

Tone words describe the speaker's or writer's feelings or judgment about the subject at hand. Note that tone words on this list are all **adjectives**, words that describe. Tone may change or **shift** within a piece of writing; be on the watch for such **tonal shifts**.

Many of these words are familiar to you, but for those that may be unfamiliar to you, I've provided parenthetical synonyms. Keep this sheet (forever) as a reference tool for any assignment requiring you to discover and discuss tone.

admiring	fanciful	remorseful (full of regret or guilt)
affectionate	forgiving	respectful
afraid	frightened	restrained (not emotional)
ambivalent (uncertain about a choice)	frightening	sad
angry	frivolous	sarcastic (sharp, wounding)
amused	giddy (silly, lighthearted)	scheming (tricky)
apologetic	grateful	scornful (arrogant)
ashamed	happy	seductive (intriguing)
audacious (bold, spirited, reckless)	horrific	self-mocking
benevolent (kind, well-meaning)	humorous	self-pitying
bewildered (confused, puzzled)	hypocritical (false, two-faced)	sentimental (romantic, emotional)
bitter (biting, full of hate)	impassioned (of strong emotion)	serious
bored	indignant	sharp
calm or calming	instructive	shocking
candid (honest)	insulting	silly
caring	irreverent (not respectful)	skeptical (disbelieving)
cheerful	ironic	solemn (serious)
childish	joyous	somber
cold	lighthearted	sorrowful
compassionate (deeply sympathetic)	loving	straightforward (direct)
complimentary	malevolent (mean-spirited, evil)	superior (looking down on)
conceited	matter-of-fact (unemotional)	sweet
condescending (superior, patronizing)	mocking	sympathetic
confused	nostalgic (longing for the past)	threatening
contemptuous (disdainful, scornful)	objective (not influenced by feelings or prejudices)	tired
critical	optimistic (hopeful)	tolerant
cruel	outraged	tragic
curious	peaceful	uncertain (doubting)
doubtful	pessimistic (not hopeful)	upset
depressed (very sad or discouraged)	playful	urgent
detached (emotionally uninvolved)	pleading (begging)	vengeful (meaning to hurt)
didactic (instructive)	poignant (moving, sorrowful)	vibrant
distressed (suffering)	praising	warm
dramatic	proud (full of praise or esteem)	worried
dreamy	provocative (stimulating)	zealous (eager and involved)
encouraging		
excited		

acerbic
adoring
affectionate
ambiguous
ambivalent
annoyed
antagonistic
anxious
apathetic
appreciative
apprehensive
belligerent
bemused
benevolent
bewildered
biting
bitter
blunt
bossy
brusque
calm
candid
casual
choleric
cold
colloquial
comic
compassionate
complex
complicated
complimentary
conceited
condescending
confident
confused
contemptuous
conversational
cynical
demanding
depressed
derisive
derogatory
desolate
despairing
desperate
detached
diabolic
direct
disappointed
disrespectful

doubtful
earnest
ecstatic
effusive
elevated
eloquent
embarrassed
emotional
empathetic
encouraging
enraged
euphoric
evasive
excited
exhilarated
facetious
factual
familiar
fervent
flippant
forceful
frantic
gloomy
greedy
gushy
harsh
haughty
hilarious
holier-than-thou
hostile
humorous
impartial
impatient
indifferent
indignant
inflammatory
informal
informative
insecure
insistent
insolent
introspective
ironic
irreverent
jovial
joyful
laid-back
learned
lethargic
lively

lofty
ludicrous
meditative
melancholy
mischievous
mocking
modest
mournful
mysterious
nervous
nostalgic
objective
ominous
optimistic
outraged
outspoken
paranoid
passionate
patronizing
pedantic
pensive
pessimistic
placid
playful
poignant
powerful
pretentious
proud
questioning
reassuring
relaxed
resigned
respectful
reticent
reverent
ridiculous
romantic
sarcastic
sardonic
scholarly
selfish
sentimental
serious
severe
sinister
skeptical
solemn
somber
stately
straightforward

