Dialogue Punctuation Practice: Printable Worksheet with Answer Key

Dialogue Punctuation Annotation Diagram

Model sentence annotated with speech tag, opening and closing quotation marks, comma, and terminal mark.

Model sentence: leo asked can we leave at noon.

Annotated version: Leo asked,

Can we leave at noon?

Labels: speech tag = Leo asked; opening quotation mark = before Can; closing quotation mark = after noon?; comma = after asked; terminal mark = question mark inside the closing quotation mark.

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Leading vs. Trailing Speech Tag Contrast Diagram

Small diagram contrasting a leading speech tag with a trailing speech tag.

Leading tag: Leo asked,

Can we leave at noon?

Trailing tag:

We can leave at noon,

Leo said.

Contrast: leading tag uses a comma after the tag; trailing tag uses a comma inside the closing quotation mark and a period after said.

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Dialogue Punctuation Answer Key

Separate answer key page with one primary rendering per item, a brief explanation, and acceptable variants where a consistent alternative convention is stated.

1. Mia asked,

Where is the library?

Reasoning: The speech tag Mia asked comes first, so a comma follows asked. The spoken words are a question, so the question mark sits inside the closing quotation mark. No period is added after the question mark. Check: Count two quotation marks. Confirm one comma after asked. Confirm the question mark is inside the closing quotation mark and no comma follows it.

2.

I will finish the report,

Tom said. Reasoning: The spoken sentence would end with a period, but a trailing speech tag follows, so the period becomes a comma inside the closing quotation mark. The outer sentence ends with a period after said. Check: Confirm the comma is inside the closing quotation mark and the final period is outside. Count two quotation marks and one comma inside.

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Acceptable Variants

Acceptable variants where a consistent alternative convention is stated.

Acceptable variant: single quotation marks may be used instead of double quotation marks if the learner states that convention and applies it consistently. The answer key shows double quotation marks as the primary rendering.

Acceptable variant: where a different but consistent convention is applied, the rubric rewards consistency rather than a single universal answer.