

Boost Free Lessons - Year 10 English

Lesson 6: Controlling Tone

Name: _____ Grade: _____ Date: _____

Worked Example 1

How does the verb choice control tone in each version?

- A. The minister **said** the figures were incomplete.
- B. The minister **claimed** the figures were incomplete.
- C. The minister **conceded** the figures were incomplete.

1. The reporting verb is the smallest and most powerful tone control available.
2. *Said* is neutral. It reports without commenting.
3. *Claimed* introduces doubt, implying the statement may not be true.
4. *Conceded* implies the minister was reluctant and had been holding something back.

Said is neutral, claimed creates doubt, and conceded implies reluctance. The reported fact is identical in all three.

Worked Example 2

Rewrite the sentence below to change its tone from hostile to measured.

The council has once again ignored residents, ramming through a decision nobody asked for.

1. Identify the words carrying the hostility: *once again, ignored, ramming through, nobody*.
2. Replace each with a word that states the same event without the judgement.
3. *Ramming through* becomes *approved*. *Ignored* becomes *did not act on*.
4. A measured tone is usually more persuasive with an official audience, because it is harder to dismiss.

Model: The council approved the decision without acting on the submissions it received.

Remember: Tone is controlled by **verb choice** more than anything else. *Said, claimed* and *conceded* report the same fact and position the reader completely differently.



Question 1: Explain what each reporting verb suggests.

1. The report **revealed** a shortfall.

2. The report **noted** a shortfall.

3. The witness **insisted** she had seen nothing.

4. The witness **stated** she had seen nothing.

5. The company **admitted** the delay.

6. The company **announced** the delay.

7. The study **suggests** a link.

8. The study **proves** a link.



Question 2: Read the passage below, then answer the questions.

The school insists that the timetable will be finalised in November. This is the supposed final version, allegedly circulated in August, and it has yet again been revised without notice.

1. Describe the tone of the passage in two words.

2. Find two words that create that tone.

3. Which reporting verb is doing the most work? Explain.

4. Rewrite the passage in a neutral tone.

5. Which version would be more persuasive to a principal? Explain.



Question 3: Answer the following questions.

1. Write a sentence reporting a school announcement in a neutral tone.

2. Rewrite it in a sceptical tone, changing only the verbs.

3. Explain why reporting verbs are so powerful.

4. When is a measured tone more persuasive than an angry one?





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Answers and Model Responses: Controlling Tone**Question 1**

1. Suggests concealment
2. Neutral
3. Suggests doubt about her
4. Neutral
5. Suggests reluctance or fault
6. Neutral
7. Appropriately cautious
8. Overstated

Question 2

1. Model: sceptical and impatient.
2. Any two of: **allegedly, insists, yet again, supposed.**
3. Model: *insists*, because it implies the school is repeating a claim in the face of contrary evidence.
4. Model: The school has stated that the timetable will be finalised in November. A revised draft was circulated in August.
5. The neutral version, because it does not invite the reader to become defensive and cannot be dismissed as an attack.

Question 3

1. Model response: The school announced that assemblies will move to Thursday mornings.
2. Model response: The school claims that assemblies will supposedly move to Thursday mornings.
3. They report the same fact while telling the reader how to receive it. A single verb can turn a statement into an admission or a doubtful claim.
4. With an audience that has power to act, such as a principal or a council. Anger invites defensiveness, while a measured tone forces the reader to engage with the argument itself.

