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.

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 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.

Tone Meaning

- ✓ Absurd illogical; ridiculous; silly
- ✓ Accusatory suggesting someone h complaining
- ✓ Acerbic sharp; forthright; biting;
- ✓ Admiring approving; think highly
- ✓ Aggressive hostile; determined; for
- ✓ Aggrieved indignant; annoyed; off
- ✓ Ambivalent having mixed feelings; dilemma; undecided
- ✓ Amused entertained; diverted; p
- ✓ Angry incensed or enraged; t
- ✓ Animated full of life or excitemen impassioned; vibrant

- ✓ Apathetic showing little interest; l unemotional
- ✓ Apologetic full of regret; repentant remorseful; acknowled
- ✓ Appreciative grateful; thankful; show
- ✓ Ardent enthusiastic; passionat
- ✓ Arrogant pompous; disdainful; o vain; scoffing
- ✓ Assertive self-confident; strong- authoritative; insistent
- ✓ Awestruck amazed, filled with wo
- ✓ Belligerent hostile; aggressive; co
- ✓ Benevolent sympathetic; tolerant; meaning
- ✓ Bitter angry; acrimonious; ant
- ✓ Callous cruel disregard; unfeeli ruthless
- ✓ Candid truthful, straightforwar
- ✓ Caustic making biting, corrosiv
- ✓ Cautionary gives warning; raises a
- ✓ Celebratory praising; pay tribute to;
- ✓ Chatty informal; lively; convers
- ✓ Colloquial familiar; everyday lang casual
- ✓ Comic humorous; witty; entert
- ✓ Compassionate sympathetic; empatheti kind
- ✓ Complex having many varying c
- ✓ Compliant agree or obey rules; ac flexible; submissive
- ✓ Concerned worried; anxious; appre
- ✓ Conciliatory intended to placate or
- ✓ Condescending stooping to the level of
- ✓ Confused unable to think clearly;
- ✓ Contemptuous showing contempt; sco
- ✓ Critical finding fault; disapprovi
- ✓ Cruel causing pain and suffe
- ✓ Curious wanting to find out mo
- ✓ Cynical scornful of motives/virt mocking; sneering
- ✓ Defensive defending a position; s
- ✓ Defiant obstinate; argumentati
- ✓ Demeaning disrespectful; undignifi
- ✓ Depressing sad, melancholic; disco
- ✓ Derisive snide; sarcastic; mocki
- ✓ Detached aloof; objective; unfeeli
- ✓ Dignified serious; respectful; for
- ✓ Diplomatic tactful; subtle; sensitiv
- ✓ Disapproving displeased; critical; con
- ✓ Disheartening discouraging; demorali depressing
- ✓ Disparaging dismissive; critical; sco
- ✓ Direct straightforward; honest

- ✓ Disappointed discouraged; unhappy gone wrong
- ✓ Dispassionate impartial; indifferent; u cold; unsympathetic
- ✓ Distressing heart-breaking; sad; tro
- ✓ Docile compliant; submissive; deferential; accommod
- ✓ Earnest showing deep sincerity
- ✓ Egotistical self-absorbed; selfish;
- ✓ Empathetic understanding; kind; se
- ✓ Encouraging optimistic; supportive
- ✓ Enthusiastic excited; energetic
- ✓ Evasive ambiguous; cryptic; un
- ✓ Excited emotionally aroused; st
- ✓ Facetious inappropriate; flippant
- ✓ Farcical ludicrous; absurd; moc improbable
- ✓ Flippant superficial; glib; shallo
- ✓ Forceful powerful; energetic; co
- ✓ Formal respectful; stilted; fact styles/rules
- ✓ Frank honest; direct; plain; m
- ✓ Frustrated annoyed; discouraged
- ✓ Gentle kind; considerate; mild;
- ✓ Ghoulish delighting in the revolti
- ✓ Grim serious; gloomy; depre humour;macabre
- ✓ Gullible naïve; innocent; ignora
- ✓ Hard unfeeling; hard-hearted
- ✓ Humble deferential; modest
- ✓ Humorous amusing; entertaining;
- ✓ Hypercritical unreasonably critical; h
- ✓ Impartial unbiased; neutral; obje
- ✓ Impassioned filled with emotion; ard
- ✓ Imploring pleading; begging
- ✓ Impressionable trusting; child-like
- ✓ Inane silly; foolish; stupid; no
- ✓ Incensed enraged
- ✓ Incredulous disbelieving; unconvinc
- ✓ Indignant annoyed; angry; dissati
- ✓ Informative instructive; factual; edu
- ✓ Inspirational encouraging; reassurin
- ✓ Intense earnest; passionate; co
- ✓ Intimate familiar; informal; confi
- ✓ Ironic the opposite of what is
- ✓ Irreverent lacking respect for thin seriously
- ✓ Jaded bored; having had too thing; lack enthusiasm
- ✓ Joyful positive; optimistic; ch

- ✓ Judgmental critical; finding fault; di
- ✓ Laudatory praising; recommendin
- ✓ Light-Hearted carefree; relaxed; chatt
- ✓ Loving affectionate; showing i
- ✓ Macabre gruesome; horrifying; fr
- ✓ Malicious desiring to harm otherswilled; spiteful
- ✓ Mean-Spirited inconsiderate; unsymp
- ✓ Mocking scornful; ridiculing; ma
- ✓ Mourning grieving; lamenting; wo
- ✓ Naïve innocent; unsophisticat
- ✓ Narcissistic self-admiring; selfish; b
- ✓ Nasty unpleasant; unkind; dis
- ✓ Negative unhappy, pessimistic
- ✓ Nostalgic thinking about the past from the past
- ✓ Objective without prejudice; with based on fact
- ✓ Obsequious overly obedient and/or grovelling
- ✓ Optimistic hopeful; cheerful
- ✓ Outraged angered and resentful;
- ✓ Outspoken frank; candid; spoken
- ✓ Pathetic expressing pity, sympa
- ✓ Patronising condescending; scornf
- ✓ Pensive reflective; introspective contemplative
- ✓ Persuasive convincing; eloquent; i
- ✓ Pessimistic seeing the negative sid
- ✓ Philosophical theoretical; analytical; r
- ✓ Playful full of fun and good spi
- ✓ Pragmatic realistic; sensible
- ✓ Pretentious affected; artificial; gran
- ✓ Regretful apologetic; remorseful
- ✓ Resentful aggrieved; offended; di
- ✓ Resigned accepting; unhappy
- ✓ Restrained controlled; quiet; unem
- ✓ Reverent showing deep respect
- ✓ Righteous morally right and just;
- ✓ Satirical making fun to show a derisive
- ✓ Sarcastic scornful; mocking; ridic
- ✓ Scathing critical; stinging; unspa
- ✓ Scornful expressing contempt o dismissive
- ✓ Sensationalistic provocative; inaccurate
- ✓ Sentimental thinking about feelings, remembering the past
- ✓ Sincere honest; truthful; earnes
- ✓ Sceptical disbelieving; unconvinc

- ✓ Solemn not funny; in earnest; s
- ✓ Subjective prejudiced; biased
- ✓ Submissive compliant; passive; acc
- ✓ Sulking bad-tempered; grumpy;
- ✓ Sympathetic compassionate; unders feels
- ✓ Thoughtful reflective; serious; abs
- ✓ Tolerant open-minded; charitabl lenient
- ✓ Tragic disastrous; calamitous
- ✓ Unassuming modest; self-effacing; r
- ✓ Uneasy worried; uncomfortable
- ✓ Urgent insistent; saying somet
- ✓ Vindictive vengeful; spiteful; bitte
- ✓ Virtuous lawful; righteous; moral
- ✓ Whimsical quaint; playful; mischie
- ✓ Witty clever; quick-witted; en
- ✓ Wonder awe-struck; admiring; f
- ✓ World-Weary bored; cynical; tired
- ✓ Worried anxious; stressed; fearf
- ✓ Wretched miserable; despairing;

LIST OF TONE WORDS

POSITIVE TONE WORDS

- admiring
- adoring
- affectionate
- appreciative
- approving
- bemused
- benevolent
- blithe
- calm
- casual
- celebratory
- cheerful
- comforting
- comic
- compassionate
- complimentary
- conciliatory
- confident

- contented
- delightful
- earnest
- ebullient
- ecstatic
- effusive
- elated
- empathetic
- encouraging
- euphoric
- excited
- exhilarated
- expectant
- facetious
- fervent
- flippant
- forthright
- friendly
- funny
- gleeful
- gushy
- happy hilarious
- hopeful
- humorous
- interested
- introspective
- jovial
- joyful
- laudatory
- light
- lively
- mirthful
- modest
- nostalgic
- optimistic
- passionate
- placid
- playful
- poignant
- proud

- reassuring
- reflective
- relaxed
- respectful
- reverent
- romantic
- sanguine
- scholarly
- self-assured sentimental
- serene
- silly
- sprightly
- straightforward
- sympathetic
- tender
- tranquil
- whimsical
- wistful
- worshipful
- zealous

NEUTRAL

- commanding
- direct
- impartial
- indirect
- meditative
- objective
- questioning
- speculative
- unambiguous
- unconcerned
- understated

NEGATIVE TONE WORDS

- abhorring
- acerbic
- ambiguous
- ambivalent
- angry

- annoyed
- antagonistic
- anxious
- apathetic
- apprehensive
- belligerent
- bewildered
- biting
- bitter
- blunt
- bossy
- cold
- conceited
- condescending
- confused
- contemptuous
- curt
- cynical
- demanding
- depressed
- derisive
- derogatory
- desolate
- despairing
- desperate
- detached
- diabolic
- disappointed
- disliking
- disrespectful
- doubtful
- embarrassed
- enraged
- evasive
- fatalistic
- fearful
- forceful
- foreboding
- frantic
- frightened
- frustrated
- furious

- gloomy
- grave
- greedy
- grim
- harsh
- haughty
- holier-than-thou
- hopeless hostile
- impatient
- incredulous
- indifferent
- indignant
- inflammatory
- insecure
- insolent
- irreverent
- lethargic
- melancholy
- mischievous
- miserable
- mocking
- mournful
- nervous
- ominous
- outraged
- paranoid
- pathetic
- patronizing
- pedantic
- pensive
- pessimistic
- pretentious
- psychotic
- resigned
- reticent
- sarcastic
- sardonic
- scornful
- self-deprecating
- selfish
- serious
- severe

- sinister
- skeptical
- sly
- solemn
- somber
- stern
- stolid
- stressful
- strident
- suspicious
- tense
- threatening
- tragic
- uncertain
- uneasy
- unfriendly
- unsympathetic
- upset
- violent
- wry

LIST OF MOOD WORDS

POSITIVE MOOD WORDS

- amused
- awed
- bouncy
- calm
- cheerful
- chipper
- confident
- contemplative
- content
- determined
- dignified
- dreamy
- ecstatic
- empowered
- energetic
- enlightened
- enthralled
- excited

- exhilarated
- flirty
- giddy
- grateful
- harmonious
- hopeful
- hyper
- idyllic
- joyous jubilant
- liberating
- light-hearted
- loving
- mellow
- nostalgic
- optimistic
- passionate
- peaceful
- playful
- pleased
- refreshed
- rejuvenated
- relaxed
- relieved
- satiated
- satisfied
- sentimental
- silly
- surprised
- sympathetic
- thankful
- thoughtful
- touched
- trustful
- vivacious
- warm
- welcoming

NEGATIVE MOOD WORDS

- aggravated
- annoyed
- anxious

- apathetic
- apprehensive
- barren
- brooding
- cold
- confining
- confused
- cranky
- crushed
- cynical
- depressed
- desolate
- disappointed
- discontented
- distressed
- drained
- dreary
- embarrassed
- enraged
- envious
- exhausted
- fatalistic
- foreboding
- frustrated
- futile
- gloomy
- grumpy
- haunting
- heartbroken
- hopeless
- hostile
- indifferent
- infuriated insidious
- intimidated
- irate
- irritated
- jealous
- lethargic
- lonely
- melancholic
- merciless
- moody

- morose
- nauseated
- nervous
- nightmarish
- numb
- overwhelmed
- painful
- pensive
- pessimistic
- predatory
- rejected
- restless
- scared
- serious
- sick
- somber
- stressed
- suspenseful
- tense
- terrifying
- threatening
- uncomfortable
- vengeful
- violent
- worried