

## Lesson Skill: Writing effective dialogue

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### Strand Writing

SOL 6.7, 6,8  
7.7, 7.8  
8.7, 8.8

### Materials

- Available technology
- Copy of the attached Sample Paragraph for Dialogue Revision sheet
- Copies of the attached Paragraphs for Dialogue Revision sheet, cut apart into strips
- Chart paper
- Markers

### Lesson

1. Display the paragraph shown on the attached Sample Paragraph for Dialogue Revision sheet. After the students have read it, reveal the Dialogue Revision shown on the sheet. Ask the students to respond in writing to the question: “Which of the two selections did you enjoy reading more, and why?”
2. Ask volunteers to read their responses, and elicit from the students the things that dialogue can add to a piece of writing.
3. If necessary, give students a mini-lesson on the formatting of dialogue, or give them a copy of the dialogue to use as a model.
4. Have the class brainstorm words to use instead of the anemic words *said* and *tell*. Start by writing the following words on the board to stimulate thinking: *bellowed*, *chided*, *screamed*, and *instructed*. Discuss the effectiveness of the brainstormed words in comparison with the words *said* and *tell*.
5. Place students in groups of four. Put multiple copies of the attached paragraph strips in a container, and have each group select one. If more than one group draws the same paragraph, it is fine because it will be interesting to see how they handle it differently.
6. Have groups revise their paragraph by writing dialogue instead of only narrative. Remind them to use vivid vocabulary and to avoid the words *said* or *tell*.
7. When the groups are satisfied with their dialogues, have them write the dialogues on chart paper and post the papers around the room for all to see.
8. Allow the groups a short time to prepare to perform their dialogues by practicing aloud, using expression. Have one or more students read the text that is not part of the dialogue and the others take the parts of the persons speaking.

9. Have the groups present their dialogues, and then hold a follow-up class discussion on the effectiveness of each dialogue.
10. If there is time, have students revisit a narrative they have written during the year and revise all or part of it to include dialogue.
11. For closure, have students complete an exit slip on which they list what they have learned about dialogue in this lesson.

**Strategies for differentiation**

- After students choose their paragraph strips, have them create a comic strip from the narrative. Students will write dialogue for the narrative by inserting it into the speech bubbles in the comic strip.
- Students will then take the dialogue from the speech bubbles and insert it into the original paragraph strip.

## Sample Paragraph for Dialogue Revision

### Paragraph

Shameka decided that she really deserved an allowance. She had never gotten one, and lots of her friends did. She talked to her dad. It started as an argument, but it ended up okay because she ended up getting an allowance, not as much as she wanted, but at least it was a start.

### Dialogue Revision

“Dad, I need to talk to you,” announced Shameka.

“Honey, I’m really busy right now. Can it wait?”

“Actually, Dad, it’s already waited for 13 years. I think we are *way* overdue for this conversation.”

“Wait a minute,” responded Dad. “I really don’t like being talked to like that. What’s your problem?”

“My *problem* is that I’m not getting any support from you and Mom,” Shameka yelled as she walked across the room and prepared to slam the door.

“STOP RIGHT THERE, young lady. You will not talk to me that way and you will not walk away.” Dad paused and then calmly asked, “Please, will you tell me what’s bothering you? Obviously, there’s something rather important. What do you mean that we don’t support you?”

“OK, Dad, I’m sorry,” apologized Shameka. “It’s just that my friends all get allowances and I don’t. When we go to the mall, I have to ask you for money. I want to have some money of my own that I can count on whenever I need it.”

Dad sighed and then he explained, “Shameka, Mom and I would really like to be able to give you an allowance. We know that your friends have more money than you do, but it’s hard for us right now. I will talk to Mom about it, but until I do, how about if I give you 10 dollars this week? Mom and I *will* discuss it, and we’ll see what we can do.”

“Well, Dad, 10 dollars really doesn’t go very far these days, but I guess it’s a beginning. Please, tell Mom how much I want it, and tell her I’ll do more around the house and that I deserve it, OK?” pleaded Shameka.

Dad laughed, hugged Shameka, and promised, “I’ll do what I can.”

## Paragraphs for Dialogue Revision

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### Paragraph 1

Sam and Billy had been planning the surprise party for Jared for at least two weeks. They were excited that the day had finally arrived and that everything went smoothly. They had tricked Jared by asking him to shoot a few baskets, and then when they got to the gym, they made an excuse to go inside and check on something. When they went inside, everyone jumped out and yelled, "Surprise!" Jared was happy, and they all had a good time. It had been a success.

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### Paragraph 2

Tanya had not done her math homework last night, and she had hoped that Mr. Jackson would not find out. Sometimes he just went over it quickly without checking if everyone had done it. When she got to class, however, they went over the homework, and he called on her. She was embarrassed, and she told him a lie in front of the class to explain why she didn't have it. She felt guilty after class, and she stayed after to tell him the truth.

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### Paragraph 3

Desiree received a phone call telling her that she had won a contest and had won a free trip to Disney World. At first she thought the call was from someone playing a joke on her, but finally they convinced her it was true. She was really excited and asked lots of questions to get all the details.

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### Paragraph 4

Philip was having a difficult morning. He got into trouble on the school bus, and the bus driver yelled at him and all the kids laughed. Then when he got to school, his locker was jammed, and he had to get the assistant principal to unlock it for him. Just as he thought the day was going to be a disaster, the prettiest girl in the seventh grade stopped by to talk to him.

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Paragraph 5

The neighborhood boys were playing baseball in the street. They were having a great time until Donte hit a fly ball that went right into the Robertson's window. Glass shattered everywhere, and Mr. Robertson came out the door. All the boys ran, and Donte was left to explain and apologize to a very angry Mr. Robertson. After a long conversation, Donte agreed to pay for the window and to be sure it got fixed. Then Donte headed off to find his "friends."

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