

Exercise walk-through

Using words and syntax for tone and style ■ 5.6

eXercise

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

Method — 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.

Method — 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.

Method — Parallelism used honestly

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

Method — 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.

Practice 2.1 ■ 2 marks

State how the expected register differs between a committee and a rally.

Solution 2.1

Method: Diction for a reader

Worked steps

a committee expects restraint and qualification **B1**; a rally expects heat and directness **B1**.

Practice 2.2 ■ 2 marks

Explain what parallelism asserts and when it is dishonest.

Solution 2.2

Method: Parallelism used honestly

Worked steps

parallelism asserts that the items are equivalent **B1**; it is dishonest when the items are of unequal weight **B1**.

Practice 2.3 ■ 1 mark

A student's essay describes opponents as “obviously ridiculous”.

- (a) State the cost.
- (b) Suggest a replacement.

Solution 2.3

Method: Tone that undercuts

Worked steps

(a) it tells a neutral reader the writer is not trying to persuade them **B1**. (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” **B1**.

Exam-style 3.1 ■ 1 mark

Varying sentence length without purpose

A creates emphasis everywhere

B creates emphasis nowhere

C improves coherence

D shortens the essay

Solution 3.1

A creates emphasis everywhere

B creates emphasis nowhere



C improves coherence

D shortens the essay

Worked steps

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

Exam-style 3.2 ■ 1 mark

Overstatement in an argument tends to

- A** strengthen the claim
- B** invite a search for the exception
- C** improve tone
- D** signal concession

Solution 3.2

- A strengthen the claim
- B invite a search for the exception**
- C improve tone
- D signal concession



Worked steps

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

Exam-style 3.3 ■ 4 marks

Rewrite this sentence for a formal committee: “Anyone can see this plan is a total disaster and always has been.”

Solution 3.3

Worked steps

removes the evaluative overstatement **B1**; replaces “anyone can see” with an argued basis **B1**; names a specific defect **B1**; register suits a committee **B1**.