

# Self-Editing Dialogue Checklist

A writer on the Go Teen Writers blog asked if we could make one of these. Hopefully you find it helpful as well!

\_\_ Are you trusting your dialogue and using action beats, or are you trying to make up for weak dialogue with lots of, “she retorted” and “he exclaimed” and she “expostulated”?

\_\_ Are your characters strategic about what they say, or are they just blurting things out? Did they enter the conversation with a plan?

\_\_ When your characters receive tough news or bad breaks, are they processing the situation and experiencing grief in a realistic way?

\_\_ Have you fallen into a “Q & A” pattern anywhere? Where one character is doing nothing but asking questions and the other character is doing nothing but answering them?

\_\_ Do your characters use different words for the same thing, or are their phrasings too similar? (Grocery store can also be the market, purses can also be handbags.)

\_\_ Are you letting character/story information come out naturally, or are you trying to explain too much with your dialogue? (“Gee, Bob, I’m so glad it’s our anniversary today and that we’ve been married for seven years and have two beautiful children!”)

\_\_ Does every character behave and interact as though they believe *they* are the main character?

\_\_ Are you using contractions?

\_\_ Is your dialogue age-appropriate? Or are your toddlers elegant and your grannies saying words like “peeps” for anything other than marshmallow chicks. (\*Shudder.\* Don’t know why, but I *hate* the word peeps.)

\_\_ Do you have too many “group” conversations? (Conversations with four or more.)

\_\_ Is “small talk” bogging down your story? (Hi, how are you? Good, how are you? Good. Nice day we’re having. Sure is. And so on.)

\_\_ Do you have a good balance of internal thoughts and dialogue? Does the reader get a sense of not only what the point-of-view character is saying, but *why* he’s saying it and what he *feels* about the conversation in general?

\_\_ Have you considered conversations from the perspective of all the characters involved, not just the point-of-view character?