

DIALOGUE TAGS, USEFUL OR USELESS?

What purpose do tags serve?

Is it worth pulling the reader from the story?

Strengths and weaknesses in dialogue tags:

- Strengths
 - Easily understand who is talking
 - Helpful in audio books
- Weaknesses
 - Pull readers from characters' POV
 - Unrealistic tags
 - Purrs, barks, growls, squeaks
- Outcomes
 - Staying in characters' POV
 - Helps strengthen deep POV
 - Allows reader to become part of the story
 - Allows action to define who is talking

Once we are used to leaving out extraneous tags, the reader gets a deeper grasp of the characters and what the author is trying to convey.

How does the author let the reader know who's talking without them?

- Physical action surrounds the dialogue
- Internal thoughts surround the dialogue

Samples:

#1

"I love you," he murmured adoringly.

"I love you," He smiled and slid his thumb along her cheek, warm and inviting.

Here, we know who's talking and his action **shows us** he adores her. And we lose not only the dialogue tag but the unnecessary adverb, as well.

#2

She squeaked meekly, "I wish you wouldn't do that."

She bit her lip and dropped her gaze to the floor. "I wish you wouldn't do that."

So here, no dialogue tag and no adverb, but we know by her actions that she's meek.

#3

She shouted, "Don't do that again or...!"

She raised a fist and shook it in his face. "Don't do that again, or...!"

Or,

She could, she really could let him have it right between the eyes. "Don't do that again, or...!"

You have options at your disposal rather than relying on dialogue tags!

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