

Additional Reference Material

Words used to describe writing or speech style

How do you describe your speaking style?

Words used to describe writing or speech style - thesaurus

1. Articulate. Adjective. Able to express your thoughts, arguments, and ideas clearly and effectively.
2. Articulate. adjective. ...
3. Be couched in something. phrase. ...
4. Chatty. Adjective. ...
5. Circuitous. adjective. ...
6. Clean. adjective. ...
7. Compendious. adjective. ...
8. Conversational. adjective.

Related words

1. Articulate

adjective

2. able to express your thoughts, arguments, and ideas clearly and effectively

3. articulate

adjective

articulate writing or speech is clear and easy to understand

4. be couched in something

phrase

to be expressed a particular way

5. chatty

adjective

chatty writing style is friendly and informal

6. circuitous

adjective

taking a long time to say what you really mean when you are talking or writing about something

7. clean

adjective

clean language or humour does not offend people, especially because it does not involve sex

8. compendious

adjective

formal short but containing all that is necessary

9. conversational

adjective

a conversational style of writing or speaking is informal, like a private conversation

10. crisp

adjective

crisp speech or writing is clear and effective

11. declamatory

adjective

formal expressing feelings or opinions with great force

12. diffuse

adjective

formal using too many words and not easy to understand

13. discursive

adjective

including information that is not relevant to the main subject

14. economical

adjective

an economical way of speaking or writing does not use more words than are necessary

15. elliptical

adjective

suggesting what you mean rather than saying or writing it clearly

16. eloquent

adjective

expressing what you mean using clear and effective language

18. emphatic

adjective

making your meaning very clear because you have very strong feelings about a situation or subject

19. emphatically

adverb

very firmly and clearly

20. epigrammatic

adjective

expressing something such as a feeling or idea in a short and clever or funny way

21. epistolary

adjective

... ..

22.euphemistic

adjective

euphemistic expressions are used for talking about unpleasant or embarrassing subjects without mentioning the things themselves

23.flowery

adjective

flowery language or writing uses many complicated words that are intended to make it more attractive

24.fluent

adjective

25. expressing yourself in a clear and confident way, without seeming to make an effort

26.formal

adjective

correct or conservative in style, and suitable for official or serious situations or occasions

27.formally

adverb

in a correct or conservative style or manner that is suitable for official or serious situations or occasions

28.gossipy

adjective

a gossipy letter is lively and full of news about the writer of the letter and about other people

29.grandiloquent

adjective

formal expressed in extremely formal language in order to impress people, and often sounding silly because of this

30.have something/a lot/nothing etc to say for yourself

phrase

to be fairly/very/not at all keen to talk, especially about yourself and your reasons for doing something

31.idiomatic

adjective

expressing things in a way that sounds natural

32.in

adjective

using a particular type or style of writing

33.inarticulate

adjective

not able to express clearly what you want to say

34.inarticulate

adjective

not spoken or pronounced clearly

35.incoherent

adjective

unable to express yourself clearly

36.informal

adjective

used about language or behaviour that is suitable for using with friends but not in formal situations

37.journalistic

adjective

similar in style to journalism

38.learned

adjective

a learned piece of writing shows great knowledge about a subject, especially an academic subject

39.literary

adjective

involving books or the activity of writing, reading, or studying books

40.literary

adjective

relating to the kind of words that are used only in stories or poems, and not in normal writing or speech

41.lyric

adjective

using words to express feelings in the way that a song would

42.lyrical

adjective

having the qualities of music

43.ornate

adjective

using unusual words and complicated sentences

44.orotund

adjective

very formal containing extremely formal and complicated language intended to impress people

45.parenthetical

adjective

not directly connected with what you are saying or writing

46.pejorative

adjective

formal a pejorative word, phrase etc expresses criticism or a bad opinion of someone or something

47.picturesque

adjective

picturesque language is unusual and interesting

48.pithy

adjective

a pithy statement or piece of writing is short and very effective

49.poetic

adjective

expressing ideas in a very sensitive way and with great beauty or imagination

50.polemical

adjective

formal using or supported by strong arguments

51.ponderous

adjective

mainly literary ponderous writing or speech is serious and boring

52.portentous

adjective

formal trying to seem very serious and important, in order to impress people

53.prolix

adjective

very formal using too many words and therefore boring

54.punchy

adjective

a punchy piece of writing such as a speech, report, or slogan is one that has a strong effect because it uses clear simple language and not many words

55.rambling

adjective

a rambling speech or piece of writing is long and confusing

56.readable

adjective

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57.rhetorical

adjective

relating to a style of speaking or writing that is effective or intended to influence people

58.rhetorical

adjective

written or spoken in a way that is impressive but is not honest

59.rhetorically

adverb

in a way that expects or wants no answer

60.rhetorically

adverb

using or relating to rhetoric

61.rough

adjective

a rough drawing or piece of writing is not completely finished

62.roundly

adverb

in a strong and clear way

63.sententious

adjective

formal expressing opinions about right and wrong behaviour in a way that is intended to impress people

64.sesquipedalian

adjective

very formal using a lot of long words that most people do not understand

65.Shakespearean

adjective

using words in the way that is typical of Shakespeare's writing

66.slangy

adjective

informal containing or using a lot of slang

67.stylistic

adjective

relating to ways of creating effects, especially in language and literature

68.succinct

adjective

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69.turgid

adjective

using language in a way that is complicated and difficult to understand

70.unprintable

adjective

used for describing writing or words that you think are offensive

71.vague

adjective

someone who is vague does not clearly or fully explain something

72.vaguely

adverb

in a way that is not clear

73.verbose

adjective

formal using more words than necessary, and therefore long and boring

74.well-turned

adjective

a well-turned phrase is one that is expressed well

75.with (your) tongue in (your) cheek

phrase

if you write or say something with tongue in cheek, you intend it to be humorous and do not mean it seriously

76.worded

adjective

expressed in a particular way

77.wordy

adjective

using more words than are necessary, especially long or formal words

155 Words To Describe An Author's Tone

*Writers Write is a comprehensive writing resource. We have put together this list of 155 words to help you describe an author's **tone**.*

What is tone?

Tone refers to an author's **use of words** and **writing style** to convey his or her attitude towards a topic

What the **author feels** about the subject is often defined as the **tone**. What the **reader feels** is known as the **mood**.

[Suggested reading: [140 Words To Describe Mood In Fiction](#)]

Tip: Don't confuse **tone** with **voice**. Voice can be explained as the author's personality expressed in writing.

1. Tone = Attitude.
2. Voice = Personality.

Tone (attitude) and **voice** (personality) create a **writing style**.

You may not be able to alter your personality but you can adjust your attitude. This gives you ways to create writing that affects your audience's mood. (Click [here](#) for examples of **tone** in a story.)

The mechanics of tone

Tone is conveyed through diction (choice and use of words and phrases), **viewpoint**, syntax (grammar; how you put words and phrases together), and level of formality. It is the way you express yourself in speech or writing.

How do you find the correct tone?

You can usually find a tone by asking these three questions:

1. Why am I writing this?
2. Who is my intended audience?
3. What do I want the reader to learn, understand, or think about?

In **formal writing**, your tone should be clear, concise, confident, and courteous. The writing level should be sophisticated, but not pretentious.

In **creative writing**, your tone is more subjective, but you should always aim to communicate clearly. **Genre** sometimes determines the tone.

155 Words To Describe An Author's Tone

Tone	Meaning
Absurd	illogical; ridiculous; silly; implausible; foolish
Accusatory	suggesting someone has done something wrong, complaining
Acerbic	sharp; forthright; biting; hurtful; abrasive; severe
Admiring	approving; think highly of; respectful; praising
Aggressive	hostile; determined; forceful; argumentative
Aggrieved	indignant; annoyed; offended; disgruntled
Ambivalent	having mixed feelings; uncertain; in a dilemma; undecided
Amused	entertained; diverted; pleased
Angry	incensed or enraged; threatening or menacing

Animated	full of life or excitement; lively; spirited; impassioned; vibrant
Apathetic	showing little interest; lacking concern; indifferent; unemotional
Apologetic	full of regret; repentant; remorseful; acknowledging failure
Appreciative	grateful; thankful; showing pleasure; enthusiastic
Ardent	enthusiastic; passionate
Arrogant	pompous; disdainful; overbearing; condescending; vain; scoffing
Assertive	self-confident; strong-willed; authoritative; insistent
Awestruck	amazed, filled with wonder/awe; reverential
Belligerent	hostile; aggressive; combatant
Benevolent	sympathetic; tolerant; generous; caring; well meaning
Bitter	angry; acrimonious; antagonistic; spiteful; nasty
Callous	cruel disregard; unfeeling; uncaring; indifferent; ruthless
Candid	truthful, straightforward; honest; unreserved
Caustic	making biting, corrosive comments; critical
Cautionary	gives warning; raises awareness; reminding
Celebratory	praising; pay tribute to; glorify; honour
Chatty	informal; lively; conversational; familiar
Colloquial	familiar; everyday language; informal; colloquial; casual
Comic	humorous; witty; entertaining; diverting
Compassionate	sympathetic; empathetic; warm-hearted; tolerant; kind
Complex	having many varying characteristics; complicated
Compliant	agree or obey rules; acquiescent; flexible; submissive
Concerned	worried; anxious; apprehensive
Conciliatory	intended to placate or pacify; appeasing
Condescending	stooping to the level of one's inferiors; patronising
Confused	unable to think clearly; bewildered; vague
Contemptuous	showing contempt; scornful; insolent; mocking
Critical	finding fault; disapproving; scathing; criticising
Cruel	causing pain and suffering; unkind; spiteful; severe
Curious	wanting to find out more; inquisitive; questioning
Cynical	scornful of motives/virtues of others; mocking; sneering
Defensive	defending a position; shielding; guarding; watchful
Defiant	obstinate; argumentative; defiant; contentious
Demeaning	disrespectful; undignified
Depressing	sad, melancholic; discouraging; pessimistic
Derisive	snide; sarcastic; mocking; dismissive; scornful
Detached	aloof; objective; unfeeling; distant
Dignified	serious; respectful; formal; proper
Diplomatic	tactful; subtle; sensitive; thoughtful
Disapproving	displeased; critical; condemnatory
Disheartening	discouraging; demoralising; undermining; depressing
Disparaging	dismissive; critical; scornful

Direct	straightforward; honest
Disappointed	discouraged; unhappy because something has gone wrong
Dispassionate	impartial; indifferent; unsentimental; cold; unsympathetic
Distressing	heart-breaking; sad; troubling
Docile	compliant; submissive; deferential; accommodating
Earnest	showing deep sincerity or feeling; serious
Egotistical	self-absorbed; selfish; conceited; boastful
Empathetic	understanding; kind; sensitive
Encouraging	optimistic; supportive
Enthusiastic	excited; energetic
Evasive	ambiguous; cryptic; unclear
Excited	emotionally aroused; stirred
Facetious	inappropriate; flippant
Farcical	ludicrous; absurd; mocking; humorous and highly improbable
Flippant	superficial; glib; shallow; thoughtless; frivolous
Forceful	powerful; energetic; confident; assertive
Formal	respectful; stilted; factual; following accepted styles/rules
Frank	honest; direct; plain; matter-of-fact
Frustrated	annoyed; discouraged
Gentle	kind; considerate; mild; soft
Ghoulish	delighting in the revolting or the loathsome
Grim	serious; gloomy; depressing; lacking humour; macabre
Gullible	naïve; innocent; ignorant
Hard	unfeeling; hard-hearted; unyielding
Humble	deferential; modest
Humorous	amusing; entertaining; playful
Hypercritical	unreasonably critical; hair splitting; nitpicking
Impartial	unbiased; neutral; objective
Impassioned	filled with emotion; ardent
Imploring	pleading; begging
Impressionable	trusting; child-like
Inane	silly; foolish; stupid; nonsensical
Incensed	enraged
Incredulous	disbelieving; unconvinced; questioning; suspicious
Indignant	annoyed; angry; dissatisfied
Informative	instructive; factual; educational
Inspirational	encouraging; reassuring
Intense	earnest; passionate; concentrated; deeply felt
Intimate	familiar; informal; confidential; confessional
Ironic	the opposite of what is meant
Irreverent	lacking respect for things that are generally taken seriously
Jaded	bored; having had too much of the same thing; lack enthusiasm

Joyful	positive; optimistic; cheerful; elated
Judgmental	critical; finding fault; disparaging
Laudatory	praising; recommending
Light-Hearted	carefree; relaxed; chatty; humorous
Loving	affectionate; showing intense, deep concern
Macabre	gruesome; horrifying; frightening
Malicious	desiring to harm others or to see others suffer; ill-willed; spiteful
Mean-Spirited	inconsiderate; unsympathetic
Mocking	scornful; ridiculing; making fun of someone
Mourning	grieving; lamenting; woeful
Naïve	innocent; unsophisticated; immature
Narcissistic	self-admiring; selfish; boastful; self-pitying
Nasty	unpleasant; unkind; disagreeable; abusive
Negative	unhappy, pessimistic
Nostalgic	thinking about the past; wishing for something from the past
Objective	without prejudice; without discrimination; fair; based on fact
Obsequious	overly obedient and/or submissive; fawning; grovelling
Optimistic	hopeful; cheerful
Outraged	angered and resentful; furious; extremely angered
Outspoken	frank; candid; spoken without reserve
Pathetic	expressing pity, sympathy, tenderness
Patronising	condescending; scornful; pompous
Pensive	reflective; introspective; philosophical; contemplative
Persuasive	convincing; eloquent; influential; plausible
Pessimistic	seeing the negative side of things
Philosophical	theoretical; analytical; rational; logical
Playful	full of fun and good spirits; humorous; jesting
Pragmatic	realistic; sensible
Pretentious	affected; artificial; grandiose; rhetorical; flashy
Regretful	apologetic; remorseful
Resentful	aggrieved; offended; displeased; bitter
Resigned	accepting; unhappy
Restrained	controlled; quiet; unemotional
Reverent	showing deep respect and esteem
Righteous	morally right and just; guiltless; pious; god-fearing
Satirical	making fun to show a weakness; ridiculing; derisive
Sarcastic	scornful; mocking; ridiculing
Scathing	critical; stinging; unsparing; harsh
Scornful	expressing contempt or derision; scathing; dismissive
Sensationalistic	provocative; inaccurate; distasteful
Sentimental	thinking about feelings, especially when remembering the past
Sincere	honest; truthful; earnest

Sceptical	disbelieving; unconvinced; doubting
Solemn	not funny; in earnest; serious
Subjective	prejudiced; biased
Submissive	compliant; passive; accommodating; obedient
Sulking	bad-tempered; grumpy; resentful; sullen
Sympathetic	compassionate; understanding of how someone feels
Thoughtful	reflective; serious; absorbed
Tolerant	open-minded; charitable; patient; sympathetic; lenient
Tragic	disastrous; calamitous
Unassuming	modest; self-effacing; restrained
Uneasy	worried; uncomfortable; edgy; nervous
Urgent	insistent; saying something must be done soon
Vindictive	vengeful; spiteful; bitter; unforgiving
Virtuous	lawful; righteous; moral; upstanding
Whimsical	quaint; playful; mischievous; offbeat
Witty	clever; quick-witted; entertaining
Wonder	awe-struck; admiring; fascinating
World-Weary	bored; cynical; tired
Worried	anxious; stressed; fearful
Wretched	miserable; despairing; sorrowful; distressed

Helpful Tip: Finding the correct **tone** is a matter of practice. Try to write for different audiences. Even if you only want to write novels, it is an apprenticeship of sorts. Write press releases. Write opinion pieces. Write interviews. Write copy. Write a business plan.

The more you write, the better you will become at infusing your work with the nuances needed to create the perfect book.

Top Tip: Find out more about our online courses and workbooks in our [shop](#).

by [Amanda Patterson](#)