

5.6 Using words and syntax for tone and style

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 12 marks

Objective

Build the skills to control **tone** 语气 and **style** 文体 in your own writing.

You must be able to:

- choose diction that matches the audience and purpose
- vary sentence length deliberately
- use parallelism where items really are equivalent
- avoid a tone that undercuts your own argument

1 Worked examples

Study these first. Each one shows the method for a task used later.

■ Diction for a reader

A committee expects restraint; a rally expects heat. The same claim will fail in either register if it wears the other's clothes.

■ Deliberate variation

Vary length for emphasis, not for its own sake. Two long sentences and then a short one puts weight where you want it; unvaried length puts weight nowhere.

■ Parallelism used honestly

Parallel structure asserts equivalence. Using it for three items of unequal weight tells the reader something false about your own argument.

■ Tone that undercuts

Sarcasm about opponents tells a neutral reader you are not interested in persuading them. Overstatement invites a search for the exception. Both cost more than they gain.

2 Practice

2.1 State how the expected register differs between a committee and a rally. [2]

2.2 Explain what parallelism asserts and when it is dishonest. [2]

2.3 A student’s essay describes opponents as ”obviously ridiculous”.

(a) State the cost. [1]

(b) Suggest a replacement. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 Varying sentence length without purpose [1]

- **A** creates emphasis everywhere
 - **B** creates emphasis nowhere
 - **C** improves coherence
 - **D** shortens the essay
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3.2 Overstatement in an argument tends to [1]

- **A** strengthen the claim
 - **B** invite a search for the exception
 - **C** improve tone
 - **D** signal concession
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3.3 Rewrite this sentence for a formal committee: ”Anyone can see this plan is a total disaster and always has been.” [4]

4 Go further

- work through the **5.6 Using words and syntax for tone and style** lesson on the **Learn** page;
- read the **Organization, Coherence, and Style** section of the AP English Language handout on the **Know** page.

Solutions

2.1 a committee expects restraint and qualification; a rally expects heat and directness.

2.2 parallelism asserts that the items are equivalent; it is dishonest when the items are of unequal weight.

2.3 (a) it tells a neutral reader the writer is not trying to persuade them. (b) a specific criticism of the plan rather than of the people, e.g. "the plan assumes a level of staffing that has never existed".

3.1 B. emphasis depends on contrast, so random variation flattens it.

3.2 B. an overstated claim is easy to refute with one counter-case.

3.3 removes the evaluative overstatement; replaces "anyone can see" with an argued basis; names a specific defect; register suits a committee.