

## OAS Skill Module

### Eavesdropping Can Be Educational—Practice Your Creative Writing Skills

Did you know that some 7,000 words come out of the average person's mouth every day? And that about 10 percent of those words are non-essential, meaningless filler, including “you know,” “um,” and the always-popular “like”?

Now that you're feeling incredibly self-conscious about the way you talk, this skill module is here to help. The purpose of this skill module is to (secretly!) observe and transcribe a real-time conversation, and then attend a 1-hour writing workshop where I will teach you how to polish this conversation into the type of snappy dialogue found in novels.

Even though this skill module is lighthearted and fun, it will help you develop some seriously useful written and spoken communication skills. This will be most obvious in your writing, but these techniques, like how to pare down the filler, will translate over to your speech as well.

During the writing workshop, you will learn writers' techniques for creating dialogue that still sounds natural without all the filler. You will also practice using descriptive dialogue to provide clues implying a story's setting, using the principle of “show, don't tell” in your writing.

The graded product of this skill module will be a one-page finished “scene with dialogue” which you will create from your original unpolished transcript, using the skills you learn during the writing workshop.

Here are your instructions:

1. Email me at [yang.shir@gmail.com](mailto:yang.shir@gmail.com) if you plan on doing this skill module. This is so I will know how many people to expect at the workshop.
2. Go out and eavesdrop on a conversation between two (and **only two**) strangers for **3 minutes**. You will probably wish to record this conversation, to make it easier to transcribe.
  - a. The more interesting the conversation, the more fun this assignment will be for you to do, and for us to grade.
  - b. Please do not make up a fake conversation, or have your friends stage a conversation for you. This defeats the point of the assignment.
  - c. Some possible good places to do your spy work: coffee shops, the city bus, while standing in line somewhere, in your dorm lobby.
3. Type up this conversation, **word for word**, and bring your typed transcript to the writing workshop.
  - a. Don't worry about conversations being improper for the classroom. As long as you are comfortable sharing your transcript with others attending the workshop, it is fine with me. People are people. They will curse, talk about their sordid weekend escapades, etc.
4. After the workshop, write your own scene with dialogue based on your transcribed conversation. It should be at least **1 page, double spaced in 12 point font, and no longer than 2 pages**. To receive a grade, you must submit both your original transcript and your scene with dialogue.