

# Let *Tom Swiftie* Puns teach you how to punctuate lines of dialogue in your own writing.

There are three different types of Tom Swiftie dialogue puns:

-ly adverb puns	adverbial phrase puns	speech verb puns
"I only have diamonds, clubs and spades," sighed Tom <b>heartlessly</b> .	"Oops! There goes my hat!" said Tom <b>off the top of his head</b> .	"So only one person arrived at the party before I did?" Tom <b>second-guessed</b> .

Use the Tom Swiftie puns below as models when you write your own Tom Swifties or when you are trying to remember how punctuate lines of dialogue in your own stories.

**As a general rule, a piece of punctuation must separate what is said in quotes with the tag line that shows who has spoken.**

**Rule #1:** When the dialogue is a statement that would, by itself, be punctuated with a period, turn the period into a comma when the tag line follows it.

- "I need a pencil sharpener," Tom said bluntly.
- "I have a split personality sometimes," Tom said, being frank.
- "I can no longer hear anything," Tom observed deftly.

**Rule #1a:** Reversing the order of the tag line and the quotation still requires you to put a comma in between, but a period can stay inside a quotation when it's the end of the sentence.

- Tom said bluntly, "I need a pencil sharpener."
- Being frank, Tom said, "I have a split personality."
- Tom deftly observed, "I can no longer hear anything."

**Rule #2:** Questions that are spoken must keep their question mark, even when they are followed by the tag line. Notice the capitalization in these examples.

- "Don't you know how to spell my last name?" asked Tom swiftly.
- "Am I going to die?" Tom croaked.
- Tom asked crabbily, "Why won't anyone pass me the shellfish?"
- Still in denial, Tom asked, "Why does everyone think I'll drown in Egypt?"

**Rule #3:** Exclamations that are spoken must keep their exclamation point, even when they are followed by the tag line. Notice the capitalization in these examples.

- "I've been shocked twice today already!" yelled Tom in revolt.
- Intently Tom cried, "We love camping, dang-it!"
- With defeat, Tom shouted, "They amputated from my ankles down!"
- "This is the tenth *Mr. Ed* episode in row!" Tom screamed hoarsely.

**Rule #4:** Sometimes a tag line comes between two complete sentences spoken by the same person. Attach the tag line to the spoken sentence that makes the most sense.

- “I don’t like 7-Up,” Tom said sprightly. “Do you have any iced tea?”
- “I am so forgetful.” Listlessly Tom explained, “I can’t remember what I was supposed to buy.”
- Without despair, Tom boasted, “I won’t let a flat tire get me down. I am in too good a mood today.”

**Rule #5:** Sometimes a tag line comes between two halves of a really long sentence spoken by the same person. Surround the tag line with commas when it sits between two halves of a sentence.

- “Without a doubt and for no apparent reason,” Tom said weakly, “I fall ill every Tuesday.”
- “When I eat a hot dog at the ball park,” Tom said frankly, “I like to smother it with mustard and sauerkraut.”
- “People who take your picture without asking for permission,” Tom said candidly, “kind of drive me nuts.”

**Rule #6:** Sometimes writers put a sentence between two lines of dialogue that doesn’t have a speaking verb. When that happens, the writer does not need to attach the sentence in the same way he/she would with a tag line.

- “Hey, I’m wearing this ribbon around my arm.” Tom looked around with abandon. “Doesn’t this ribbon count for something.”
- “The court has found you guilty.” With conviction, Tom patted his client’s shoulder and handed him a banana. “It’s time to think about your appeal.”
- “I believe I can eat one-hundred and forty-four hot dogs.” Tom rubbed his stomach grossly and winked. “At least, that’s my gut reaction.”

Below, write three Tom Swiftie dialogue puns, using correct dialogue punctuation. Try to use a question mark and an exclamation mark in two of your three puns.


WritingFix’s on-line Tom Swiftie creator will help give you good words to base your puns on.  
[http://www.writingfix.com/YoungAdult\\_Prompts/Tom\\_Swifties.htm](http://www.writingfix.com/YoungAdult_Prompts/Tom_Swifties.htm)