Tone Under Pressure

Sort sentences by how consistently they maintain a formal tone.

12.LL.22 "Apply conventions of standard English grammar, mechanics, and usage, including appropriate formality of language, to communicate effectively with a target audience. a. Exhibit stylistic complexity, sophistication..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

STEADY FORMAL TONE

A sentence maintains a formal tone when its word choices remain precise and appropriate for an academic audience, even as its ideas become complex.

When the observatory detected a distant pulsar, researchers recorded its rhythmic signals.

SHIFT IN TONE

A sentence shifts in tone when slang or conversational wording interrupts an otherwise formal sentence.

When the observatory detected a distant pulsar, researchers were totally stoked.

1 SORT

8 items

Circle STEADY or SHIFT for each sentence, then choose two numbered items and explain which words helped you decide.

1.	Although the survey included hundreds of residents, its conclusions were super sketchy.	STEADY	SHIFT
2.	Because the revised schedule reduced delays, commuters reported greater confidence in the transit system.	STEADY	SHIFT
3.	While the court acknowledged the witness's uncertainty, it admitted the testimony as evidence.	STEADY	SHIFT
4.	Although the restoration preserved the mural's original colors, the final result was pretty rad.	STEADY	SHIFT
5.	Because the drought persisted throughout July, farmers adopted methods that conserved irrigation water.	STEADY	SHIFT
6.	While the museum acquired several rare manuscripts, its new exhibit was super cool.	STEADY	SHIFT
7.	After the committee reviewed the applications, it recommended candidates whose experience matched the position.	STEADY	SHIFT
8.	Although the experiment followed the approved procedure, its results contradicted the original hypothesis.	STEADY	SHIFT

2 PROVE IT

Explain your thinking

Pick two items from Part 1. For each one, tell how you knew where it belonged.

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

3 MAKE YOUR OWN

One of each

Write one new STEADY sentence and one new SHIFT sentence, each with at least two clauses.

STEADY _____

SHIFT _____

CHALLENGE

Rewrite your SHIFT sentence so it becomes STEADY without changing its main idea or removing a clause.

ANSWER KEY

Tone Under Pressure

GRADE 12 · 12.LL.22

PART 1 · SORT

#	ITEM	CATEGORY	WHY
1	Although the survey included hundreds of residents, its conclusions were super sketchy.	**SHIFT**	The slang phrase “super sketchy” interrupts the formal tone.
2	Because the revised schedule reduced delays, commuters reported greater confidence in the transit system.	**STEADY**	The sentence maintains precise, formal wording throughout.
3	While the court acknowledged the witness's uncertainty, it admitted the testimony as evidence.	**STEADY**	Both clauses maintain a formal tone.
4	Although the restoration preserved the mural's original colors, the final result was pretty rad.	**SHIFT**	The slang phrase “pretty rad” breaks the formal tone.
5	Because the drought persisted throughout July, farmers adopted methods that conserved irrigation water.	**STEADY**	The sentence uses precise, formal language in both clauses.
6	While the museum acquired several rare manuscripts, its new exhibit was super cool.	**SHIFT**	The conversational phrase “super cool” interrupts the formal tone.
7	After the committee reviewed the applications, it recommended candidates whose experience matched the position.	**STEADY**	The sentence maintains formal wording across its clauses.
8	Although the experiment followed the approved procedure, its results contradicted the original hypothesis.	**STEADY**	The sentence maintains precise, formal wording throughout.

PART 2 · PROVE IT

Accept any explanation that names the deciding feature from the rule box for the chosen item.

PART 3 · MAKE YOUR OWN (SAMPLE ANSWERS)

- **STEADY**: Although the archive was incomplete, historians reconstructed the city's early trade routes.
- **SHIFT**: Although the bakery expanded its menu, its new pastries were super yummy.

Challenge: Although the bakery expanded its menu, its new pastries were exceptionally flavorful.

For Part 2, item 1 shifts at “super sketchy,” while item 2 maintains formal wording throughout. Accept explanations that cite specific wording and connect it to the sentence's tone.