

Appendix IV.1.19

Dialogue Exercises

1. Write down the things you say over the course of the day. Examine your own speech patterns. You don't have to get every word, but you may find that you say less than you think and that your statements are surprisingly short. You might also find that you rarely speak in complete sentences.
2. Find a crowded place such as a restaurant, a bar, or a shopping mall (**or Great Room**) and write down snippets of the conversations you hear. Avoid trying to record whole conversations, just follow along for a brief exchange and then listen for your next target.
3. Test responses to the same question. Think of a question that will require at least a little thought, and ask it of several different people. Compare their responses. Remember that you are focused on their words not their oh-so-meaningful answer. Write them down as soon as you can.
4. Watch several different TV shows. Some choices include: sitcom, news, drama, talk show, infomercial, sporting event, etc.). Write down a transcript using just the dialogue and people's names. You can also transcribe two shows of the same genre, using one show you like and one you dislike. Compare dialogue between the fiction and non-fiction programming you recorded. Look for such things as greetings, descriptions of physical actions, complete sentences, slang, verbal ticks (Such as *like*, *you know*, *uhhhh*, *well*, etc.).
5. Write the dialogue for a scene without using any modifiers. Just write down a conversation as it goes along naturally. After you have completed the dialogue, add narrative description, but not dialogue tags such as *said*, *shouted* or *ordered*. Instead, try to work the dialogue into the action as a logical progression of the statements. Finally, add any dialogue tags that are absolutely necessary, and keep them simple such as *said*, *told*, or *asked*. Again, only put them in if you can find not other options. Compare this to the previous dialogue you have written and see what you like or dislike about the changes.