

Hello learning birds - this is Eric Buffington and this is our creative writing lesson on dialogue. We're going to talk about what is dialogue, keeping a good balance of dialogue and action, and then making realistic dialogue.

So dialogue. When I talk about dialogue I'm going to be talking about when characters are speaking or communicating with each other. When a new person speaks you need to begin a new paragraph and you need to indicate what they're saying using quotation marks.

So I'm going to show you a bit of dialogue from JRR Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and you'll be able to see this in action. Here's the example of dialogue:

I was coming over the mountains with a friend or two.

"I can only see one and a little one at that," said Bjorn.

"Well, to tell you the truth, I did not like to bother you with a lot of us until I found out if you were busy. I will give a call if I may?"

"Go on. Call away."

So you can see, with each time a person speaking, you get a new paragraph and that's helpful. It helps us to keep it differentiated who's speaking and then what they're saying is inside of those quotation marks.

When you are writing dialogue you want to keep a good balance. If you just have dialogue for a long time, without anything else, the reader is left very confused, not knowing what's happening or the tone of what they're saying or anything about the dialogue at all.

On the other end of things, if you have too much action between the dialogue pieces, the reader will have a hard time remembering what's being said. Let me show you what I'm talking about. Here's an example with too much dialogue:

"Do you like fish?"

"Yes I do!"

"That's wonderful. What's your favorite kind?"

"I like goldfish."

"That's gross."

"I didn't mean it like that."

"I like you, you're funny."

"I think I'm starting to like you too. It tingles when you hold my hand."

Like, that this is totally confusing and terribly written it. Yeah, it's just horrible. The reader wouldn't have any idea what's going on if you only have dialogue. It's made even worse if you have more than two characters speaking back and forth. It's harder to follow.

You need to have those action and tone and what they're doing how, they're saying it all, in between there to make it make sense. Here's our other bad example of too much action:

"Do you like fish?," John asked as he looked out over the big blue ocean. It had been years since he was last on the shores of this beautiful island and he felt a mix of joy at returning, and sadness that he had been away for so long. He lowered his head and took a deep breath, then turned back to pulling on the rope that moved their boat slowly to the shore. "Yes," she replied.

So obviously by the time you get her answer you've almost forgotten what the question is because there's so much happening. This is an extreme example but you can see the principle here. You want to have a balance of not too much action and not too much dialogue.

Another note about dialogue is that you need to keep it real. Read the dialogue out loud. Perhaps have a friend read one part as you read another part. See if it makes sense. Is that the way that a real conversation would go? Would it logically go from one thing to the next?

And also note that different people speak differently. Some people have accents. Some people have

different idioms that they use or words that they use differently. Try and incorporate that into your writing and it will help to enhance your writing style. Let's take a look at this and see if it's realistic or not:

"Hello, Jill," Jack said with his head hanging down.

"Hi," she responded.

"I've had a really bad day. My mom ran out of water and I need someone to go up that hill there to fetch it with me."

Is this realistic? Not really. Why is this not realistic? We've got that "hi," she responded. She's not caring about how he's reacting and what she said would never lead a friend to ask telling about a bad day. So let's change her dialogue a little bit, so that it's a little more realistic.

"Hello, Jill," Jack said, with his head down.

"What's wrong?" she asked, voice filled with concern.

"I've had a really bad day. My mom ran out of water and I need someone to go up that hill there to fetch it with me."

Now we have dialogue that flows a little bit more. It makes more sense and it goes from one thing logically to the next. One final example here, where I tried to show a balance of action and dialogue:

"Kaz Kinsley, I know you're up there."

Kaz casually sat at the side of the roof dangling his legs over the edge.

"Kaz, what are you doing?" Fenn asked in an angry yet hushed tone. "My heart is about to pound out of my chest."

With a smirk Kaz responded, "That's what all the girls in the village say about me."

"You wish," Fenn retorted, "The only time you make hearts beat is when they're running to get away from you."

So this is dialogue that is obviously between a young man who's sitting up on a roof of a building and a

young girl that he actually threw something down at her and scared her. So you can see that there's a little bit of action mixed with the dialogue that keeps it realistic, keeps it flowing and it's a conversation that you can actually see happening.

So remember when you're working with dialogue to keep it balanced, keep it real, and have a wonderful day.