice, or simply delay the conversation?

Dialogue writing exercises

03 / Keep what belongs to the character

A clearer line can still preserve hesitation, repetition or a difficult rhythm. Read the final version aloud beside the surrounding paragraphs.

Original line and polished version

Copy the two versions here before trying exercise 5.

5. Restore one line after a polishing pass

Choose a rough exchange and revise it for clarity.

Compare the original with the polished version. Restore one line whose awkwardness belongs to the character. Explain the cost and benefit.

Your version

Check: What useful difference did the polish remove? Keep enough clarity for the reader.

One change to make in your draft

Name the passage, the change and a voice choice you want to preserve.