“The writer should never be ashamed of staring. There is nothing that does not require his attention.”

-FLANNERY O'CONNOR, attributed

Dialogue Rules

1. Take what you can from real life dialogue. Do your best to craft lines that stay true to the natural cadence of language – the musicality of our speech.
2. Work to engage the audience. Interesting characters say interesting things.
3. Avoid long speeches. (You’re not writing a Shakespearean tragedy. We don’t need soliloquies.)
4. Never waste a line. Avoid stating the obvious and be aware of how dialogue affects the pace of the show.
   1. Every line should:
      1. Propel the plot forward
      2. Develop character
      3. Engage the audience
5. Characterization in a play (as in life) comes through words and actions. Decide who the characters are and stay true to their personalities. Ask yourself, ‘Would ---- feel that way? Would she say that?’
6. If two characters are having a conversation, make sure they are conversing, which is different from merely speaking to each other.
7. Less = more. After the first draft, don’t be afraid to cut lines of dialogue.
8. Revision is a good thing! In the words of author Nancy Thayer, “It’s never too late – in fiction or in life – to revise.”
9. Say it aloud! The best way to know if it works is to hear it.
10. Have faith in your ability to craft natural dialogue. A positive outlook on your own skills, even if this is new to you, will serve you well. Debby Downers are unproductive! Take the risk. If you stumble, someone here will catch you.