How to Write a Monologue With Examples

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Dramatic monologues are a literary device that have been used since ancient Greek
theatre—today, they are a common tool in modern plays and films.

What Is a Monologue?

A monologue is a long speech by a single character in a theatre production or film.
Monologues can either be addressing other characters in the scene, or they can be one
character talking to themselves or to the audience. The word *monologue* is made up of the
Greek roots for *alone* and *speak*, and it is the counterpart of the word *dialogue*, which
comes from the Greek word for *conversation*. [Learn more about writing great dialogue in
our how-to guide here](#).

Monologues serve a specific purpose in storytelling—to give the audience more details
about a character or about the plot. Used carefully, they are a great way to share the
internal thoughts or backstory of a character or to give more specific details about the plot.

What Is the Difference Between Monologue and Soliloquy?

When a character is talking to themselves in an internal monologue (sometimes called
"interior monologue") rather than talking to another character, it's often further defined as
a "[soliloquy](#)." [Soliloquies are a common tool](#) in William Shakespeare's plays, and arguably
the most famous example of a soliloquy monologue is the "To Be or Not to Be" speech
from *Hamlet*. In the famous monologue, Hamlet wonders whether he should continue to
oppose his evil uncle or commit suicide. Here are the first few lines from the monologue:

To be, or not to be, that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them.

3 Considerations When Writing a Monologue

Monologue writing isn't a way for writers to let loose and write without limits. In fact,
monologue scripts should be written with special care and restraint, otherwise they can
quickly bore viewers and fail to contribute anything to the character or plot. There are
several key considerations you should keep in mind when writing a monologue:

1. 1. **The character's backstory or importance to the storyline**. Monologues are
   supposed to reveal important details about a character or the plot—it's essential that

you've developed the speaking character and a detailed plot for them to inhabit, even before you start writing. Monologues help inform the audience about the character's traits and past events.

2. 2. **The character's motivation**. In real life, people don't monologue unless they have a reason—in the same way, any character giving a monologue in a play or film should have a purpose for it.
3. 3. **The character's voice**. First-time writers can be tempted to use monologues as a way to show off their writing skills; however, doing this will quickly pull viewers out of the story. There are many types of monologues a writer can explore, but monologues should feel natural and invisible in your story, which means they should be told in your character's voice and point of view. Using language that sounds more authentically like your character is good writing, and it will help create an effective monologue.

How to Write a Monologue

Good monologues are structured just like good stories: they have a beginning, a middle, and an end. This rhythm—a build up and a resolution—is critical in long stories, because without it, stories can become monotonous and stale.

- 1. **Beginning**. In real life, people don't just start monologuing without a reason; they usually start speaking in response to something else that was said or to something that happened. When writing, try transitioning into a monologue smoothly with your first line. Even the opening line "I was thinking about something you said yesterday" is an easy way for a character to start giving a monologue.
- 2. **Middle**. The middle of a monologue can be the hardest part to write, because viewers will start to get bored during long speeches; it's vital to keep your monologues from being predictable. Craft small twists and turns into the storytelling—from interesting plot details to unique ways the character describes them—to keep the monologue fresh and engaging.
- 3. **End**. It's common for monologues—especially ones meant to convince another character to do something—to wrap up with a quick statement of meaning. However, don't indulge too much in explanation at the end of the monologue; this can make it feel shallow or uninteresting. Instead, trust your readers to derive meaning from it themselves.

4 Tips for Writing a Strong Monologue

The best way to write strong monologues is to practice—every monologue you write will help you improve for the next one. Here are a few extra tips to get you started:

1. 1. **Keep it concise**. Monologues aren't something used to fill time in a script—so as you write a monologue, keep it as short as possible. This doesn't mean that your monologue has to be short; rather, it means you should spend time editing and identifying what is most important. The more focused your monologue, the more powerful and memorable it will be for your viewers.

2. 2. **Placement is key**. Monologues are very potent writing tools, and too many of them too close together in a story will quickly tire viewers. Limit yourself to as few monologues as possible, and space them out in your story so that they're not back to back. This will help each monologue shine and prevent the audience from getting bored.
3. 3. **Use detail**. Monologues written entirely in general language are usually forgettable—viewers need concrete details to latch onto and remember. Pepper your monologues with vivid imagery (when in doubt, think of the five senses) to make them memorable.
4. 4. **Read and watch more monologues**. Great monologues are inspired by other great monologues—when you're stuck, seek out other examples of monologues to get you back on track. William Shakespeare is always a good place to start (for example, after you've read *Hamlet*, look into *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet*).