

The 12 Key Pillars of Novel Construction

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Inspection Checklist #9

Dialog Compressed and Essential

	QUESTION	YOUR ANSWER
QUESTION #1	Go through all your dialog. Have you tightened and trimmed to condense, removing all boring, mundane, and unimportant lines?	
QUESTION #2	Have you gone through and removed all unnecessary speaker tags? Conversely, have you made sure it's clear who is speaking?	
QUESTION #3	Have you made sure to alternate speaker tags with narrative bits to show both who is speaking and what the tone, mood, reaction, or emotion is?	
QUESTION #4	Have you made sure each line of dialog well reflects each character's personality, background, education, and ethnicity?	
QUESTION #5	Have you checked to ensure none of your dialog is used as an info dump, telling readers what either they or the characters already know?	
QUESTION #6	Have you removed or changed all "on the nose" dialog—characters saying exactly what they are feeling? Replace with subtext and implication.	

	QUESTION	YOUR ANSWER
QUESTION #7	Have you removed all adverbs in speaker tags and instead found a way to <i>show</i> the emotion of the character as she speaks?	
QUESTION #8	Does every spoken line in your scenes serve a purpose? Help to reveal character or a new plot development? If not, change or take it out.	
QUESTION #9	Have you found places where you can insert moments of silence to add tension? Find some more.	
QUESTION #10	Have you checked to make sure each character's speech and actions are grouped together in paragraphs to make clear who is speaking?	
QUESTION #11	Have you gone through and removed excessive "flowery" speaker tag verbs such as cajoled, postulated, elucidated?	
QUESTION #12	Have you checked to make sure your characters speak naturally, using contractions where needed?	

Write a one-paragraph summary of your novel highlighting Dialog Compressed and Essential: