**SOAPSToneS**

**Introduction (source: apcentral.collegeboard.org)**

Students need to recognize that any good composition, whether written, spoken, or drawn, is carefully planned. This composition has integral parts that work together in a complex and subtle arrangement to produce meaning. SOAPSTone provides a concrete strategy to help students identify and use these central components as a basis for their own writing. SOAPSTone **(Speaker, Occasion, Audience, Purpose, Subject, Tone)** is an acronym for a series of questions that students must first ask themselves, and then answer, as they begin to plan their compositions. SOAPSTone can also be used as a tool to do rhetorical analysis on others’ writing.

**Who is the SPEAKER?  
The “voice” that tells the story.** If you are writing an argument essay, then you are the speaker of that essay. The speaker is whoever created the text, whether it be a speech, a photograph, a cartoon, an essay, an advertisement, etc. Consider the credibility and motivations and goals of the speaker. What assumptions can you make about the speaker? (e.g. age, gender, emotional state, biases/prejudices, educational or political background, race, etc.)

**What is the OCCASION?  
The time and place of the text; the context that prompted the writing.** Writing does not occur in a vacuum. All writers are influenced by the *larger occasion or context*: an environment of ideas, biases, experiences, attitudes, and emotions that swirl around a broad social issue. Then there is the *immediate occasion*: a specific event or situation that catches the author’s attention and triggers a response (such as a speech, an essay, a photograph, a satirical cartoon, etc.) What are the circumstances that inspired or triggered the text?

**Who is the AUDIENCE?**   
**Those readers or listeners whom the text is intended for**. Successful writers must determine who their audience is. It may be one person or a specific group or all humans on the planet! This understanding of audience will affect how and why writers shape a particular text. Whom does the author want to be affected by the text?

**What is the author’s PURPOSE?  
The reason behind the text.** Writers need to clearly consider the purpose of their texts in order to develop the thesis or the argument and its logic. Writers should ask themselves, "What do I want my audience to think or do or feel as a result of reading my text?" What is the reason for creating the text (to relate a memory, to offer a description, to make an observation, to convey an argument, to criticize, to shock, to call to action?

**What is the SUBJECT?**

**Students should be able to state the subject in a few words or phrases.** This step helps writers to focus on the intended task throughout the writing process.

**What is the TONE?**  
The attitude of the author toward his/her subject and even audience. Spoken words can convey the speaker's attitude and thus help to impart meaning through tone of voice. With written words, tone is created by conscious choices in diction, syntax, imagery and details. The ability to clearly convey tone is one of the best indicators of a sophisticated writer. Think about the following when trying to assess the tone: Diction – is the writing tight and efficient (economical) or elaborate and long-winded (expansive)? Does the writer use proper/formal language or informal/colloquial language? Slang? Profanity? Does the speaker’s attitude toward the subject matter in the speech or writing seem sarcastic, aggressive, wistful, pessimistic, hopeful, bitter, reflective, skeptical, etc.?

**What are the rhetorical STRATEGIES used by the author?**What strategies are used and how successful are they in achieving the purpose of the text? In persuading/influencing the audience? Consider such strategies as diction (denotations and connotations of words selected), rhetorical appeals (pathos, logos, ethos), figurative language, imagery, syntax (such as repetition, sentence structure), hyperbole, understatement, and so on.