

Describing tone in persuasive writing

Positive	Negative	Neutral
Amused	Accusing	Authoritative
Assertive	Admonishing	Bemused
Confident	Aggressive	Calm
Earnest	Antagonistic	Concerned
Encouraging	Arrogant	Considered
Enthusiastic	Bitter	Dispassionate
Optimistic	Condescending	Even
Playful	Contemptuous	Measured
Proud	Critical	Pleading
Reasonable	Cynical	Restrained
Respectful	Mocking	Sentimental
Soothing	Outraged	Serious
Sympathetic	Sarcastic	Thoughtful

The following statements have all been written to support the same contention, but each one uses a very different tone. See if you can describe the tone of each statement using one of the words from the above table.

Contention: That players are ultimately responsible for their own choice to take performance-enhancing drugs.

Statement 1: Though many professional athletes are already inundated with excessive riches, swanning around in piles of cash like Scrooge McDuck, these gluttonous moneygrubbers choose to cheat honest, hardworking athletes out of their prize money by gaining an unfair advantage through the use of banned substances.

Tone:

Statement 2: We, the public, deserve to see sport played as it was in the very first Olympic Games – a true measure of natural human skill and ability. We can only hope that the players do the right thing and provide us with a fair and even contest by avoiding performance-enhancing substances.

Tone:

Statement 3: Why on earth would professional athletes put their health and careers at risk by choosing to ignore both the law and the wisdom of physicians to take performance-enhancing drugs? Sure, it may give them an immediate competitive edge, but they are ultimately playing Russian Roulette with their entire future livelihood.

Tone:

Statement 4: Whilst it is true that some players are sullyng the reputation of sportspeople on the whole, with increased frequency and accuracy of testing for banned substances, I have no doubt that within only a few short decades the choice to cheat through drug use will not be only be unlikely, but downright impossible. All we have to do is wait for the science to allow us to weed the few baddies out.

Tone:

Using tone in persuasive writing

Imagine you are writing a piece in which your **contention** is

“That school detentions should be banned.”

Have a go at writing a few persuasive statements, like those above, experimenting with different tones. Try writing at least one from each category in the above table of tone words.

Positive

Negative

Neutral