BUILD-A-PLAY
WRITING DIALOGUE

You have created your play’s **CHARACTERS, SETTING** and **DRAMATIC ACTION OUTLINE**. You have written the WHO, WHERE, and WHAT of your story. Now, it’s time to **CREATE THE HOW**.

When writing a narrative story (like a book) most of our writing is description (80-90%) and the rest is dialogue or what the characters say (about 10-20%). BUT – when writing a play this percentage is flipped. 90% of your play is **DIALOGUE**! The most important thing you do as a playwright is write **WHAT THE CHARACTERS SAY**! Your story is **SHOWN TO THE AUDIENCE** through the **DIALOGUE**!

Playwrights put dialogue on the page in a special way to remind us how important it is that our story is told through the dialogue and also to make it easy for actors to read the words their character needs to say.

**TODAY** we are going to **LEARN HOW TO FORMAT DIALOGUE ON THE PAGE** so we can then write the scenes of our play.

**STUDY THE FOUR PARTS OF A PLAY FORMAT & WHERE IT GOES ON A PAGE**
To help us understand how to put dialogue on the page for a play look at the next two pages to see how a script that a playwright writes is put on the page.
THE FOUR PARTS OF A PLAY FORMAT

1) **DIALOGUE** – what each character says
2) **CHARACTER NAME** – the Name of the Character who is speaking the line of dialogue
3) **STAGE DIRECTIONS** – the description of where and when we are and important movement the actors may do
4) **PARENTHETICAL** – a brief description for a specific character in parenthesis right after the CHARACTER NAME. It helps the actor know how you may want them to say their line.

**REMEMBER:** 90% of what you write in your play (most of the words) are of #1 – **DIALOGUE!**

I can’t stress this enough. You play is dialogue, the rest is there to help us know where we are, when we are, what it might look like, and any important movement that helps move the story forward. Otherwise, YOU ARE WRITING DIALOGUE.

Briefly, this is what these FOUR PARTS look like on the page:

**CHARACTER NAME** *(in all caps, on a line by itself)*

**STAGE DIRECTIONS.** (Indented 3”)
**STAGE DIRECTIONS.** *(Is not in Parenthesis. Is not in italics.)*

**CHARACTER NAME**
(Parenthetical) Dialogue.

**STUDY THE NEXT PAGE** TO SEE HOW THIS LOOKS FOR FIRST PAGE OF OUR THREE LITTLE PIGS EXAMPLE.
SAMPLE DIALOGUE
An Adaptation of The Three Little Pigs

SCENE ONE
LIGHTS UP. Inside Mama Pig’s home. Pig One, Two and Three are lounging on the couch in the living room in the middle of the day. Mama Pig enters.

MAMA PIG
What are you boys doing around here?

PIG ONE
Relaxing.

PIG TWO
What else is there to do?

PIG THREE
Did you have something in mind, Mama?

MAMA PIG
(Sighing.) As a matter of fact, I do have something in mind.

PIG ONE, TWO AND THREE
What’s up?

Mama Pig goes to the front door and opens it.

MAMA PIG
It’s about time you boys learned how to survive out there in the big, bad world. I’m not going to be taking care of you forever, you know. Here’s the door, now go out there and show the world what you’ve got.
USING THE EXAMPLE ABOVE, PRACTICE writing a page of dialogue between TWO of your characters. USE all of the FOUR PARTS OF THE PLAY FORMAT and PRACTICE PUTTING THEM in the proper place on the page.

START WITH, LIGHTS UP and then tell us in the Stage Directions where we are, when we are and who is there. THEN, write the dialogue. Use the proper format.

THIS IS PRACTICE. Learn how to write in the proper format. It will make your play easier to write and easier for someone else to read.

You can use a computer, a tablet or a paper and pencil to write this practice. The important thing is to properly format it.

NEXT TIME: We will WRITE the FIRST SCENE of YOUR PLAY.