

# Understanding the Tone

**Examples of Different Tones:** Match each example with its tone:

**★ 1. Sympathetic Tone**

The writer feels sorry for someone.

**★ 2. Sad / Disappointed Tone**

The writer feels unhappy or let down.

**★ 3. Cynical Tone**

The writer does not trust people; they believe the worst.

**★ 4. Instructive Tone**

The writer wants to teach or explain something clearly.

**★ 5. Outraged Tone**

The writer is extremely angry about something unfair.

**★ 6. Convincing (Persuasive) Tone**

The writer wants you to agree or take action.

**★ 7. Nostalgic Tone**

The writer misses the past.

**Example:**

“People talk loudly on buses! I want to throw their phones out the window!”

**Example:**

“We believed in him, but he betrayed our trust.”

**Example:**

“Trusting a city official is like trusting a fox in a henhouse.”

**Example:**

“When you buy clothes, check the seams and the lining.”

**Example:**

“The small, frightened child walked alone in the street.”

**Example:**

“Life was calmer before cell phones. People talked more

**.”Example:**

“We need stronger laws to protect children. Write to your representative.”

**Exercise 1: Select the word from the box that best describes the tone of each of the following statements. Not all of the words will be used.**

optimistic (hopeful, positive)

angry (extremely annoyed, mad)

admiring (approving, holding a high opinion)

cynical (distrustful, doubting)

excited (feeling enjoyment and pleasure)

humorous (amusing, making people laugh)

disapproving (disliking, condemning)

formal (serious, official)

informative (factual)

sarcastic (saying the opposite of what is meant)

apathetic (lacking enthusiasm, energy, or interest)

1.Taking a young child to a PG-13 movie is not okay and shows that the parents used poor judgment.

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2.The brown recluse spider has a dark, violin-shaped mark on the top part of its body. ....

3.The hard work and strong effort of the young men and women in the Special Olympics inspired everyone there.....

4.It doesn't matter to me which mayor candidate wins the election, so I won't bother to vote.....

5.No one is ever a total failure; he or she can always be a bad example for others.....

6.The councilman again showed his concern for the environment when he voted to allow building in an area meant to be a nature preserve.....

7.The company's youth mentoring program will inspire other business groups to start similar programs.....

8.Professional athletes no longer show loyalty to their teams or fans—only to their own wallets.....

9.We were excited to hear that next year's convention will be in San Antonio—we've always wanted to visit the Alamo!.....

10.To be considered for the student-of-the-year award, a person must show academic excellence and strong community service and provide at least four letters from teachers.....

**Exercise 2: Read the sentences below carefully to determine their tone. Read them out loud and listen to how they sound as you read. What kind of voice do you use? What tone do you hear?**

**1.** *Um, I was wondering if maybe I could borrow your pen, if you don't mind. That is, if it isn't too much trouble.*

- a. playful      b. hesitant      c. cheerful      d. angry

**2.** *Give me that pen!*

- a. gloomy      b. sad.      c. demanding

**3.** *For Pete's sake, get your own pen!*

- a. absent-minded      b. bold      c. annoyed      d. shy

**4.** *May I borrow your pen, please?*

- a. respectful      b. timid      c. anxious      d. thoughtful

**5.** *Remember, you need to be home by ten o'clock.*

- a. bossy      b. factual      c. ironic      d. inspiring

**6.** *You'd better be home by ten o'clock, or else!*

- a. threatening      b. sad      c. demanding      d. inspiring

**7.** *Shi had stayed up all night working on his research paper. Finally, by 6:00 A.M., he had everything ready: cover page, essay, Works Cited page, and illustrations. This was the best essay he had ever written, and he couldn't wait to present it to the class. He smiled as he showered and got ready for school. He smiled at everyone he passed on his way to the bus stop and smiled at the bus driver. He sat down in his usual seat and hummed to himself for a little while. Then he opened his bag. He wanted to admire his paper once more before his presentation. Of course, he had left his paper on the kitchen table.*

- a. proud      b. ironic      c. sad      d. cheerful

**8.** *"During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country . . ."—from Edgar Allan Poe, "**The Fall of the House of Usher**"*

- a. gloomy      b. mocking      c. nostalgic      d. hopeful

**Exercise 3: To strengthen your understanding of tone, complete the following task. Change the tone of each passage so it conveys a new tone. You may change words, add words, delete words, or change the sentence structure.**

<b>Change from:</b> factual <i>The tickets are sold out.</i>	<b>To:</b> disappointed tone <i>Man, I can't believe the tickets are already sold out. What a bummer!</i>
<b>1. Change from:</b> apologetic tone <i>I'm really, really sorry I got you in trouble</i>	<b>To:</b> indifferent tone
<b>2. Change from:</b> annoyed tone <i>Now what do you want?</i>	<b>To:</b> respectful tone
<b>3. Change from:</b> fearful tone <i>Oh no—he's here!</i>	<b>To:</b> joyful tone

#### **Exercise 4 : Rewrite this sentence in the tones mentioned below:**

“I went to the market yesterday.”

- Angry: .....
- Excited: .....
- nostalgic: .....
- humorous: .....
- sarcastic: .....

#### **Exercise 5 Underline words in “A Brother Lost” that indicate the author’s tone. It may change from one paragraph to the next. Choose one word that best describes the author’s overall tone. What other words could you use to describe her tone in specific paragraphs?**