

Name: _____

Writing

Foundations:

Tone

Outcomes:

After this module you will be able to:

- Identify tone in another person's writing
- Determine the impact of tone on audience
- Write using a positive tone
- Compare formal and informal language
- Describe the tone of someone else's writing
- Re-write a statement using appropriate tone

Tone: How can I communicate the information?

Tone refers to a writer's mood, feeling and attitude toward the reader and the topic being written about. Tone affects how the reader will perceive the message. Identifying your audience and purpose will help you to identify the tone you should use.

Guidelines to consider when determining the tone of workplace writing:

- Be confident – be prepared and knowledgeable about what you are writing
- Be respectful – use a polite tone and positive language - BE FRIENDLY!
- Be inclusive – do not use sexist or biased language

Practice A

Look at the chart below. Determine what the tone/style says about you.

Tone/style of your writing	What your writing says about you
Stiff and formal	
Lots of big, complex words	
Full of short, concise sentences (e.g. Go talk to Mary)	
Sarcastic	
Condescending	
Full of slang words	

Practice B

Determine if the tone of each of the statements is appropriate for the workplace.

Yes/Maybe/No	Please refrain from making personal calls from the office telephones.
Yes/Maybe/No	I totally biffed walking out of the staff room and spilled coffee all over Mary. Man was she ticked off!
Yes/Maybe/No	I would appreciate it if you could please return the form by Friday.
Yes/Maybe/No	WHERE ARE THE ADMISSION FORMS?
Yes/Maybe/No	Pursuant to my previous communication, please make the accommodations noted in the aforementioned correspondence.
Yes/Maybe/No	I am writing to confirm your hotel booking at the Best Western hotel in Minneapolis.

Assignment 1: Using a Positive Tone

Rewrite each sentence in a more positive tone.

1. The machine will not operate properly if it is not level.

2. We cannot process the order until you send us the correct order number.

3. I will not work overtime unless I am paid.

4. Please do not use the office telephones for personal calls during work hours.

5. You are not allowed to post notices on the bulletin board without the manager's permission.

6. The desktop publishing software that you ordered will not be available until June 30.

7. We had to delay shipping your order because you did not give the expiry date of your credit card.

8. Ms. Koswick will not be able to attend the seminar on May 10, and the only person we can send in her place is Mr. Gus Despatie, our assistant manager.

Assignment 2: Formal and Informal Language

Read the following messages set to a co-worker. Determine if they are too formal or informal. Explain why.

A.

✉ Message			
To:	Miriam Costa, Manager of Accounting	From:	Anne Chag
Cc:	Lucia Jones	Sent:	04/05/2010
Subject:	Missing files	Attachment:	

I didn't get your last email with attachments. Maybe you didn't send it to me? Now I don't have all the files and I can't finish my work. Please send me all the files right away. I don't want to be late with my report.

Too formal

Too informal

Why?

B.

✉ Message			
To:	Thomas Blake, Technical Support	From:	Edward Alb
Cc:		Sent:	06/01/2010
Subject:	Software manuals	Attachment:	

Dear Mr. Blake,

Pursuant to my previous message, please be advised that the enclosed instructions for new software should be distributed only among the employees using the aforementioned software. I greatly appreciate your prompt attention to this matter.

Edward Alb

Too formal

Too informal

Why?

Adapted from: LINC 5 Business Writing, pg 107 <https://www.settlementatwork.org/lincdocs/linc5-7/business.writing/pdfs/bus.writing.LINC5.pdf>

Assignment 3: Describing Tone

Describe the tone in each of the letters below and decide whether it is appropriate for the situation. Circle the words/expressions that show the tone.

Letter 1

Hi Mr. Samuels,

Three months ago, your order desk messed up and sent me the wrong order. The delivery person made me pay C.O.D. before I had a chance to check the order and now I'm out \$3,986. I called the girl at the order desk but she didn't do anything about it and now three months have passed.

Can you get someone to pick up the shipment and arrange for a refund right away?

Thanks,

Description: _____

Appropriate? _____

Letter 2

Dear Mr. Samuels:

I am writing to complain about the service I received from your company. Three months ago I received the wrong merchandise. The delivery person insisted that I pay C.O.D. before I had a chance to check the order. I informed the order desk about the mistake the next day, but nothing was done about it. I am completely disillusioned with your company.

I demand that someone pick up the order immediately. I want my money back or I will begin the process of suing your company for damages.

Sincerely,

Description: _____

Appropriate? _____

Letter 3

Dear Mr. Samuels:

I am writing to complain about the service I received from your company.

On April 16, I received the wrong merchandise from your company. The delivery person insisted that I pay C.O.D. before I had a chance to check the shipment. I called Sylvia Razik at the order desk on April 17 and reported the error to her. She informed me that on April 19 someone would come to pick up the merchandise and return my payment of \$3,986 within a few days. That was three months ago. No one has come for the order, and my money has not been refunded.

I am requesting that you give this matter your immediate attention and resolve this situation as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,

Description: _____

Appropriate? _____

Adapted from: LINC 6 Business Writing, pg 171 <https://www.settlementatwork.org/lincdocs/linc5-7/business.writing/pdfs/bus.writing.LINC6.pdf>

Assignment 4: Tone

Read the incident report below. In this report, the writer uses the wrong tone. Highlight or underline what is wrong with this statement. Rewrite the statement using an appropriate tone.

Employee Statement:

As you know, I work in the cafeteria as a cashier. Well, you see, yesterday, August 16, 2018, Stan Kemberly from the shipping department came into the caf after we were closed and I asked him to leave.

Then, well, he refused to leave and demanded that I give him some food. I said that I could not do that and he called me a “stupid idiot” and pushed me against the wall. Can you believe it? Nobody has the right to treat me this way! Tell him he was wrong. Make him apologize. You must punish him for this. You should investigate this immediately. Please help.

Rewritten Statement

Answer Key: Tone

Tone... Practice A

Tone/style of your writing	What your writing says about you
Stiff and formal	Cold, unable to connect or understand, detached, not "human"
Lots of big, complex words	Showing off, full of oneself, intimidating, overconfident, professional, well-educated
Full of short, concise sentences	Short, impatient, tactless, uneducated
Sarcastic	Inappropriate, unclear, doesn't take matters seriously
Condescending	Inappropriate, overconfident, rude, impatient
Full of slang words	Inappropriate, uneducated, young, new employee

Tone... Practice B

Yes or Maybe	Please refrain from making personal calls from the office telephones.
No	I totally biffed walking out of the staff room and spilled coffee all over Mary. Man was she ticked off!
Yes	I would appreciate it if you could please return the form by Friday.
No	WHERE ARE THE ADMISSION FORMS?
No	Pursuant to my previous communication, please make the accommodations noted in the aforementioned correspondence.
Yes	I am writing to confirm your hotel booking at the Best Western hotel in Minneapolis.

Assignment 1: Using a Positive Tone

- The machine will operate properly if it is level.
- Your order will be processed when the correct order number is sent.
- If I am paid, I will work overtime.
- During work hours, office phones are to be used for workplace matters. Please refrain from using them for personal calls. Thank you!
- Notices on the bulletin board must be approved by a manager before posting. Thank you.
- The desktop publishing software that you ordered will be available on June 30.
- Your shipment has been delayed. Please provide the expiry date on your credit card so we can get it out to you as soon as possible. Thank you.
- Unfortunately, Ms. Koswick will be unable to attend the seminar on May 10. In her place we will be sending Mr. Gus Despatie, our assistant manager.

Assignment 2: Formal and Informal Language

A. Too informal

- Whiny
- Negative tone
- Very direct, not polite
- Rude
- Unconfident

B. Too formal

- Uses legalese/big words such as pursuant to and aforementioned
- Stiffly worded
- Language inappropriate for who the email is being sent to
- Sounds overconfident/superior
- Does not sound polite or sincere

Assignment 3: Describing Tone

Letter 1 - The tone is too informal for a business

Hi Mr. Samuels,
Three months ago, your order desk messed up and sent me the wrong order. The delivery person made me pay C.O.D. before I had a chance to check the order and now I'm out \$3,986. I called the girl at the order desk but she didn't do anything about it and now three months have passed.

Can you get someone to pick up the shipment and arrange for a refund right away?

Thanks,

Letter 2 - The tone is angry and threatening.

Dear Mr. Samuels:

I am writing to complain about the service I received from your company. Three months ago I received the wrong merchandise. The delivery person insisted that I pay C.O.D. before I had a chance to check the order. I informed the order desk about the mistake the next day, but nothing was done about it. I am completely disillusioned with your company.

I demand that someone pick up the order immediately. I want my money back or I will begin the process of suing your company for damages.

Sincerely,

Letter 3 - The tone is serious and business-like.

Dear Mr. Samuels:

I am writing to complain about the service I received from your company.

On April 16, I received the wrong merchandise from your company. The delivery person insisted that I pay C.O.D. before I had a chance to check the shipment. I called Sylvia Razik at the order desk on April 17 and reported the error to her. She informed me that on April 19 someone would come to pick up the merchandise and return my payment of \$3,986 within a few days. That was three months ago. No one has come for the order, and my money has not been refunded.

I am requesting that you give this matter your immediate attention and resolve this situation as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,

Assignment 4: Tone

As you know, I work in the cafeteria as a cashier. Well, you see, yesterday, August 16, 2018, Stan Kemberly from the shipping department came into the caf after we were closed and I asked him to leave.

Then, well, he refused to leave and demanded that I give him some food. I said that I could not do that and he called me a "stupid idiot" and pushed me against the wall. Can you believe it? Nobody has the right to treat me this way! Tell him he was wrong. Make him apologize. You must punish him for this. You should investigate this immediately. Please help.

Re-write statement and hand-in.

End of Module Reflection

After completing this module, answer the questions below. If you answer agree (3) for each question, ask for a review or a final assessment from an instructor. If you answer maybe (2) or no (1), have a discussion with an instructor to make a plan to improve your performance and confidence.

1 – No

2 – Maybe

3 – Yes

A	I understand all of the outcomes covered in this module.	1	2	3
B	I do not need any further assistance from an instructor on the material covered in this module.	1	2	3
C	I do not need more practice questions or assignments	1	2	3
D	I am confident in my abilities to complete tasks related to this module.	1	2	3
E	I am ready to complete a review and/or a final assessment related to this module.	1	2	3

Reflection
