

# Dialog resources

## 1. Sociolinguistics

- [Sociolinguistics: A Very Short Introduction by John Edwards](#)
- [PBS online intro](#)
- [Easy-to-read primer on African-American English](#)
- To find linguistic info on something, search for 'X grammar' or "X linguistics," where X is the language or dialect

## 2. Dialog and crime fiction articles

- [Best of examples circa 2015](#)
- [Dialog vs. conversation](#)
- [Writing dialog for millennials \(!\)](#)

## 3. Authors with yummy dialog

- Kellye Garrett (*Like a Sister*) manages different dialects
- Catriona McPherson's "Scot" series (humor needs great dialog!!!)
- James McCrone (who grew up partially in Scotland) manages Scottish and American English well in his upcoming *Bastard Verdict* (a technical term, not a swear)
- Movies whose dialog would mostly work in fiction:
  - Glass Onion
  - Knives Out
  - Brick

# Diagnostic Tool

Worried about your dialog? Try this:

Using a spreadsheet or your favorite authoring tool, create columns, one each for two or three of your main characters. Label each column with their name. Now cut and paste just the dialog (no context or “he said”) for that character into their column. Just use a section of your book, it’s really tedious to do a whole chapter or novel.

Now, cover up the name. Just by reading the dialog, can you tell who is speaking? Can you name the kinds of differences between each column? Here’s the list from the Idiolect slide:

- Diction levels/vocab quirks
- Sentence length
- Phrase complexity
- What they talk about
- What they don’t talk about
- Code-switching
- Reduplication
- Mirroring/accommodation
- Dialects carry a lot of cultural meaning, so be careful! (use “markers,” use them sparingly)

Do these things differ at crucial points in the story? Do characters lie?

Now, go in there and tune up the dialog—if needed.