

Using Descriptive Dialogue Tags

Created by Candace Sinclair
[The Writer's Mentor](http://www.thewritersmentor.com)

Descriptive dialog tags can bring your characters to life because tags manipulate the language while describing your character. Here's the list I look at when writing dialog.

Can you see the character more vividly by using several of the tags below?

After you've reviewed the list below, then look at how I've used just a couple of these words in a few sentences as a comparison to, "He said," or "She said."

screamed	yelled	whispered
queried	panted	hacked
sneezed	hooted	whined
barked	wailed	protested
coughed	worried	jested
declared	hissed	bleated
joked	spewed	whimpered
cooed	shouted	moaned
groaned	teased	cackled
stammered	stuttered	sang
begged	questioned	gasped
snickered	spat	pleaded
sniffed	coaxed	chortled
waffled	pronounced	trumpeted
panted	pleaded	begged
expounded	joked	harped
questioned	uttered	jeered
spat	spit	haggled

If you choose two words to use as descriptive dialogue tags, like spat and hacked, let's see if you can create a scene where these tags would be appropriate to more accurately define the character.

Let's say that a woman has just announced to her husband (Charlie) that she's taken a lover and wants a divorce. He glares at her, and stomps toward her, waving his fist in the air.

"Who is he?" Charlie spat. "That cook at the diner?"

From using the word "spat," we get a better picture of how angry Charlie is, and his words follow his nasty reaction.

Now let's substitute the word "hacked" and see what type of response that evokes.

"Again?" Charlie hacked, reaching for his favorite bottle of scotch.

The word "hacked," used in this instance, would imply a chronic smoker's cough or a bark. Perhaps his alcohol consumption has caused him to have a raspy voice.

In either instance, aren't those tags more effective than saying, "He said," or "He asked?" For example, look at how bland and boring the following dialogue is compared to when we use tags that are more descriptive.

Who is he?" Charlie asked. "That cook at the diner?"

Or,

"Again?" Charlie grumbled, reaching for his favorite bottle of scotch.

You don't want to overuse tags, but in some scenes, a tag will heighten your character's description and state of being.

Now, choose a dialogue tag from the list above, and see if you can make the dialogue in your story sparkle.

* * *

For more help, you might want to sign up for one of our writing courses. You can find more information here: <http://www.thewritersmentor.com/writing-courses.html>

* * *

Or, you might want to check out Jonathan's free report found at: www.allaboutwords.com/recommends/writing that talks about writing articles using his software program called Content Infinity. When you visit his page, he'll send you the free report.

Thanks, and I hope you enjoyed reading my private dialogue tag list.

Candace Sinclair
The Writer's Mentor
www.thewritersmentor.com