

# Punctuating Speech



# Punctuating Speech – direct speech & reporting clauses

Speech bubbles can show us what a character is saying.



What shall I bring  
you for tea  
today?

The words that are spoken are called **direct speech**.

*“What shall I bring you for tea today?”* asked Tom.

Bubbles would take up too much room in a story so we use **speech marks** instead.

**Speech marks** work in pairs to hug the **direct speech**.

We report who is speaking using a **reporting clause**.

**Speech marks** are  
also called *inverted  
commas*.

# Punctuating Speech – direct speech & reporting clauses

EXAMPLE

Freya



Can I be your  
friend, Eliza?

*“Can I be your friend, Eliza?” said Freya.*

*“I would love that!” replied Eliza.*

I would love that!



Eliza

Write this conversation as punctuated speech.  
Remember to hug the **direct speech** with **speech marks**  
and add **reporting clauses**.

# Punctuating Speech – capital letters open **direct speech**

**Direct speech** begins with a capital letter, even if it is in the middle of a sentence.

*Freya pleaded, "Help me to find my mirror."*

*Eliza reassured, "We will find it."*

It is the beginning of the speaker's sentence so a capital letter is used.



# Punctuating Speech – interrupted **direct speech**

**Direct speech** begins with a capital letter, even if it is in the middle of a sentence.

One exception - If the speech sentence is interrupted by a **reporting clause**, the speech sentence continues with a lowercase word.

*“Certainly, it’s something to do with the new girl,” the families complained.*

*“Certainly,” the families complained, it’s something to do with the new girl.”*



lowercase

# Punctuating Speech – commas separate clauses

Direct speech and reporting clauses are usually separated by a comma.

*“She has gone now,” said Eliza. She looked disappointed.*

*Tom sighed, “What shall I bring today, my brave Little Dolphin?”*

The comma is placed at the end of the first clause.

If it is after the direct speech,  
the comma is placed inside the speech marks.



# Punctuating Speech – exclamations and questions

If the speech ends in a ! or ? we do not need a comma after the speech.

*“Shall I stop doing the tail now?” asked Oliver.*

*“I’ve got loads of seaweed!” shouted Lissie.*



The punctuation is placed inside the speech marks.  
The reporting clause still starts with a lower-case letter.



# Punctuating Speech – a new line shows a change of speaker

*Kaya asked, “Why have you put that shell there?” “I wanted her to hold it,” Eliza replied. “It’s important.” “She looks good now,” said Kaya. “Just like a real mermaid!” “She does,” agreed Eliza. “She looks happy to be free.”*

*Kaya asked, “Why have you put that shell there?”*

*“I wanted her to hold it,” Eliza replied. “It’s important.”*

*“She looks good now,” said Kaya. “Just like a real mermaid!”*

*“She does,” agreed Eliza. “She looks happy to be free.”*

It’s hard to see **who is speaking** when the dialogue is squashed together.



We show each **change of speaker** by starting a new line.



## Punctuating Speech – Identifying mistakes.

*I think I saw her in the water ” gasped Eliza.*

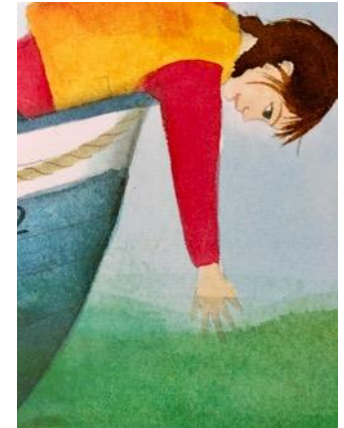
*“I think I saw her in the water!” gasped Eliza.*

*Tom nodded “maybe you did.”*

*Tom nodded, “Maybe you did.”*

*“It could have been my reflection”, admitted Eliza.*

*“It could have been my reflection,” admitted Eliza.*



Can you spot  
the 5 mistakes?

**ANSWERS**

## Eliza and Tom Sentences 1

*Highlight the direct speech and the reporting clauses. The first two have been done for you.*

### Core

1. "It's really stormy out there today," said Tom.
2. "I wish you didn't have to go out then," replied Eliza.
3. "Why doesn't she find some friends to play with?" wondered Tom.
4. "When will Dad be back?" thought Eliza, hoping that it would be soon.
5. "I've caught you some mackerel" shouted Tom from the side of the boat.
6. Eliza explained, "Dad, this is a girl that I met on the beach."
7. "I don't think that she's going to come back, my brave Little Dolphin," Tom comforted.
8. Eliza whispered, "I know. It's sad, but it's OK. I won't forget her."
9. "My net is completely full!" Tom exclaimed.
10. Eliza gasped, "I think I might have just seen her!"

## Eliza and Tom Sentences 2

*Add speech marks to these sentences. Add a reporting clause to 5-10.*  
Stretch

1. It's really stormy out there today, said Tom.
2. I wish you didn't have to go out then, replied Eliza.
3. Why doesn't she find some friends to play with?  
wondered Tom.
4. When will Dad be back? thought Eliza, hoping that it would be soon.
5. I've caught you some mackerel!
6. Dad, this is a girl that I met on the beach
7. I don't think that she's going to come back, my brave Little Dolphin
8. I know. It's sad, but it's OK. I won't forget her
9. My net is completely full!
10. I think I might have just seen her!

### Eliza and Tom Sentences 3

*Take these pieces of direct speech and turn them into sentences with punctuation and reporting clauses.*

#### Challenge

Eliza	Tom
I wish you didn't have to go out then	It's really stormy out there today
When will Dad be back?	Why doesn't she find some friends to play with?
Dad, this is a girl that I met on the beach	I've caught you some mackerel
I know. It's sad, but it's OK. I won't forget her	I don't think that she's going to come back, my brave Little Dolphin
I think I might have just seen her!	My net is completely full!