



Tone and Creativity at Write Label: When in Doubt, Consider the Dress

by Jon-Marc McDonald

Write Label Internal Training | 2023

My dad has a passion for architecture. While other dads were playing catch or watching sports with their kids, my dad and I would cruise around, marveling at new construction sites. His eyes would light up discussing various styles, and his descriptions of the buildings, their construction and design, were so captivating that I developed an interest in architecture solely from his enthusiasm.

Back at home, without the distraction of driving, my dad delved deeper into his love for architecture. He'd use everyday items as visual aids to illustrate his explanations. Popsicle sticks, my Play-Doh, rubber bands, and even my mom's bobby pins became tools for his creative demonstrations. His excitement and language were just as vibrant as in the car, but now he had props to enhance my understanding.

What I treasured most were our home sessions; that's where my dad's creativity truly shined. Unlike during our drives, he had the freedom to showcase more ingenuity. In the car, my dad could only rely on tone to convey his ideas. But at home, his options expanded, allowing him to express himself more creatively. That was his flair — his creativity.

Let's view it differently. Think of tone as a dress and creativity as its accessories.

Imagine trying on a dress in a store. It fits perfectly, looks great, and you feel confident. Then, a sales associate suggests adding a belt, earrings, and stunning heels. Suddenly, you look in the mirror and feel absolutely dazzling! That ensemble is fire!

You see the analogy here. The dress represents your tone — how you craft your words based on the client's request. It can be simple, serious, professional, whimsical, or anything in between. And creativity? It's the flair that accentuates the dress. The embellishments that complete the entire look, making it stand out.

THE CREATIVITY SCALE

1 out of 3 — Well written, inside the box. Sometimes the client doesn't want many accouterments.

The dress stands alone with maybe one or two accessories, but maybe none at all. Does not necessarily

need any world-building elements like sound effects, music beds, or dialogue.

2 out of 3 — At the edges of the box. The client is looking for something more to enhance the dress. Could use some world-building elements like sound effects, music beds, or dialogue.

3 out of 3 — Outside the box. This client wants the whole shebang. They want the belt, the fire pumps, and the bling. Should present some use of sound effects, dialogue, music beds, and voice directions to world-build and present an out-of-the-box concept.

THE TONE OF VOICE (TOV) SCALE

1. Neutral / Straightforward: Shouldn't contain any wacky humor, and often shouldn't be emotional in tone.

2. Serious — three subtypes:

- *Emotional:* Think ASPCA commercials.
- *Instructional:* Think healthcare ads; they should instruct the listener to DO something.
- *Professional:* Maybe like a law firm or bank; should use more formal language and explain a business's product or service.

3. Funny — three subtypes:

- *Lighthearted:* Cute or amusing in a family-friendly way; not crass, easily liked by children and adults alike.
- *Dry humor:* Situational humor delivered with seriousness and sincerity — think The Office.
- *Wacky:* Think kid cartoons, the Dorito baby commercial.

HOW THEY WORK TOGETHER

Tone and creativity go hand in hand but are not the same. They complement each other; they do not mirror each other. A serious-emotional script can be a 1 out of 3 on creativity or a 3 out of 3. A wacky-funny script can be played completely straight with no sound effects, or it can be built into a full world with music beds, dialogue, and layered SFX. The dress can stand alone beautifully. Or it can be dressed up. What it can't do is be confused for the accessories.

When in doubt, think of the dress. Or my dad. But preferably the dress.

REFERENCE: TONE + CREATIVITY COMBINATIONS

The full training document includes 21 example scripts covering every combination of tone (Funny-Lighthearted, Funny-Dry, Funny-Wacky, Serious-Emotional, Serious-Instructional, Serious-Professional, Neutral/Straightforward) across all three creativity levels. Sample scripts available upon request.

