

Mood and tone worksheet: name the mood, then the tone

Sixteen short passages: eight to name the mood and eight to name the writer's tone. The key points to the evidence in each passage, not just the word. To do it on screen and check the answers:

wordsofpositivity.com/mood-words#mood-or-tone

Name _____

Date _____

Name the mood

Mood is the feeling the passage gives the reader. Read each passage, then choose the word that names its mood.

EXAMPLE

Lanterns swung over the square, a band played on the fountain steps and children chased each other between stalls of honey cake and hot chestnuts.

Which word names the mood?

Answer: festive. Bright and cheerful, like a celebration: lanterns, a band, children playing, food stalls.

- Every morning that summer, mist lifted off the lake while the ducks drifted past the dock. We ate breakfast on the warm boards, swam until lunch and fell asleep in the hammock to the sound of bees. Nobody looked at a clock. It was the kind of week you remember as perfect.*

Which word names the mood?

☐ ominous ☐ idyllic ☐ matter-of-fact
- The teapot cleared its throat and asked whether anyone had seen its lid. Outside, the kites had gone to sleep in the apple tree with their tails tucked in, and the moon was pinning the laundry to a line of stars.*

Which word names the mood?

☐ eerie ☐ bittersweet ☐ whimsical
- Nana's garden gate still sticks in the same place. I push it open and stand for a while by the bench where she used to shell peas, beside the roses she planted, which have grown wild. I would give a lot to hear her call me in for supper one more time.*

Which word names the mood?

☐ wistful ☐ tense ☐ celebratory
- On the last day of school the six of us signed each other's shirts and laughed until our stomachs hurt. Then the buses came. Mia was moving to another city on Saturday, and when she waved from the back window we kept waving long after we could not see her.*

Which word names the mood?

☐ gloomy ☐ bittersweet ☐ whimsical

5. *The fishermen pulled their boats higher up the beach than usual. Over the harbor the sky had turned the color of a bruise, and the gulls, which had shrieked all morning, were suddenly quiet. Somewhere far out, a bell began to ring.*
Which word names the mood?
☐ admiring ☐ idyllic ☐ ominous
6. *It had rained for nine days. The streetlights came on at four in the afternoon, and the shop on the corner had a sign in the window saying it would not open again. In the apartment the heater ticked and gave out no warmth, and nobody had anything to say.*
Which word names the mood?
☐ festive ☐ gloomy ☐ wistful
7. *The playground was empty at midnight, but one swing was still moving, slowly, back and forth. There was no wind. The merry-go-round creaked a quarter turn and stopped, and every window in the houses around the park was dark.*
Which word names the mood?
☐ whimsical ☐ ironic ☐ eerie
8. *Nobody in the waiting room spoke. A man turned the same magazine page back and forth. Every time the door opened, all six heads came up at once, and every time the nurse called someone else's name, the rest of us breathed out and went back to staring at the floor.*
Which word names the mood?
☐ tense ☐ sarcastic ☐ gloomy

Name the tone

Tone is the writer's or speaker's attitude to the subject. Read each passage, then choose the word that names its tone.

EXAMPLE

To make the sauce, melt the butter first. Then whisk in the flour and cook it for a minute before you add the milk.

Which word names the writer's tone?

Answer: instructive. The writer is teaching the reader how to do something, step by step.

9. *Ms. Okafor ran the school library for thirty-one years. She knew which child needed a dinosaur book and which needed to be left alone with one, and she never let a late fine stand between a reader and the next story. This town's readers owe her more than most of them know.*
Which word names the writer's tone?
☐ admiring ☐ sarcastic ☐ ominous
10. *What a season! The under-12 team won nine of their ten games, scored more goals than any team in the club's history and finished by lifting the league trophy in front of parents, grandparents and one very loud dog. Every player got time on the field, and every one of them earned it.*
Which word names the writer's tone?
☐ objective ☐ cynical ☐ celebratory
11. *We asked the 120 fifth graders how they get to school. Of those, 54 walk, 38 come by car, 20 take the bus and 8 ride a bike. The question was asked in one dry week in May, so it may count more walkers than a wet week would.*
Which word names the writer's tone?
☐ critical ☐ objective ☐ celebratory
12. *Dear Parents and Guardians, We write to inform you that the school will be closed next Friday for staff training. Students are not expected to attend. Should you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact the school office.*
Which word names the writer's tone?
☐ sarcastic ☐ conversational ☐ formal
13. *"Oh, brilliant," said Dev, as the tent folded into the mud for the third time. "Top marks to whoever packed the instructions. I always wanted to spend my vacation finding out what every one of these poles is for."*
Which word names Dev's tone?
☐ admiring ☐ sarcastic ☐ objective
14. *The new parking app is a triumph of convenience. It needs only your name, your license plate, your card number, your date of birth and a photo of your face to let you park for twenty minutes. Our reporter managed it in just under half an hour.*
Which word names the writer's tone?
☐ ironic ☐ admiring ☐ formal

15. *The company says its new recycling scheme is about protecting the planet. Of course it is, just as last year's customer care campaign was about customers and not about the price rise announced the same week. Nobody gives anything away. They only change the label on what they take.*

Which word names the writer's tone?

- ☐ pessimistic ☐ cynical ☐ celebratory

16. *The film's first hour is gripping, but the middle drags: three scenes repeat the same argument, and the villain vanishes for forty minutes. The ending tries to tie up six storylines in ten minutes and leaves most of them loose.*

Which word names the writer's tone?

- ☐ mocking ☐ ominous ☐ critical

Answer key

Mood and tone worksheet: name the mood, then the tone

For teachers: Ask students to underline the words in each passage that support their answer. A different word can be right if the evidence in the passage supports it, so the key gives the evidence, not just the word. Some options are tone words in the mood questions and the other way round: spotting them is part of the practice.

Name the mood

1. idyllic

Idyllic: the scene is peaceful, simple and happy, almost too good to last ("Nobody looked at a clock", "the kind of week you remember as perfect"). Ominous would need a hint that something bad is coming, and nothing here warns of it. Matter-of-fact names a tone, the writer's plain way of telling, not the feeling the scene gives the reader.

2. whimsical

Whimsical: the oddities are playful and charming, a teapot that talks, kites asleep in a tree, a moon doing the laundry. Eerie needs strangeness that frightens, and nothing here threatens anyone. Bittersweet needs happiness and sadness together, and there is no loss in the scene.

3. wistful

Wistful: the sadness is soft and full of longing for something past ("I would give a lot to hear her call me in for supper"). Tense needs nervous waiting for something to go wrong. Celebratory is a tone word, the writer marking a success with joy, and there is no success here.

4. bittersweet

Bittersweet: joy and loss sit side by side, laughing with friends and saying goodbye on the same afternoon. Gloomy is dark and without hope all the way through, and this scene starts in laughter. Whimsical is light and fanciful, and this is an ordinary goodbye.

5. ominous

Ominous: every detail suggests something bad is about to arrive, a bruise-colored sky, silent gulls, boats pulled higher than usual. The storm has not come yet, and that is the difference between ominous and a scene where the bad thing has already happened. Idyllic is peaceful and happy. Admiring is a tone, a writer looking up to a subject.

6. gloomy

Gloomy: the scene is dark in both light and feeling (rain, streetlights at four, a shop closing for good, a silent room) with nothing hopeful in it. Wistful is a gentler sadness that longs for something, and no one here longs for anything. Festive is bright and cheerful, like a holiday.

7. eerie

Eerie: something is wrong and nothing explains it, a swing moving with no wind, a merry-go-round turning on its own. The threat is felt, not seen. Whimsical is strange in a charming way, and this strangeness frightens. Ironic is a tone, a gap between what is said and what is meant.

8. tense

Tense: the reader holds their breath with the people waiting, every head coming up when the door opens. Gloomy is dark and hopeless, and these people are waiting for news, not without hope. Sarcastic is a tone of mocking praise, and nothing here mocks anyone.

Name the tone

9. admiring

Admiring: the writer clearly looks up to Ms. Okafor and says why, with the things she did. Sarcastic would praise her while meaning the opposite, and every word here is meant. Ominous is a mood, a sense that something bad is coming, not the writer's attitude.

10. celebratory

Celebratory: the writer marks a success with joy, from the opening exclamation to the trophy and the loud dog. Objective would give the results without the writer's feelings, and this report is openly delighted. Cynical would doubt that anyone meant well.

11. objective

Objective: the writer gives the figures, says what they cannot show, and offers no opinion about which way to travel is best. Critical would point out faults. Celebratory would treat the results as a success to cheer.

12. formal

Formal: it follows the rules of official writing, "We write to inform you", "Should you require", "please do not hesitate".

Conversational would sound like a chat: "Just so you know, no school on Friday!" Sarcastic says the opposite of what it means, and this letter means exactly what it says.

13. sarcastic

Sarcastic: the words praise ("brilliant", "top marks") but the meaning mocks whoever packed the tent. Aiming the mockery at a person is what makes it sarcastic rather than wry, which is gentler and laughs at the situation. Admiring would mean the praise. Objective would report the fallen tent with no attitude at all.

14. ironic

Ironic: the writer calls the app "a triumph of convenience" while every detail shows the opposite, and that gap between the words and the meaning is the point. Some readers would call it sarcastic too, which is fair; ironic is the closer word because the target is an app, not a person. Admiring would mean the praise. Formal names correct, official wording, and this is a joke at the app's expense.

15. cynical

Cynical: the writer doubts that anyone means well ("Nobody gives anything away"). Pessimistic is close, but it means expecting things to go badly, and this writer is not predicting anything: they are doubting motives. Celebratory would treat the scheme as a success.

16. critical

Critical: the writer finds the faults and names them exactly, a dragging middle, repeated scenes, a missing villain, loose ends, and still gives the first hour its credit. Mocking would make fun of someone unkindly. Ominous is a mood, a sense that something bad is coming.