

Rubric Category	Language and Syntax
Grade/Score	Grade 6-8 / Score 4
Grade/Score	Grade 9-12 / Scores 2, 3, and 4
CCSS Writing Standards	W1d (9-12)
Argument Type	All arguments

# Maintaining Objective Tone

*Students will gain an understanding of objective tone, its purpose, and when and how to use it.*

## Understanding the Expectations

When writing argument, it is important to establish an objective tone—you want to come across as level-headed, thoughtful, and intelligent to your reader. Sometimes this means avoiding language that makes a personal judgment sound uncertain, like “I think,” or “in my opinion.” Objective tone also involves guarding against the use of bias, assumption, stereotyping, or generalizing. The goal is to let your evidence and your argument speak for themselves without relying on a previously held belief or point of view.

The writer should also avoid highly emotive language unless it comes in the form of a quote from a source. This is language that appeals to emotions or values to make an argument. Although this type of language can be persuasive, it lacks a reliance on factual evidence, and therefore works contrary to the intent of academic writing.

Working with a partner, brainstorm a list of words or phrases that signal an author's lack of objectivity.

Possible responses:

It seems that	I think	should	need to	it is good
it is bad	it is right	it is wrong	everyone	never
always	we all know	I feel	in my opinion	personally

Discuss your findings. What else do authors need to be aware of when crafting an objective tone? What else would be a clue to a reader that an author was not being objective?

## Trying It Out

1. First, read the following passage and underline as many examples of judgmental, biased, or emotive language as you can find. Working with a partner if possible, edit to correct the passage with alternative phrasing and unbiased language to cultivate an objective tone.

*I strongly believe that graffiti should be considered art and that graffiti artists should never be charged with the crime of vandalism. We all know that most graffiti artists come from poverty-stricken backgrounds and often live in economically depressed areas of cities. If they are just trying to express themselves through an artistic outlet then it would be sad for them to be penalized. They should be given credit for creating street art and trying to beautify their urban landscape. Graffiti is a form of language that cannot be expressed in spoken words.*

2. Review the paragraph. Does this passage consider other viewpoints? Does it make any reasonable compromises? Does it draw distinctions between street art and graffiti that might be used for other purposes? How would these things affect the argument? Discuss your thinking with a partner.

3. Using a written work in progress, choose a paragraph for revision in which you will target your use of objective tone. Keep in mind the following:
  - » Are there words or phrases that suggest emotive or biased language?
  - » Does your position maintain an awareness of other viewpoints?
  - » Does your position make reasonable compromises?

Share your work with a peer editor. Exchange feedback.

## Writing It Up

If you are still in the early stages of drafting, take your time when sketching out ideas to maintain a tone of objectivity. Work on creating new habits of mind to acknowledge other viewpoints and avoid biased language.

If you are in the later drafting stages, review your work. Consider how your overall tone might sound to a stranger. Are you coming across as fair or biased? How can you make adjustments to maintain an objective approach?