

32 Describing people

A Height /*height*/ (= how many metres?)

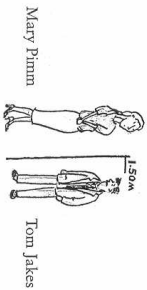
Mary Pimm is a very tall woman.
[NOT Mary Pimm is a very high woman.]

Tom Jakes is quite short.
[NOT Tom Jakes is quite low.]

If you aren't tall or short, you are medium height.

To ask if someone is tall or short, we say:

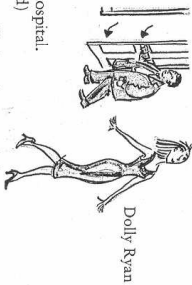
How tall is Mary/Tom? She's 1.60 metres tall. / He's 1.48 metres tall.



B Weight /*weight*/ (= how many kilos?)

Dolly Ryan is really slim.
I was very thin when I was in hospital.
(thin is a more negative word)

A rather fat man opened the door. (fat is quite negative)
The doctor said I am overweight. (= more kilos than is good for me)
How much do you weigh? I weigh 62 kilos / 74 kilos, etc.



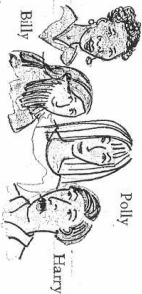
C Face and head

Sally has dark hair and dark skin.
She has brown eyes.

Polly has blonde (or fair) hair and fair skin.
She has blue eyes.

Billy has a beard and long hair.
He has green eyes.

Harry has a moustache and short hair. / *no's hairs!*



D Age

My grandmother is 97. She's very old. My sister is 14. She's young, but would like to be older. My father is 56. He's middle-aged, but would like to be younger!

This hospital is for elderly people. (more polite than old)

E Looks: positive (+) and negative (-)

My sister is quite pretty. (++) (usually girls/women only). She's a very beautiful girl. (++++) Jim's a very handsome man. (++++) (usually for men only) Bob's a rather ugly man. (---) I'm not ugly or beautiful, I'm just ordinary-looking! (-/-)

Exercises

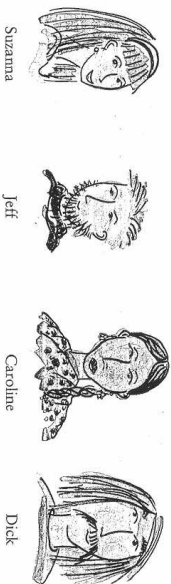
32.1 Fill the gaps in the sentences.

- 1 He's only one metre 52. He's quite ... *short*...
- 2 Very people are often good at basketball.
- 3 Models are usually
- 4 Is her skin dark? No it's
- 5 She's only 12. She's very
- 6 If I eat too much, I'll be
- 7 My grandmother is in this hospital. It's a hospital for people. (don't use 'old')

32.2 Ask questions for these answers. Use the words in brackets.

- 1 *How tall is your brother?* (your brother)
- 2 Is ? (Elena's hair)
He's about one metre 75.
- 3 No, her hair's dark. ? (Mike's hair)
- 4 Yes, it is quite long. ? (your parents)
- 5 Not really, they're middle-aged. ? (his sister)
- 6 Yes, all the boys want to go out with her. ? (Sara - thin)
- 7 Why ? (Sara - thin)
She has been very ill.

32.3 Write sentences describing the people in these pictures.



- 1 Suzanna's got
- 2 Jeff has
- 3 Caroline's got
- 4 Dick's hair is and he

32.4 Write down the names of three people you know. Then write about:

- their height (tall, short, medium height)
- their hair (colour, long, short, beard)
- their eyes (colour)
- their looks (ordinary, handsome, etc.)

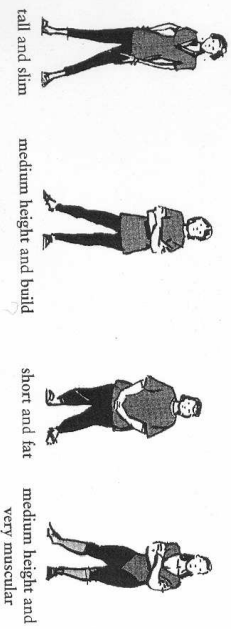
4.3 Describing people's appearance

A General

Positive: beautiful is generally used to describe women; handsome is used to describe men; good-looking is used for both; pretty is another positive word to describe a woman (often a girl) meaning 'attractive and nice to look at'.

Negative: ugly is the most negative word to describe someone; plain is more polite.

B Height and build

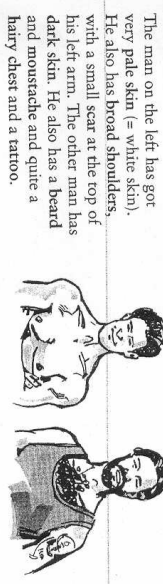


Note: Another word for slim is thin, but slim has a more positive meaning, e.g. John is lovely and slim, but his brother is terribly thin. Skinny also has the same meaning, but is very negative. It is not very polite to say someone is fat; overweight is more neutral and polite.

C Hair



D Special features



The man on the left has got very pale skin (= white skin). He also has broad shoulders, with a small scar at the top of his left arm. The other man has dark skin. He also has a beard and moustache and quite a hairy chest and a tattoo.

E Asking questions about a person's appearance

Q: What does she look like?
A: She's quite tall, with short fair hair.
Q: How tall is she?
A: About 1 metre 65.
Q: How much does she weigh?
A: I don't know and it may be rude to ask. Probably about 45 kilos.

Exercises

4.3.1

Complete these sentences in a suitable way. (More than one answer may be possible.)

- 1 She's got blonde
- 2 He's got very pale
- 3 They've both got curly
- 4 I would say he was medium
- 5 Her brother has got very broad
- 6 She doesn't like men with hairy
- 7 Last time I saw him he had grown a
- 8 He's got very muscular
- 9 Both men were very good-
- 10 All of them have got dark

4.3.2

Replace the underlined word in each sentence with a word which is either more suitable or more polite.

- 1 He told me he met a handsome girl in the disco last night.
- 2 She's beautiful but her younger sister is really quite ugly.
- 3 I think Peter is getting a bit fat, don't you?
- 4 Most people want to stay slim, but not as skinny as that girl over there.
- 5 I think she's hoping she'll meet a few beautiful men at the tennis club.

4.3.3

You want to know about the following:

- someone's general appearance
- their height
- their weight

What questions do you need to ask? Complete these questions.

What

How

How much

Now answer these questions.

- 1 How tall are you?
 - 2 How would you describe your build?
 - 3 How much do you weigh?
 - 4 What kind of hair have you got?
 - 5 What colour is it?
 - 6 Would you like it to be different? If so, what would you like?
 - 7 Do you think you have any special features?
 - 8 Are there any special features you would like to have?
 - 9 Do you like beards?
 - 10 Can you think of a famous woman you would describe as beautiful, and a famous man you would describe as good-looking?
- If possible, ask another person these questions.

44 Describing character

A

Opposites

Many positive words describing character have clear opposites with a negative meaning.

<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>
warm and friendly	cold and unfriendly
kind	unkind
nice, pleasant	horrible, unpleasant
generous (= happy to give/share)	mean (= never gives to others)
optimistic (= thinks positively)	pessimistic (= thinks negatively)
cheerful (= happy and smiling)	miserable (= always seems unhappy)
relaxed and easy-going	tense (= nervous; worries a lot; not calm)
strong	weak
sensitive	insensitive (= does not think about others' feelings)
honest (= always tells the truth)	dishonest

Jane is very tense at the moment because of her exams, but she's usually quite relaxed and easy-going about most things.
I think the weather influences me a lot: when it's sunny I feel more cheerful and optimistic, but when it's cold and raining I get very miserable.
He seemed a bit unfriendly at first, but now I've got to know him I realise he's very warm and kind.
The shop assistant told me that the dress I tried on looked better on people younger than me. I thought that was very insensitive of her, but at least she was being honest, I suppose.

B

Character in action

People often talk about qualities of character that you may need in a work situation. Again, some of these words come in pairs of opposites: one positive and one negative.

<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>
hard-working	lazy (= never does any work)
punctual (=always on time)	not very punctual; always late
reliable	unreliable (= you cannot trust / depend on someone like this)
clever, bright (<i>int/br!</i>)	stupid, thick (<i>st/ft!</i>)
flexible	inflexible (= a very fixed way of thinking; unable to change)
ambitious	unambitious (= no desire to be successful and get a better job)

Some pairs of opposites do not have a particularly positive or negative meaning:
He is very shy when you first meet him because he finds it difficult to talk to people and make conversation; but when he knows people quite well he's much more self-confident. People often say the British are very reserved (= do not show their feelings), but when you get to know them they can be very emotional like anyone else.

C

Using nouns

Some important qualities are expressed through nouns.
One of her great qualities is that she uses her initiative. (= she can think for herself and take the necessary action; she does not need to wait for orders all the time)
That boy has got no common sense (= he does stupid things and doesn't think what he is doing). His sister, on the other hand, is very sensible. (= has lots of common sense)

Exercises

44.1

Organise these words into pairs of opposites and put them in the columns below.

mean	clever	nice	lazy	relaxed	hard-working
tense	cheerful	generous	unpleasant	stupid	miserable
<i>Positive</i>		<i>Negative</i>			
.....				
.....				
.....				

44.2

What prefix forms the opposite of each of these words? (You need three different prefixes.)

kind	flexible	friendly	honest
reliable	sensitive	ambitious	pleasant

44.3

How would you describe the person in each of these descriptions?

- 1 He never bought me a drink all the time we were together.
- 2 I have to tell her what to do every minute of the working day. She wouldn't even open a window without someone's permission.
- 3 He often promises to do things but half the time he forgets.
- 4 She's always here on time.
- 5 I don't think he's done any work since he's been here.
- 6 She finds it difficult to meet people and talk to strangers.
- 7 He could work in any of the departments, and it doesn't matter to him if he's on his own or part of a team.
- 8 One of the great things about her is that she is so aware of what other people think or feel.

44.4

What nouns can be formed from these adjectives? Use a dictionary to help you.

Example: kind *kindness*

punctual	optimistic	reliable	lazy
confident	generous	ambitious	stupid
sensitive	strong	flexible	shy

44.5

Choose three words from the opposite page which describe you. Is there one quality you do not have but would like to have? What, in your opinion, is the worst quality described on the opposite page? If possible, compare your answers with a friend.

B You look shy

1 What do they do? Look at the pictures. The six people are: a criminal, a poet, a footballer, a businessman, a scientist and a politician. Discuss who does what. Examples:



'I think C is a poet.' 'I don't agree. I think he's a criminal.'
'D looks like a scientist.' *'No, C looks more like a scientist.'*

2 What are they like? Look at the pictures and discuss the people's personalities. Useful words:

kind shy sensitive
 self-confident intelligent
 stupid bad-tempered
 calm friendly nervy

Examples:
'What is A like, do you think?'
'I think she's shy.'
'I think C looks rather friendly.'
'I don't agree. I think he looks very bad-tempered.'



3 Say some things about yourself and other people. Ask about other people. Examples:
'I look shy, but I'm not.'
'What's your sister like?' *'She's rather bad-tempered.'*

4 Read your sign with a dictionary. Is it true?

Aries (21/3 - 20/4): energetic, bossy, often bad-tempered, warm, generous, sensitive, artistic.
Taurus (21/4 - 21/5): hardworking, calm, friendly, interested in business, money, friends and family.

Gemini (22/5 - 21/6): clever, witty, very talkative, changeable, interested in books, people and ideas.
Cancer (22/6 - 23/7): humorous, conservative, often happy, anxious, shy. Interested in history.
Leo (24/7 - 23/8): proud, bossy, independent; either very floy or very unfloy; passionate and generous.
Virgo (24/8 - 23/9): practical, punctual, critical, hard-working, perfectionist. Interested in nature.

Libra (24/9 - 23/10): friendly, energetic (but also lazy), pleasant, argumentative. Interested in sport, animals.
Scorpio (24/10 - 22/11): brave, sometimes violent, extremist, possessive, passionate. Often very religious.
Sagittarius (23/11 - 21/12): talkative, self-confident, cheerful. Interested in sport, travel, living dangerously.
Capricorn (22/12 - 20/1): conservative, polite, serious, sociable but shy. Interested in home, politics, people.
Aquarius (21/1 - 19/2): tolerant, sociable but unstable. Interested in sport and politics. Often brilliant or mad.
Pisces (20/2 - 20/3): sensitive, emotional, imaginative, artistic, depressive. Very interested in themselves.

It's not true! I'm not talkative! I'm not talkative! I'm not talkative!