

Words to use instead of SAID

There is nothing wrong with using the word said in written dialogue. Be careful not to treat the word said as a word to be avoided; as there are times where it should be used. Well written dialogue should never fully rely on tags such as the ones below, but should convey its own attitude. When using words instead of said, be sure you utilize them properly. For example, you cannot laugh and talk at the same time. "That is so funny, laughed Bob," should not be used. A person can laugh before or after they speak, but not while they speak. Think about how your character is going to speak and the emotion that they are experiencing. Think it out before you write it down. Let me give you some examples. The following sentence does not use the word said:

"I hate you," spat Bob in disgust. Now think about that sentence. Can a person spit in disgust and speak at the same time?

Watch what happens this time when I use the word said and describe Bob's actions: "I hate you," said Bob as he clenched his fists. His lips snarled with rage as he stormed out the room, vowing never to return.

Here is another example where the word said works just fine: "Do have some more gravy, Bob," said Darla, spooning it out herself.

For dialogue to be effective it must appear to be realistic. The person reading your story must believe that your characters actually talk this way. You should use dialogue to reveal insights into characters, set the mood, and even to clarify plot points. I was once told that when writing dialogue, to think of it as action. Use dialogue to make something happen.

You may notice that some words on the list below cannot be used as replacements for said. These words have been added to assist you to enhance your dialogue and make it more descriptive. For example, the word "quietly" cannot be used instead of said, but it can enhance your dialogue.

Ms. Maple covered her lips with her index finger until she had the attention of the entire class. "Let's use our inside voices," she said quietly.

The words below are classified by emotion to make the list easier to use. Keep in mind that some words could easily be classified in several categories such as "gasped" which could express either fear or surprise.

The emotion of ANGER 😡				
accused	argued	badgered	barked	bellowed
bickered	chastised	chided	clipped	clucked
commanded	complained	corrected	countered	cursed
dared	demanded	disagreed	exasperated	exploded
fumed	gibed	goaded	growled	grumbled
harshly	hissed	hollered	howled	huffed
insulted	interrupted	muttered	nagged	objected
ordered	raged	ranted	retaliated	retorted
roared	sassed	screamed	scoffed	scolded
scowled	seethed	shot	shouted	shrilled
snapped	snarled	sneered	spluttered	stormed
swore	taunted	threatened	warned	yelled
The emotion of DISGUST 🤢				
cringed	grimaced	grunted	mocked	rasped
refused	smirked	sniffed	snorted	
The emotion of FEAR 😨				
babbled	confessed	croaked	denied	doubted
fretted	groaned	gulped	moaned	panted
prayed	quavered	shrieked	slurred	squeaked
squealed	stammered	stuttered	whimpered	whined
whispered	worried			
The emotion of HAPPINESS 😊				
approved	beamed	bubbled	burst	cackled
chatted	chattered	cheered	chirped	chortled
chorused	chuckled	complimented	congratulated	cooed
crowed	effused	exulted	forgave	giggled
grinned	gurgled	gushed	hummed	joked
praised	resounded	sang	simpered	smiled
thanked	trilled			
Words associated with PERSUASION 😏				
advised	appealed	asserted	assured	avowed
begged	beseached	cajoled	claimed	convinced
encouraged	entreated	implored	pleaded (pled)	stressed
suggested	urged			
Words associated with PROVOCATION 😠				
bragged	jested	jeered	joked	lied
mimicked	provoked	quipped		
The emotion of SADNESS 😞				
apologized	bawled	blubbered	comforted	consoled
cried	glumly	lamented	mumbled	murmured
sighed	sniffled	sobbed	spilled	wailed
wept				

The emotion of SURPRISE 🤩				
bleated	blurted	exclaimed	gasped	marveled
perplexed	sputtered	yelped		
Words associated with QUESTIONS or CURIOSITY 🤔				
asked	challenged	coaxed	hinted	inquired
pleaded (pled)	puzzled	queried	questioned	quizzed
wondered				
Words associated with UNCERTAINTY 🤔				
cautioned	doubtfully	guessed	hesitated	vacillated
The emotion of LOVE or ROMANCE 💕				
breathed	expressed	proclaimed	promised	purred
swooned				
Words not associated with any particular emotion 🧐				
acknowledged	acquiesced	added	addressed	admitted
affirmed	agreed	alliterated	announced	answered
articulated	began	bet	boasted	boomed
broke in	called	chimed in	clarified	coached
commented	conceded	concluded	concurred	confided
confirmed	considered	continued	contributed	conversed
deadpanned	decided	declared	defended	deflected
demurred	described	disclosed	divulged	drawled
echoed	emphasized	ended	explained	finished
flatly	gently	gloated	greeted	highlighted
hinted	hypothesized	imitated	implied	informed
insisted	interjected	intoned	instructed	jabbered
lectured	lisped	maintained	mentioned	monotoned
mouthed	mused	motioned	nodded	noted
notified	observed	offered	opined	pestered
piped	pointed out	pondered	prattled	pressed
pronounced	proposed	protested	put in	quietly
quoted	rambled	rattled on	read	reasoned
reiterated	related	remarked	remembered	reminded
repeated	replied	reported	requested	responded
restated	revealed	rhymed	ridiculed	sibilated
sneezed	snickered	speculated	spoke	started
stated	surmised	sympathized	teased	tempted
tested	testified	theorized	told	uttered
volunteered	vowed	went on	wheezed	wished
yakked	yapped	yawned		