

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. Well written dialogue should never 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 be used in several categories such as "gasped" which could express either fear or surprise.

The emotion of ANGER				
accused	argued	asserted	badgered	barked
bellowed	bickered	challenged	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	jeered	jibed
muttered	nagged	objected	ordered	pestered
provoked	quipped	raged	ranted	retaliated
retorted	roared	sassed	screamed	scoffed
scolded	scowled	seethed	shot	shouted
shrieked	shrilled	snapped	snarled	sneered
spat	sputtered	stormed	swore	taunted
threatened	warned	yelled		

The emotion of FEAR

babbled	begged	blubbered	choked	confessed
croaked	denied	doubted	dribbled	fretted
groaned	gulped	implored	moaned	panted
pleaded	pled	prayed	quavered	slurred
squeaked	squealed	stammered	stuttered	whimpered
whined	whispered	worried		

The emotion of DISGUST

grimaced	grunted	mocked	rasped	refused
snorted				

The emotion of HAPPINESS

approved	beamed	bubbled	burst	cackled
chatted	chattered	cheered	chirped	chittered
chortled	chorused	chuckled	complimented	congratulated
cooed	crowed	effused	encouraged	exulted
forgave	giggled	grinned	gurgled	gushed
hummed	jested	joked	laughed	praised
prattled	purred	resounded	sang	simpered
smiled	smirked	trilled	thanked	

The emotion of SADNESS				
apologized	bawled	comforted	consoled	cried
glumly	lamented	mumbled	murmured	sighed
sniffed	sniffled	sobbed	spilled	wailed
wept				
The emotion of SURPRISE				
bleated	blurled	coughed	exclaimed	gaspd
marveled	perplexed	yelped		
Words associated with qustons or curiosity				
challenged	coaxed	hinted	pleaded	puzzled
queried	questioned	quizzed	wondered	worried
Words associated with uncertainty				
cautioned	conceded	guessed	hesitated	spluttered
vacilated				
Words not associated with any particular emotion				
acknowledged	acquiesced	added	addressed	admitted
advised	affirmed	agreed	announced	answered
articulated	asked	assured	avowed	began
bet	blurled	boasted	boomed	bragged
breathed	broke in	bugged	cajoled	called
cautioned	chimed in	claimed	clarified	coached
coaxed	commented	conceded	concluded	concurred
confided	confirmed	considered	continued	contributed
convinced	decided	declared	defended	deflected
demurred	described	disclosed	divulged	drawled
echoed	emphasized	ended	explained	expressed
finished	gawked	gently	gloated	greeted
guessed	highlighted	hinted	hypothesized	imitated
implied	informed	inquired	insisted	interjected
intoned	instructed	lectured	lied	lisped
maintained	mentioned	mimicked	mouthed	mused

motioned	nodded	noted	notified	observed
offered	opined	piped	pointed out	pondered
proclaimed	promised	pronounced	proposed	protested
put in	quietly	quoted	rattled on	reasoned
reassured	recalled	reckoned	recounted	reiterated
related	remarked	remembered	reminded	repeated
replied	reported	requested	responded	restated
revealed	ridiculed	sneezed	snickered	speculated
spoke	started	stated	stressed	stuttered
suggested	surmised	sympathized	teased	tempted
tested	testified	theorized	told	urged
uttered	volunteered	vowed	went on	wheezed
wished	yawned	yakked	yapped	

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