



# WRITING DIALOGUE THAT SPEAKS TO LEARNERS

*10 Tips for  
Crafting Compelling Lines*

# The Scenario

*Let's write something together.*



You're creating a new video-based **microlearning module** hosted on an internal video hosting channel.



You want to **empower** new managers to lead teams through conflict with **confidence**. You want them to feel stress, but remain calm.



They need to demonstrate **active listening** and **intentional response** in conflict resolution meetings.

**Character 1:** Ellia, a new manager

**Character 2:** Peter, her direct report, Peter

Ellia and Peter work in an office, where cubicles are close together and there is no privacy.

Peter has been a jerk to absolutely everyone. He's loud and insulting, but he's also a top performer.

Ellia has to confront Peter about his offensive attitude.

# BRAINSTORM SHEET

*Set up the scene.*

Your Character

The Environment

The Event

# THEY SAY

*Give the character(s) lines of dialogue.*

Line 1

Line 2

Line 3

# The Protips

*Use these tips to write voiceover that resonates with audiences and conveys impactful messages.*

1

## **Allow yourself to play!**

Writing is a process of letting garbage fall all over the page, then dusting off the treasures you pick out and building on them. If you wait for the perfect words before you start writing or get discouraged when you get feedback, you simply won't come up with the best you could really produce.

2

## **Create emotional impact.**

You can address the emotional impact you want your words to have:

- By providing direction to the voice talent
- By using sentence structure and rhythm
- And/or by focusing on your word choice.

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## **Breathe life into your characters.**

As you write, imagine the person saying the lines to breathe a little life into them. Give them a backstory. You don't have to share it with your audience. It's there to help with character development.

Some questions you might ask yourself:

- Do they speak with an accent / in a certain dialect?
- Are there specific words they use often?
- What's their personality like?



## All **narrators** are characters, even when they're real people.

When you present something, you embody a curated version of yourself as you speak. The same is true for the person explaining a concept in video or on a podcast. It's performance.

So who is that host?

- Are they a reliable guide?
- Are they a jokester?
- Are they a jerk?

Paint the character and use that image to help you craft your lines.



## Create **relationships**.

Use dialogue to show how characters relate to other characters and their environment.

Is one always talking? Interrupting? Using words the other person clearly doesn't understand on purpose? Are they constantly yelling at their computer?

How characters relate in dialogue can all communicate quite a bit without having to spell it all out directly.





## Pay attention to the **conventions** of language.

Conventions of language is just a fancy way of saying styles of communication agreed upon by a group of individuals, like a company.

It includes things like:

- jargon
- acceptable acronyms and shorthand
- brand voice
- reference guidelines
- punctuation guidelines

For example, in the science communities, there are different expectations for how individuals discuss their work than there are in the restaurant industry.

Is your dialogue aligned with these conventions? Does it need to be?



## **Speed** is a language.

Pacing communicates emotion. Let's say you want to show someone is in a rush or nervous. Would they have slow, steady speech? Probably not. How rapidly do you want your voiceover to be delivered? Let your talent know.



## **Actions** speak louder than words.

So much can be communicated to your audience by aligning or misaligning your character's words and actions.

Is your character reliable? Keeping a secret? Scared? Confused? Uninformed?

Well, then their actions just might not match their dialogue.



### **Get real.**

Grammatically perfect English is not conversational English. It sounds like reading.

If you want someone to listen, provide language that sounds like it's meant for the medium. We use contractions. We put prepositions at the end of phrases. We use "they" instead of he, she, or one. If everyone in the office calls your Amazing Technological Advanced Product "A - Tap," don't make your voiceover talent say the full name a million times or read it as "A-T-A-P." It will sound like an outsider is talking.. Or worse, it will sound artificial.



### **Silence is loud.**

When two people talk and one stops responding, it sends a message. That's because silence is a form of communication.

You can use silence to encourage thought or make people uncomfortable. Indicate where pauses are required in your script / storyboard.





Learn more about writing  
voiceover for video.



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