**Tone and Voice = Writing Style**

**Tone** (attitude of author/narrator) and **voice** (personality) create [**writing style**](https://writerswrite.co.za/what-is-your-literary-style/). You may not be able to alter your personality but you can adjust your attitude. This gives you ways to create writing that varies in tone and style and affects your audience’s **mood** (how audience feels). Style is the choices you make in your writing because you are you (voice) combined with choices made because of the type of writing/context/audience you are writing (tone). The *New York Times* newspaper, for example, has always had an authoritative and informative voice, but its tone changes depending on the topic. Its story about ‘[What Summer Tastes Like in America](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/28/us/best-summer-treats.html?action=click&module=Editors%20Picks&pgtype=Homepage)’ takes a warm, nostalgic tone, while an article on the ‘[Pandemic Learning Loss](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/08/us/school-testing-education-covid.html?action=click&module=Well&pgtype=Homepage&section=Education)’ has a more serious, thoughtful tone.

***Voice (Personality):***

The best writers are those that possess an unforgettable personality. People like reading content that feels like it has actually been written by a human. A writing personality isn’t exactly the same as a real life personality but there is usually some overlap.

*What kind of person wrote the following?:*

* “There were meetings. There were always meetings. And they were dull, which is part of the reason they were meetings. Dull likes company.”
* “Something about the Post Office discouraged original thinking. The letters went in the slots, okay? There was no room for people who wanted to experiment with sticking them in their ear, up the chimney or down the privy.”
* “It’s not worth doing something unless someone, somewhere, would much rather you weren’t doing it.”
* “The presence of those seeking the truth is infinitely to be preferred to the presence of those who think they’ve found it.” “I have no use for people who have learned the limits of the possible.”
* “There are times in life when people must know when not to let go. Balloons are designed to teach small children this.”
* “Give a man a fire and he's warm for a day, but set fire to him and he's warm for the rest of his life.”
* “Some humans would do anything to see if it was possible to do it. If you put a large switch in some cave somewhere, with a sign on it saying 'End-of-the-World Switch. PLEASE DO NOT TOUCH', the paint wouldn't even have time to dry.”
* “Wisdom comes from experience. Experience is often a result of lack of wisdom.”
* “No! Please! I'll tell you whatever you want to know!" the man yelled.  
  "Really?" said Vimes. "What's the orbital velocity of the moon?"  
  "What?"  
  "Oh, you'd like something simpler?”
* “It would seem that you have no useful skill or talent whatsoever," he said. "Have you thought of going into teaching?”
* “If you trust in yourself. . .and believe in your dreams. . .and follow your star. . . you'll still get beaten by people who spent their time working hard and learning things and weren't so lazy.”

***Tone (Attitude):***

To determine tone, use DID. From these clues decide if the writing is **casual** or **formal**; **positive** or **negative**. Then decide on the attitude.

**DID (clues to look for)**

**Diction:**The words that a writer chooses to use (i.e., [diction](https://www.litcharts.com/literary-devices-and-terms/diction)) play a huge part in determining the tone of a piece, in part because different words that mean the same thing can have different [connotations](https://www.litcharts.com/literary-devices-and-terms/connotation).

* + A writer might choose to use words like “furiously”, “fiery” or “rough” if they are showing a negative, angry tone.
  + Similarly, the difference between "a dull, insipid man" and "a peaceful, calm man" might show a different attitude to the subject. The first tone is negative and scornful and the second positive and appreciative.

**Imagery:**helps to establish tone using descriptions of physical things in the world of the story. These images will be associated with positive or negative things in our minds and can help us sense the author’ attitude through this.

* + *Dulce Et Decorum Est*, a war poem, has a lot of harsh images such as a man dying from chlorine gas and men so tired they are sleep walking. This tells us the author has a negative and critical attitude toward the war.
  + An author who describes sunshine, puppies and a picnic may be showing a positive or approving attitude towards the characters or events.

**Details:** Specific facts that are included or omitted

* *Alice in Wonderland* uses fantastical creatures and curious settings to create a positive and playful tone.
* *Dulce Et Decorum Est* does not include anything fun or lighthearted. This is because it has a critical and serious tone.

*Examples of attitudes:*

1. Cheerful
2. Cynical
3. Assertive
4. Light-hearted
5. Regretful
6. Humorous
7. Pessimistic
8. Nostalgic
9. Melancholic
10. Facetious
11. Joyful
12. Sarcastic
13. Arrogant
14. Persuasive
15. Uneasy
16. Regretful
17. Reverent
18. Inspirational

*Decide the tone for the below examples. Use DIDS. Then decide if it informal or formal. Then is it positive or negative? Then what is the attitude of the writer towards the subject:*

* “His skin was like an advert for youth, peach-like, glowing, as if it had been force-fed vitamins in a greenhouse”.
* “The long rollers of the Channel, travelling from beyond Lizard Point, follow hard upon the steep seas at the river mouth, and mingling with the surge and wash of deep sea water comes the brown tide, swollen with the last rains and brackish from the mud, bearing upon its face dead twigs and straws, and strange forgotten things, leaves too early fallen, young birds, and the buds of flowers”.
* “I had two rooms, each a bare eight foot square. I paid extra for a rocky balcony but my landlord, Smaractus, allowed me a discount in the form of natural daylight through a hole in the roof (plus free access to water, whenever it rained)”.
* “In Moose County, four hundred miles north of everywhere, it always starts to snow in November, and it snows – and snows – and snows.

First, all the front steps disappear under two feet of snow. Then fences and shrubs are no longer visible. Utility poles keep getting shorter until the lines are low enough for limbo dancing”.

***Writing Style:*** (https://www.dabblewriter.com/articles/how-to-find-your-writing-style)

Let’s set aside the answer of voice and tone and look at the smaller elements that contribute to the overall “vibe” of your writing. You know, things like:

* Diction
* Rhythm
* Sentence structure
* Sentence length
* Pacing

Your style can also include your personal values and perspective, the [themes](https://www.dabblewriter.com/articles/common-themes) you gravitate towards, and the devices you use to tell your stories.

Both Britt-Marie Was Here and A Man Called Ove follow the protagonist’s perspective and voice closely. But they do so by way of author Fredrik Backman’s signature moves: constantly sharing his character’s thoughts, focusing on themes of connection and loss, and giving his main character a symbolic obsession with a seemingly trivial thing, like baking soda.

To understand better, how would you determine your own writing style? One of the quickest and simplest strategies for finding your writing style is to read what you’ve already written. Do you notice any patterns?

Ask yourself:

* How long and complex do my sentences tend to be?
* What do I notice about my diction? Do I tend to use more formal language or do I keep it casual? Are my descriptions detailed and visceral? Or am I more inclined to keep things stripped down?
* What moods or attitudes come up a lot? Do I tend to communicate with a tone of cynicism? Amusement? Reverence?
* Does my writing have a noticeable rhythm? Is it quick and clipped? Slow and flowy? Bright and bouncy?
* What specific strategies do I use to clarify character or [evoke emotion](https://www.dabblewriter.com/articles/emotions-in-writing)?