# CAT Author's Tone Practice Questions

25 short passages with answers and explanations

## Quick reference: common tones and their clues

| Group | Tones | Typical clues |
|---|---|---|
| Positive | Appreciative, admiring, optimistic, sympathetic | Praise words, warm adjectives, "deserves more" |
| Negative | Critical, indignant, scathing, dismissive, cynical, resigned | Failure lists, "outrageous", "polite shrug", "nothing will change" |
| Neutral | Analytical, informative, didactic | Balanced evidence, facts, commands and advice |
| Doubt or mixed | Sceptical, ambivalent, cautious, speculative, apprehensive | "Until proven", "yet", "may", "perhaps", worry about outcomes |
| Style-based | Ironic, sarcastic, humorous, wistful, introspective | Saying the opposite, exaggeration, memory, self-examination |
| Rigid or superior | Dogmatic, condescending | "Only one way", "of course", talking down to readers |

Method: 1) find the evaluative words, 2) decide the direction (positive, negative or neutral), 3) judge the intensity (mild or strong), 4) pick the option that matches both. Avoid extreme options unless the passage clearly earns them.

Time yourself: 25 questions in 25 minutes. For every question, ask: how does the author feel about the subject?

## Questions

**Q1. What is the author's tone in the passage below?**

*The restored library does more than shelve books. Its sunlit reading rooms, patient staff and free evening classes have turned a forgotten building into the neighbourhood's second home. Few public projects serve so many people so gracefully.*

(a) Neutral
(b) Appreciative
(c) Sarcastic
(d) Apprehensive

**Q2. What is the author's tone in the passage below?**

*The city promised 'smart' buses in 2019. Seven years later, tracking apps still crash, fares have risen twice, and half the fleet idles in depots. The programme has delivered press conferences more reliably than buses.*

(a) Critical
(b) Admiring
(c) Indifferent
(d) Wistful

**Q3. What is the author's tone in the passage below?**

*Studies of remote work show mixed results. Some firms report higher output, while others see weaker collaboration. The difference often depends on how teams organise meetings and share information.*

(a) Scathing
(b) Nostalgic
(c) Analytical
(d) Alarmed

**Q4. What is the author's tone in the passage below?**

*Advocates claim the new diet cures fatigue within a week. The evidence so far rests on one small survey with no control group. Until larger trials appear, the claim deserves caution, not applause.*

(a) Cynical
(b) Enthusiastic
(c) Hostile
(d) Sceptical

**Q5. What is the author's tone in the passage below?**

*I used to think I read carefully. Then I tried to summarise a chapter and found I could recall only the examples, not the argument. That humbled me.*

(a) Accusatory
(b) Introspective
(c) Boastful
(d) Indifferent

**Q6. What is the author's tone in the passage below?**

*The ministry has formed a committee to study why committees take so long. Its first meeting, naturally, was postponed.*

(a) Earnest
(b) Reverent
(c) Ironic
(d) Apprehensive

**Q7. What is the author's tone in the passage below?**

*Early trials of the vaccine show a strong immune response in older adults. Researchers stress that larger studies are still needed, but they expect to publish encouraging results soon.*

(a) Cautiously optimistic
(b) Euphoric
(c) Pessimistic
(d) Dismissive

**Q8. What is the author's tone in the passage below?**

*The new metro has cut commute times and eased traffic. Yet it has also displaced hundreds of families, and the compensation offered feels inadequate. It is hard to call the project either a triumph or a failure.*

(a) Triumphant
(b) Contemptuous
(c) Resigned
(d) Ambivalent

**Q9. What is the author's tone in the passage below?**

*Always begin a presentation with your conclusion. Listeners decide quickly whether to pay attention, so give them the point first and the evidence afterward. Then trim every slide that does not support that point.*

(a) Sarcastic
(b) Didactic
(c) Nostalgic
(d) Alarmed

**Q10. What is the author's tone in the passage below?**

*That a company can poison a river, pay a modest fine and carry on is outrageous. Villagers lost their fish, their drinking water and their livelihoods, yet the penalty did not even cover a week's profit.*

(a) Amused
(b) Wistful
(c) Indignant
(d) Neutral

**Q11. What is the author's tone in the passage below?**

*Every year the committee drafts a new plan for the lake, and every year the plan gathers dust. Residents no longer attend the hearings. They have learned that nothing will change.*

(a) Resigned
(b) Hopeful
(c) Indignant
(d) Humorous

**Q12. What is the author's tone in the passage below?**

*Politicians pledge to clean up public life just before elections, then forget the promise when counting ends. Voters know it, and so do the politicians. Both sides keep playing the game.*

(a) Idealistic
(b) Admiring
(c) Bewildered
(d) Cynical

**Q13. What is the author's tone in the passage below?**

*Critics call the film profound. In truth, it repeats one idea for three hours and mistakes silence for depth. It deserves a polite shrug, not a debate.*

(a) Scathing
(b) Appreciative
(c) Dismissive
(d) Puzzled

**Q14. What is the author's tone in the passage below?**

*The report is thorough in its data collection, but its recommendations rest on a narrow sample. A broader study would have made the conclusions more convincing.*

(a) Scathing
(b) Mildly critical
(c) Contemptuous
(d) Enthusiastic

**Q15. What is the author's tone in the passage below?**

*Few scientists combined rigour and imagination as she did. Her papers read like detective stories, and her students still describe her lab as the best education they ever had.*

(a) Admiring
(b) Detached
(c) Condescending
(d) Apprehensive

**Q16. What is the author's tone in the passage below?**

*The sensors installed along the coast can detect a rising tide within minutes. But maintenance budgets keep shrinking, and nobody can say who will repair the system when it fails. One missed alert could cost thousands of lives.*

(a) Complacent
(b) Amused
(c) Apprehensive
(d) Triumphant

**Q17. What is the author's tone in the passage below?**

*Congratulations to the airline for its remarkable punctuality: the flight left only four hours late, a stunning improvement.*

(a) Genuinely pleased
(b) Neutral
(c) Puzzled
(d) Sarcastic

**Q18. What is the author's tone in the passage below?**

*Of course, ordinary readers cannot be expected to grasp economic theory. They should simply trust experts and leave the thinking to those who understand.*

(a) Humble
(b) Condescending
(c) Appreciative
(d) Apprehensive

**Q19. What is the author's tone in the passage below?**

*Why did the settlement vanish around 1200? Drought may have emptied its wells, or war may have driven its people away. Perhaps both played a part. The ruins offer no clear answer.*

(a) Speculative
(b) Dogmatic
(c) Triumphant
(d) Scornful

**Q20. What is the author's tone in the passage below?**

*There is only one correct way to teach mathematics, and every teacher who deviates from it is wrong. Debate on the subject is a waste of time.*

(a) Tentative
(b) Balanced
(c) Dogmatic
(d) Wistful

**Q21. What is the author's tone in the passage below?**

*Delivery riders cross the city in heat and rain for wages that barely cover fuel. Many have no health cover and no one to ask for help when an app suspends their account. Their situation deserves more than our passing thanks.*

(a) Derisive
(b) Sympathetic
(c) Indifferent
(d) Triumphant

**Q22. What is the author's tone in the passage below?**

*My houseplant has survived three moves, two neglectful summers and one cat. I have begun to suspect it is not a plant at all but a very patient landlord.*

(a) Bitter
(b) Solemn
(c) Scornful
(d) Humorous

**Q23. What is the author's tone in the passage below?**

*The Western Ghats receive heavy monsoon rainfall, which feeds many peninsular rivers. The forests along the slopes shelter a large number of endemic species. Together, the rainfall and the forests shape local farming and water supply.*

(a) Informative
(b) Persuasive
(c) Mocking
(d) Elegiac

**Q24. What is the author's tone in the passage below?**

*Schools should teach financial literacy from the middle grades. Young people already face loans, digital payments and investment apps. Waiting until adulthood leaves them to learn costly lessons alone.*

(a) Detached
(b) Nostalgic
(c) Persuasive
(d) Mocking

**Q25. What is the author's tone in the passage below?**

*When the dam opened, farmers downstream cheered, and the town held a festival. Engineers, however, quietly noted that the reservoir was filling more slowly than planned, and they asked for patience before anyone declared success.*

(a) Jubilant
(b) Cautious
(c) Hostile
(d) Sarcastic

## Answer key and explanations

| Q | Answer | Why |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | (b) Appreciative | Words such as sunlit, patient and gracefully show clear approval. |
| 2 | (a) Critical | The author lists failures and ends with a pointed contrast between press conferences and buses. |
| 3 | (c) Analytical | The author weighs evidence from both sides in calm, unemotional language. |
| 4 | (d) Sceptical | The author doubts the claim because the evidence is weak and asks for better trials. A cynical author would assume bad motives, and a hostile one would attack. |
| 5 | (b) Introspective | The author examines their own habits and admits a weakness. |
| 6 | (c) Ironic | The postponed meeting of a committee on delays creates irony. |
| 7 | (a) Cautiously optimistic | The news is hopeful, but the author reminds us that more evidence is needed. |
| 8 | (d) Ambivalent | The author holds both benefits and harms in view and declines to pick a side. |
| 9 | (b) Didactic | The author instructs the reader, using commands and advice. |
| 10 | (c) Indignant | The word outrageous and the contrast between harm and penalty show anger at injustice. |
| 11 | (a) Resigned | The author reports a settled loss of hope, not a burst of anger. |
| 12 | (d) Cynical | The author assumes insincere motives on all sides. |
| 13 | (c) Dismissive | A polite shrug signals that the film is not worth serious attention. The tone is cool, not savage. |
| 14 | (b) Mildly critical | The author praises one part and gently faults another. Scathing and contemptuous are far too strong. |
| 15 | (a) Admiring | Praise runs through every sentence, so the tone is admiring. |
| 16 | (c) Apprehensive | The author worries about a failure with serious consequences. |
| 17 | (d) Sarcastic | The praise says the opposite of what the author means. |
| 18 | (b) Condescending | The author talks down to ordinary readers. |
| 19 | (a) Speculative | The author offers possible explanations without claiming certainty. |
| 20 | (c) Dogmatic | The author states an opinion as absolute truth and rejects debate. |
| 21 | (b) Sympathetic | The author highlights the riders' hardship and urges more concern for them. |
| 22 | (d) Humorous | The playful exaggeration creates a light, amusing tone. |
| 23 | (a) Informative | The author presents facts without pushing an opinion. |
| 24 | (c) Persuasive | The author argues for a change and gives reasons to support it. |
| 25 | (b) Cautious | The author separates the public celebration from the engineers' careful, measured stance. |

Score check: 22 or more is excellent, 18 to 21 is good, and below 18 means you should revisit the clue words and the intensity ladder. For the official CAT pattern, check iimcat.ac.in. Prepared by CatMock (www.catmock.com).