

Tone Words Divided by General Effect

Positive

ecstatic—intense feeling; rapturous delight

I was ecstatic to learn I had won the scholarship.

empathetic—understand/appreciate the feelings of others

Her empathetic tone led me to trust her.

bantering—light teasing/joking

The bantering, although light-hearted, made the minister uncomfortable.

elated—extremely happy

We were elated when we won the game.

jovial—cheerful (**jocular**)

The teacher's jovial (jocular) personality made learning fun.

earnest—intensely sincere

The candidate spoke earnestly of his desire to help others.

reverent—respectful/regarding something as very important

She spoke of the President in a reverent tone.

vibrant—full of life

His tone became vibrant when he spoke of his happy childhood.

whimsical—lightly fanciful

He whimsically spoke of magical powers and talking gnomes.

humble—modest, meek

The athlete's humble tone contrasted with his great achievements.

authoritative—official, expert, knowledgeable

A political candidate tries to sound authoritative when speaking of the economy.

solemn—very serious, grave

At the funeral, the preacher delivered the eulogy in a solemn tone.

Neutral

objective—unbiased

The police report was thorough and objective.

clinical—impersonal, scientific

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The professor's clinical tone failed to inspire his students.

detached—emotionally uninvolved

The writer's detached tone left his audience cold.

diffident—shy, unsure

Her diffident nature made her an unlikely candidate for class president

inquisitive—positive: eager for knowledge

The student's inquisitive tone inspired her teacher.

negative: inappropriately curious

She was so inquisitive that we had to tell her to mind her own business.

NEGATIVE

sarcastic—ridiculing (**taunting, derisive, mocking**)

He sarcastically told his losing team "good job!"

ironic—opposite to what is expected by reader

Swift's "A Modest Proposal" is ironic; he did not seriously intend for people to eat their children.

satiric—ridiculing in order to expose wrongs

John Stewart satirically praised the governmental policy that led to war.

sardonic—darkly humorous

Her sardonic story treated murderers in a humorous manner.

cynical—questioning the goodness of people

The student's cynical remarks alarmed her parents, who had always taught her to trust others.

flippant—irreverently humorous

The flippant remarks about religious faith offended the priest.

haughty—excessively proud (**arrogant**)

The rich woman assumed a haughty tone towards her servants

condescending (patronizing)—conveying an attitude of superiority

Unfortunately, my high test grades in school led me to develop a condescending attitude towards my friends.

pretentious—assuming self-importance

The speaker's name-dropping and use of big words seemed more pretentious than genuine.

bombastic—talking in a way that sounds important (big words) but has little meaning.

The general's bombastic tone alienated his troops.

coarse—crude, ill-mannered

The tennis player's coarse words caused him to be thrown off the court.

apathetic—with little or no emotion; uninvolved

He seemed not to care; the father's attitude toward his son was oddly apathetic.

disdainful—scornful

The coach's disdainful words hurt and discouraged her team.

gloomy—sad, dark

Our good mood soon darkened as we read the gloomy passage

nostalgic—longing for the past

Listening to music from the 40's created a nostalgic mood in the old folks' home.

inflammatory—arousing anger

accusatory—blaming

His accusatory tone had an inflammatory effect on his audience.

contentious—quarrelsome

The girl's contentious words created a hostile atmosphere among her classmates.

wrathful—very angry

In "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," Jonathon Edwards terrified his listeners by vividly describing a wrathful God.

bitter—strong negative feelings as a result of pain

She spoke bitterly of the death of her husband in the war.

didactic—preachy, lecturing

I soon tired of my mother's didactic tone

moralistic—imposing a system of right and wrong

The moralistic sermon inspired all of us to do the right thing

TONE WORDS DEFINED

1. **satiric**: using irony, sarcasm, ridicule to expose, denounce or deride vice or folly.
2. **whimsical**: given to odd or fanciful ideas.
3. **dramatic**: characteristic of or appropriate to the drama; employing contrast/conflict.
4. **learned**: scholarly
5. **informative**: instructive
6. **somber**: dark, gloomy, depressing
7. **objective**: free from personal feelings or prejudices; unbiased
8. **diffident**: insecure, shy, lacking confidence in one's abilities
9. **didactic**: teaching or lecturing (in a negative sense)
10. **petty**: concerned with narrow, small ideas
11. **elegiac**: sorrowful, lamenting
12. **disdainful**: scornful, contemptuous
13. **lugubrious**: excessively sorrowful, mournful
14. **pedantic**: making a show of knowledge
15. **bantering**: playful teasing
16. **flippant**: irreverent joking, disrespectful levity
17. **patronizing**: looking down on; treating as inferior; condescending
18. **facetious**: humorous
19. **inflammatory**: arousing passion or anger
20. **detached**: impersonal, not involved
21. **cynical**: distrusting the sincerity of human motives
22. **incisive**: sharp; keen; penetrating
23. **effusive**: unduly demonstrative; gushy; without reserve
24. **colloquial**: having characteristics of ordinary conversation rather than formal speech.
25. **insipid**: lacking distinctive qualities; dull
26. **pretentious**: assuming dignity or importance
27. **vibrant**: full of vigor, energy, excitement
28. **irreverent**: lacking veneration, respect
29. **sentimental**: focusing on feeling; unduly emotional
30. **moralistic**: concerned with values of right and wrong
31. **taunting**: insulting; sarcastic
32. **turgid**: pompous or bombastic (using too many big words)
33. **sardonic**: bitterly ironic
34. **contentious**: argumentative
35. **candid**: clear, honest, open

Ables

Anger
belligerent
bitter
disappointed
disgusted
enraged
fuming
incensed
insulting
outraged
savage
sullen
threatening
wrathful

Arrogance
arrogant
authoritative
boastful
bold
condescending
cocksure
contemptuous
despotic
pretentious
pompous
proud
supercilious

Comedy
comical
cynical
frivolous
hilarious
ironic
laughable
mock-heroic
mocking
mock-serious
ridiculing
sarcastic
silly
taunting

Happiness
amiable
cheery
contented
ecstatic
elated
elevated
enthusiastic
euphoric
exuberant
festive
genial
giddy
glorious
harmonious
impassioned
joyful
jovial
jubilant
lighthearted

mirthful
sprightly
zestful

Logic
argumentative
clinical
didactic
doubting
ethical
explanatory
informative
instructive
moral
objective
persuasive
probing
questioning
rational
sensible
thoughtful

Romantic
affectionate
amorous
compassionate
devoted
erotic
fanciful
ideal
loving
lustful
passionate
sensual
tender

Sadness
despairing
defeated
dejected
desperate
dire
disastrous
discord
disheartened
dismal
foreboding
gloomy
isolated
lamentable
lonely
melancholy
mournful
regretful
remorseful
serious
sorrowful
tragic

Satire
(see comedy)
belittling
condescending
cynical

disdainful
facetious
haughty
insolent
ironic
mocking
patronizing
ridiculing
sarcastic
sardonic
wry

Tranquility
calm
hopeful
meditative
optimistic
peaceful
placid
relaxed
sedate
self-composed
serene
soothing
spiritual

Miscellaneous
adventurous
aggravated
aggressive
agitated
agreeable
alarmed
aloof
ambitious
apathetic
apologetic
ardent
artificial
astutely
audacious
banal
benevolent
bitter
bleak
bored
callous
cautious
chaotic
chauvinistic
childish
coarse
comforting
contemplative
corrosive
critical
curious
detached
distant
domineering
dreamy
eerie
embattled
empathetic

encouraging
envious
esoteric
fearful
feminine
flippant
flirtatious
foreboding
frantic
frazzled
frivolous
glibly
hollow
hypnotic
hypocritical
idealistic
impious
indifferent
inevitability
innocent
inquisitive
insightful
intense
interrogative
intrinsic
irrational
irreverent
jealous
laconic
languid
lethargic
macho
majestic
malicious
manipulative
masculine
meditative
meek
melancholic
meticulous
militaristic
modest
morbid
morose
naïve
nostalgic
obnoxious
odious
paranoid
patriotic
patronizing
pensive
perturbed
reluctant
reminiscent
resentful
resigned
reverent
savvy
scrupulous
trite
vulgar