

## Punctuating Conversation

Three simple rules make punctuating dialogue easy:

1. Every time a new person speaks, even if the last has said nothing more than, "Oh!" begin a new paragraph. That way, the paragraphing itself lets the reader know to expect a new voice.

*"What is your name?"*

*"Jennifer Bradley."*

*"Could you possibly be related to the Bradleys who owns the big department store downtown?"*

2. Separate the dialogue from the tag (the *he* or *she* said that identifies the speaker) with a comma, not a period. Use a question mark or exclamation mark when it is needed.

*"Tom Bradley is my uncle," she said.*

Or, *"Do you know Tom Bradley?" she asked.*

Or, *"Tom Bradley!" she exclaimed.*

This rule applies no matter where the tag falls.

*She said, "Tom Bradley is my uncle."*

Or, *"Tom Bradley is my uncle," she said, "my father's brother."*

3. If a sentence of description replaces the tag, each full sentence should stand alone.

*"Tom Bradley is my uncle." Jennifer turned to stare at the stranger. "He's my father's brother."*