

Exercise walk-through

Using words and syntax for tone and style ■ 8.4

eXercise

You must be able to

- write in a register that neither flatters nor lectures
- use inclusive pronouns without presuming agreement
- adjust tone at a difficult point in the argument
- revise a passage whose tone works against its claim

Method — Between flattery and lecture

Flattery (“as intelligent readers will see”) makes disagreement a failure of intelligence.
Lecturing (“it must be understood that”) assumes authority you have not earned.
Both cost the reader’s goodwill.

Method — Inclusive pronouns, honestly

“We all want good schools” is safe; “we all know the reform failed” presumes the conclusion. The first names a shared value, the second smuggles in the claim.

Method — Tone at the difficult point

Where the argument is weakest, lower the temperature: state the evidence plainly and let it stand. Raising the volume where the case is thin is the most common tonal error.

Practice 2.1 ■ 2 marks

State what is wrong with “as intelligent readers will see”.

Solution 2.1

Method: Between flattery and lecture

Worked steps

it makes disagreement a failure of intelligence **B1**, so a reader who disagrees is insulted rather than persuaded **B1**.

Practice 2.2 ■ 2 marks

Explain the difference between naming a shared value and presuming a conclusion.

Solution 2.2

Method: Inclusive pronouns, honestly

Worked steps

naming a shared value states something both accept **B1**; presuming a conclusion smuggles the claim in as though already agreed **B1**.

Practice 2.3 ■ 1 mark

A writer's tone becomes most emphatic where the evidence is weakest.

- (a) State the effect on a careful reader.
- (b) State the better strategy.

Solution 2.3

Method: Tone at the difficult point

Worked steps

(a) they notice the mismatch and discount the claim **B1**. (b) lower the temperature and let the evidence stand **B1**.

Exam-style 3.1 ■ 1 mark

“We all know the reform failed” is problematic because it

- A** names a shared value
- B** presumes the conclusion
- C** is too formal
- D** is a concession

Solution 3.1

Method: Inclusive pronouns, honestly

- A names a shared value
- B presumes the conclusion 
- C is too formal
- D is a concession

Worked steps

- B. the disputed claim is asserted as common knowledge.

Exam-style 3.2 ■ 1 mark

Where the argument is weakest, the better tonal choice is to

- A** raise the volume
- B** state the evidence plainly
- C** add rhetorical questions
- D** flatter the reader

Solution 3.2

Method: Tone at the difficult point

- A raise the volume
- B state the evidence plainly
- C add rhetorical questions
- D flatter the reader



Worked steps

- B. plainness invites assessment rather than resistance.

Exam-style 3.3 ■ 4 marks

Revise for tone: “Obviously anyone who has thought about this for five minutes agrees that the current policy is indefensible.”

Solution 3.3

Worked steps

removes “obviously” and the insult to dissenters **B2**; replaces assertion of consensus with an argued basis **B1**; tone suits a reader who may disagree **B1**.