

What is tone?

Tone refers to an author's use of words and writing style to convey his or her **attitude** towards a **topic**. Tone is often defined as what the author feels about the subject. What the **reader** feels is known as the **mood**. Mood is the general **feeling** or atmosphere that a piece of writing creates within the reader.

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

The mechanics

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.

Examples of Tone

Accusatory suggesting someone has done something wrong, complaining

Aggressive hostile; determined; forceful; argumentative

Angry	incensed or enraged; threatening or menacing
Apologetic	full of regret; repentant; remorseful; acknowledging failure
Appreciative	grateful; thankful; showing pleasure; enthusiastic
Assertive	self-confident; strong-willed; authoritative; insistent
Candid	truthful, straightforward; honest; unreserved
Cautionary	gives warning; raises awareness; reminding
Colloquial	familiar; everyday language; informal; colloquial; casual
Critical	finding fault; disapproving; scathing; criticizing
Depressing	sad, melancholic; discouraging; pessimistic
Enthusiastic	excited; energetic
Forceful	powerful; energetic; confident; assertive
Informative	instructive; factual; educational
Outraged	angered and resentful; furious; extremely angered