

WRITING TIPS

FOR NOVICE AUTHORS



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STYLE TIPS: Characters in Motion

Add sparkle – and muscle – to your writing,
with strong, expressive verbs

Does your character run somewhere? Or does she speed, race, tear, scoot, skip, trot, or gallop?

Does your character just throw something? How about having him toss, hurl, sling, fire, flip, or veer?

Something makes your character turn. Does he or she spin, swivel, swerve, wheel, or veer?

Before you give your story a final polish, check to see if you've made the most of its action words.

ACTIVE VS. PASSIVE VOICE

A good reason for putting yourself directly into your remembered scene is that you're less likely to use passive verbs – weak verbs that don't happen to anyone in particular and seem to leave the reader floating in space.

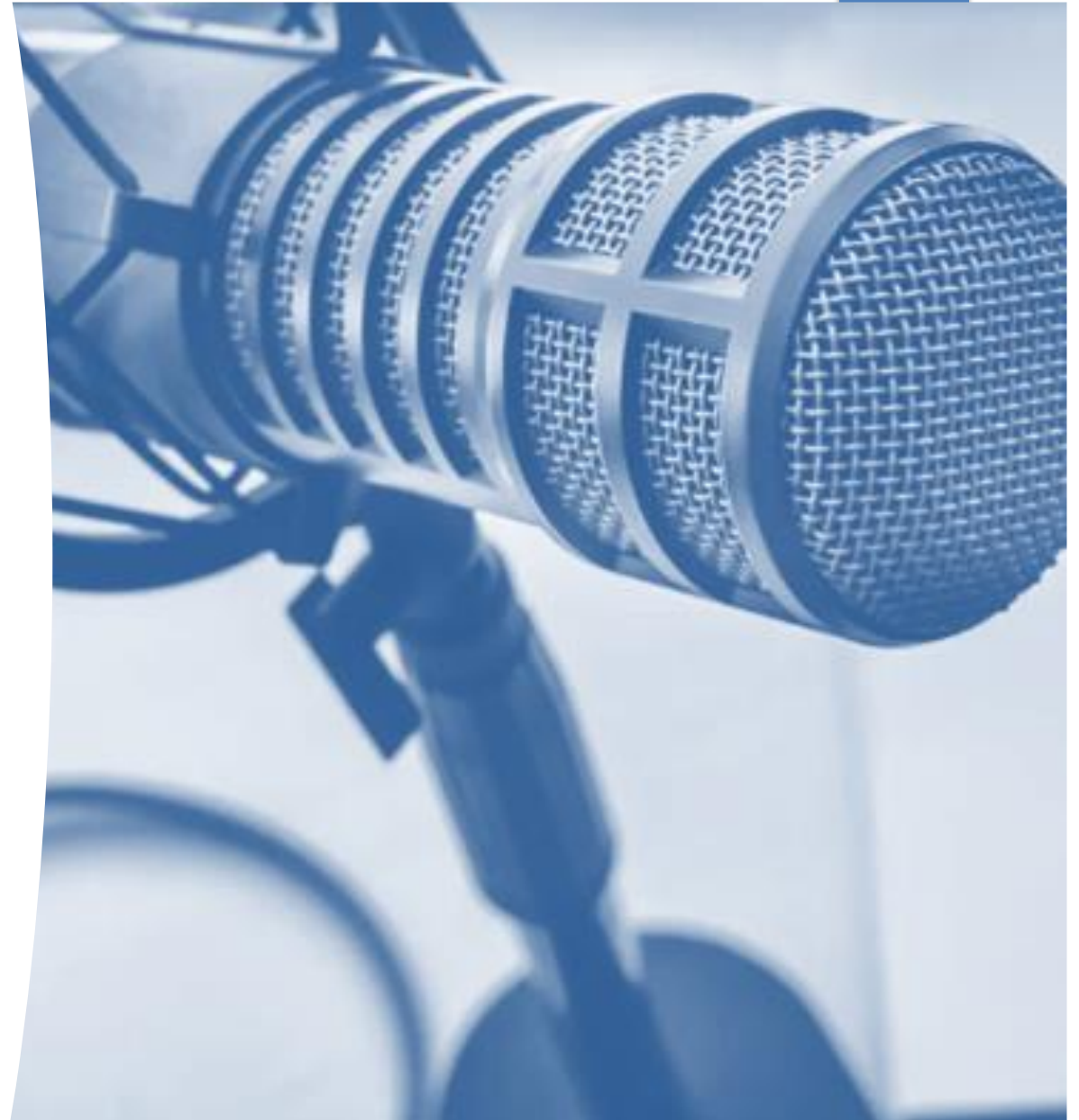
COMPARE:

Passive:

"The faint tapping of a hammer *could be heard* from the garage, where my father had his workshop."

Active:

"*I could hear* the faint tapping of a hammer could be heard from the garage, where my father had his workshop."





WRITING TIPS: Putting Dialogue on the Page

To reinforce your practice, here are a few basic rules:

Dialogue is always enclosed in quotation marks – the signal that tells the reader these are spoken words.

Punctuation at the end of the spoken words goes inside the end-quote marks. This is true whether the dialogue ends with a period, a question mark, a dash, or an exclamation point.

"He can't be telling the truth! (it's also true of the comma.)"

A comma? You may ask. When would you end a line of a dialogue with a comma? The answer is when you add a tagline—words that identify the speaker.

"He can't be telling the truth," Willam said.

A second comma would be necessary if you put the tagline in the middle of a dialogue sentence: *"He can't be telling the truth," Willam said, "because it rained that day."*

Each time the speaker changes, you start a new paragraph. You do this whether or not you're using a tagline (a tag line isn't always necessary when it's clear who's speaking):

"Mom say I can get a puppy," Tanya told her friends.

"Michelle said, "That's great! What kind do you think you'll get?"

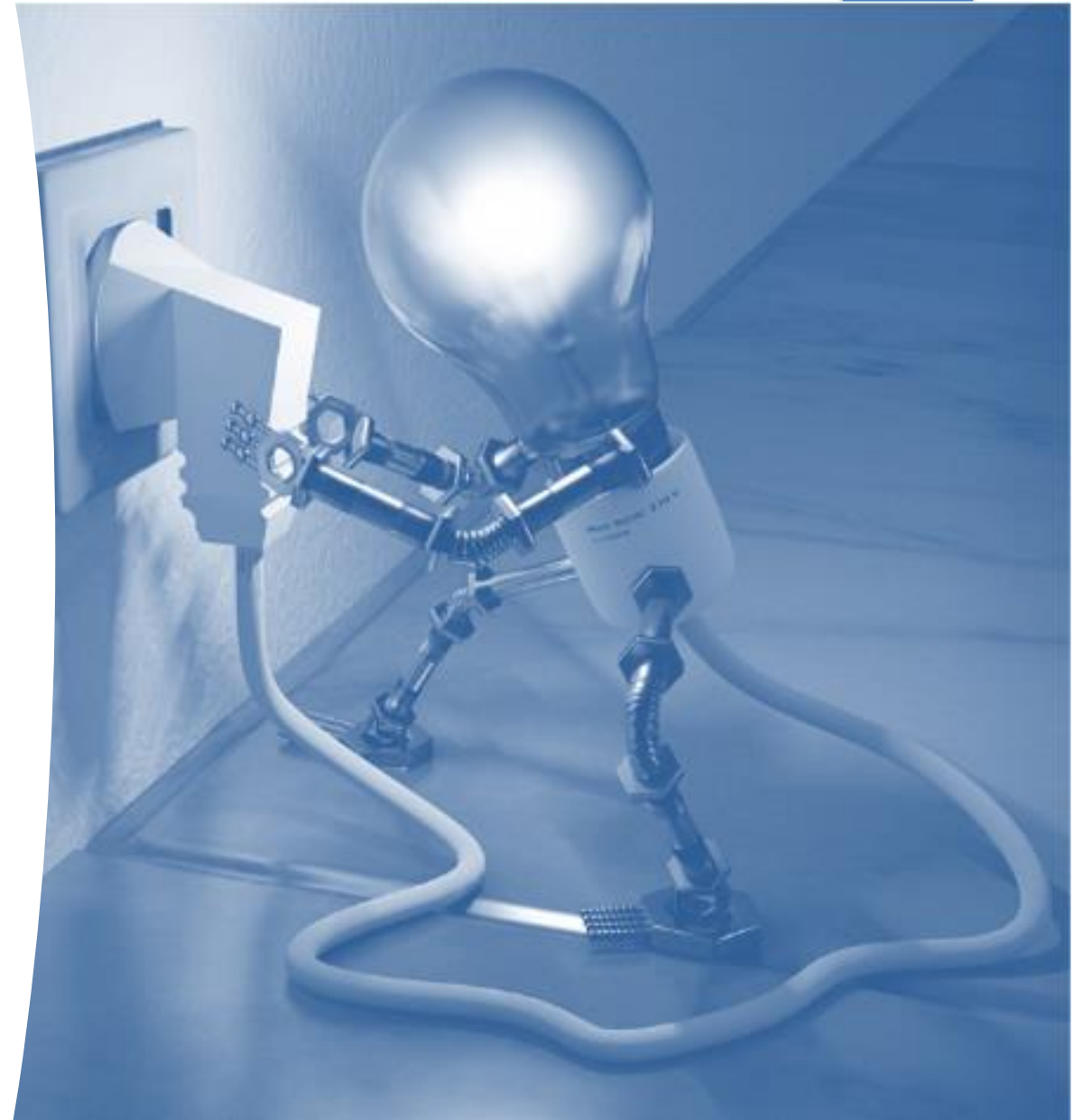
"I'm not sure. Maybe a Labrador."

ON IDEA SOURCES

I got the idea for this story when my daughter Katya, then a four- year old, asked, "What if a robber came in and stole the pies?" – *Virginia Kroll*

The idea for "Dead or Alive" came when one of my sons asked this very question [about hair], and I was not able to answer it well! It seemed to me there must be a fun way to give kids the answer. – *Victoria Earle*

People get their ideas for writing from many different places. Some writers find inspiration in their own lives, drawing on personal experiences and memories. Others get ideas from books, movies, and other stories they love. Nature and the world around them can also spark ideas, like a beautiful sunset or a busy city street. Talking to friends and family can give writers new thoughts and perspectives. Even dreams and daydreams can be a rich source of creative ideas. Basically, writers can find inspiration almost anywhere if they keep their eyes and minds open!



ON DIALOGUE

How do you make a dialogue sound authentic?

Listen to your memories, your siblings, your nephews and nieces, or the people in the neighbourhood.

Listen while you are at the supermarket, while you're in a shopping mall, at the gas station, and the restaurants where you eat. Just listen.

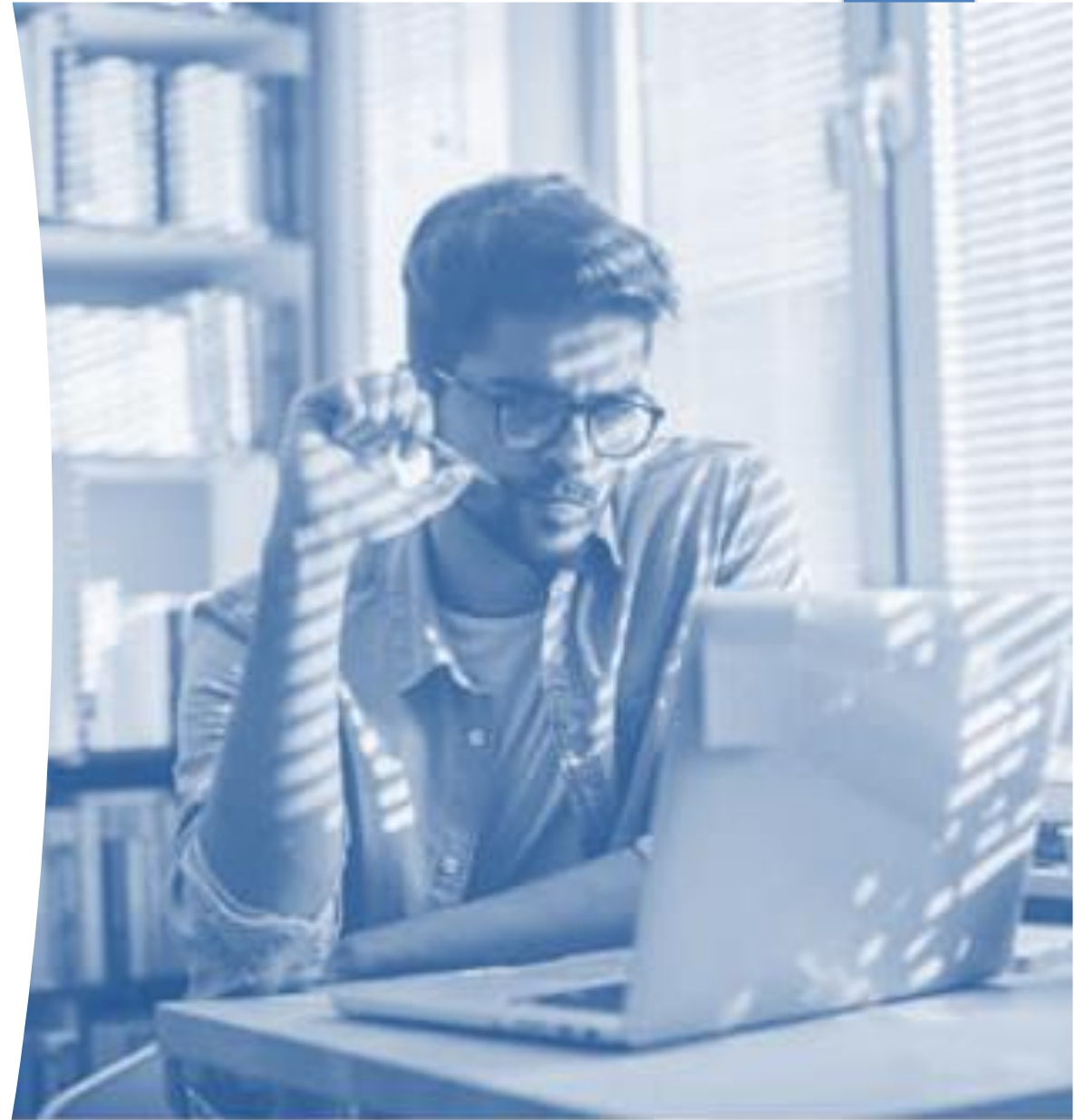
To make dialogue sound authentic in writing, it's crucial to listen to the way people speak in real life. Listen to their word choices, the rhythm of their speech, and how they express emotions. By observing real conversations, you can capture the natural flow and nuances of dialogue, making your characters' conversations more believable and engaging.



ON RESEARCH

"The Blue Demon" began in a store in Chinatown, where I saw cricket cages made to fit in a merchant's sleeve. This fascinated me and led me to the public library, where I read for hours about ancient Chinese life. – *William Groenweg*

Research is a crucial element in writing that can bring depth and authenticity to a story. Digging deeper into your topic through research can transform a simple idea into a compelling narrative, showing the importance of thorough investigation in the creative process.



To assist you in the writing process

Reacquaint yourself with your own childhood. Get out the family photo albums and any diaries or scrap books or other memorabilia you may have saved from your child and teenage years. As you look through them, make notes about particular episodes or events that strike you as having a story or article potential.

How much do you know about the people in your community? What kinds of story or article material might they inspire? Go through several of your local papers or online scrolls, whether daily or weekly, looking for items about people and their activities.

News being what it is, some of these activities may be less than constructive, but don't pass over them for that reason alone. Many editors welcome articles that explore contemporary problems and suggest solutions. As for fiction, remember that stories thrive on trouble—and that children's fiction doesn't always have to be upbeat.

OMERA has a wide range of resources to help you navigate every aspect of your writing journey.

Join the our community and have access to ALL our resources today!

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