

A

Hair, face, skin and complexion /kəm'plekʃən/



She's got **straight hair** and she's **thin-faced**/ she's got a **thin face**.



She's got **long, wavy hair** and she's **round-faced**/ she's got a **round face**.



She's got **curly hair** and is **black**.



He's got a **crew-cut**. He's **white**.



He's **bald** /bɔːld/ and has freckles.



He's got a **beard** and **moustache** /mʊs'taːʃ/ and has a **chubby** face.



He's got **receding** hair and a few **wrinkles** /'rɪŋkəlz/.



He **used to have black** hair but now it's gone **grey**, almost **white**.

What sort of person would you find attractive? **Blonde**, **fair**, **dark** or **ginger-haired** / **red-haired**?

She has such beautiful **auburn** hair. /'ɔːbənz/ [red-brown]

Fair and **dark** can be used for hair, complexion or skin. Some people like **getting a tan** in summer [exposing their skin to the sun so that it goes darker], although the risks of getting **sunburnt** are well known.

B

Height and build

Fat may sound impolite. Instead we can say that someone is rather **plump** or **stout**, or **a bit overweight**. If someone is broad and solid, we can say they are **stocky**. A person with good muscles can be **well-built** or **muscular**. [generally said about men] Someone who is very fat can be described as **obese** /əʊ'biːs/, especially when talking in a medical context.

Someone who is thin can be described as **slim** [positive] or **skinny** [negative]. If someone **has a nice figure**, they have an attractive shape. [generally said about women]

C

General appearance

She's a very **smart** and **elegant** woman, always **well-dressed**; her husband is quite the opposite, very **scruffy** and **untidy-looking** / **messy-looking**.

Chloe looked **stunning** in her red dress. [very attractive]

He's very **good-looking**, but his friend's rather **unattractive**. [opp attractive]

Her eyes are her best **feature**. [the most attractive part of her face]

Do you think **beautiful** women are always attracted to **handsome** men? I don't. I think **personality** matters most.

First impressions are always important. [your first reaction to someone]

Language help

The suffix **-ish** is useful for describing people (see Unit 70). She's **tallish**. He has **brownish** hair. He must be **thirtyish** / **in his thirties**.

Exercises

7.1 Choose a word from the opposite page to complete these sentences.

- I wish I could get a *tan* like yours but my skin just goes red in the sun.
- My cousin used to have a lovely but she's put on weight in all the wrong places since she stopped taking much exercise.
- Thomas's eyes are his best – they're so large and sparkly and such a deep brown.
- Jess is in her thirties but she still has the same lovely fresh as her young daughter has.
- Staff at the bank were told to dress smartly for work so they would always create a good on customers.
- I'd call her rather than ginger-haired – her hair's dark brown with just a tinge of red in it.
- George says that the round his eyes just show that he has smiled a lot in his life.
- Even in jeans Alina manages to look
- Carla looks beautiful in old clothes and without any make-up but when she's dressed up for an evening out she's absolutely

7.2 Answer these remarks with the opposite description.

- A: I thought you said he was the short, chubby one.
B: *No, no, no, not at all, he's the tall, thin-faced one.*
- A: Was that his brother, the one with wavy hair?
B: No, completely the opposite, his brother's
- A: She's always quite well-dressed, so I've heard.
B: What! Who told you that? Every time I see her, she's
- A: So Charlene's that rather plump, fair-haired woman, is she?
B: No, you're looking at the wrong one. Charlene's
- A: So, tell us about the new boss; good-looking?
B: No, I'm afraid not; rather
- A: I don't know why, but I expected the tour guide to be fiftyish or rather plump.
B: No, apparently she's only

7.3 WANTED! MISSING! Complete the gaps in these police posters with your own ideas.

WANTED FOR MURDER	WANTED FOR ARMED ROBBERY	MISSING	WANTED DEAD OR ALIVE
			
Ian Prowse White, height 6ft,-faced, hair, skin	Sandra King White, height 5ft 4, hair, build,-faced	Jasmin Kaur, Age 7, Asian, height 4ft, thin-....., hair	Jack 'Dagger' Flagstone White, height 6ft,, with and; build.

7.4 Over to you

Write a description of each of these people, giving information about their hair and face, their height and build and general appearance:

- you yourself
- your best friend
- a neighbour
- your ideal of a handsome man / a beautiful woman

A

Intellectual ability

lots of ability	intelligent bright clever sharp shrewd able gifted talented brainy (informal)
lacking ability	stupid foolish simple silly brainless daft dumb dim thick (the last five are predominantly informal words, and they can all be offensive)
clever, in a negative way, using brains to trick or deceive	cunning crafty sly

B

Attitudes towards life

Amal is **pessimistic** while Nia is **optimistic** – he always expects the worst to happen while she looks on the bright side.

It is strange that one of the twins is so **extroverted** while the other is so **introverted** – Ben loves being the focus of attention while Jake prefers to be alone with his thoughts.

I feel very **tense** (or **wound up** / **stressed out****) after a very busy day at work but, after a hot bath, I'll soon feel **relaxed**.

Eva is very **sensible** – she'd never do anything stupid. In other words, she's very practical and **down-to-earth**.

Roberto is very **sensitive** – he gets very **upset** (or **worked-up**, more informal), if he feels people are criticising him.

C

Attitude towards other people

Enjoying others' company: **sociable** **gregarious***

Disagreeing with others: **quarrelsome** **argumentative**

Taking pleasure in others' pain: **cruel** **sadistic**

Relaxed in attitude to self and others: **easy-going** **even-tempered** **laid-back****

Not polite to others: **impolite** **rude** **ill-mannered** **discourteous***

Telling the truth to others: **honest** **trustworthy** **reliable** **sincere**

Unhappy if others have what you do not have yourself: **jealous** **envious**

D

One person's meat is another person's poison

Some characteristics can be either positive or negative depending on your point of view. The words in the right-hand column mean roughly the same as the words in the left-hand column except that they have negative rather than positive connotations.

positive associations	negative associations
determined	obstinate stubborn pig-headed
thrifty economical	stingy mean tight-fisted miserly*
self-assured confident	self-important arrogant full of yourself**
unconventional original	eccentric odd peculiar weird**
frank direct open	blunt abrupt brusque curt
broad-minded	unprincipled permissive
enquiring*	inquisitive nosy**
generous	extravagant
innocent	naive
ambitious	pushy**
assertive	aggressive bossy**

* These words are much more common in written than in spoken English.

** These words are much more common in spoken than in written English.

Exercises

8.1 Match the words on the left with their opposites on the right.

- 1 clever

2 extroverted

3 rude

4 cruel

5 generous

6 unsociable
- f
- a introverted

b tight-fisted

c courteous

d gregarious

e kind-hearted

f dim

8.2 Do you think that the speaker likes or dislikes the people in these sentences? Reword each sentence to give the opposite impression (negative rather than positive or vice versa).

- 1 Carmen's very thrifty. *Likes - Carmen's very stingy.*

2 Molly's usually frank.

3 Grace is quite broad-minded.

4 Sam can be aggressive.
- 5 Nico's quite bossy.

6 I find Marcus self-important.

7 Don't you think James is nosy?

8 Freya is very original.

8.3 Pair the words that have similar meanings.

brainless - silly

brainless	curt	gifted	rude	tense
brusque	direct	honest	sensible	tight-fisted
crafty	down-to-earth	impolite	silly	trustworthy
cunning	frank	miserly	talented	wound up

8.4 Magazines often publish questionnaires which are supposed to analyse aspects of your personality. Look at the words below and match them to the corresponding question.

pessimistic	argumentative	sensitive	sociable
extravagant	assertive	inquisitive	reliable

- 1 If you arrange to meet at 7 pm, do you arrive at 7 pm? *reliable*

2 When you have a problem, do you think the worst will happen?

3 Do you find it easy to tell your boss if you feel he or she has treated you badly?

4 Do you always look out of the window if you hear a car draw up?

5 Do you often buy your friends presents for no particular reason?

6 Do you frequently disagree with what other people say?

7 Do you lie awake at night if someone has said something unkind to you?

8 Do you prefer to be in the company of other people?

8.5 What questions like those in 8.4 could you ask to find out if a person is the following?

- 1 thrifty *Do you use up leftover food?*

2 blunt

3 sensible

4 intelligent

5 even-tempered

6 original

7 obstinate

8 stressed out

8.6 Over to you

Choose two people who are important in your life. Describe them using adjectives in this unit and give reasons why you chose each adjective.

EXAMPLE *My brother is sociable because he loves being with other people.*

A

Positive and negative qualities

positive

She has **a heart of gold**. [very kind, generous]

He's **as good as gold**. [helpful, well-behaved; used generally for children]

negative

She's **as hard as nails**. [no sympathy for others]

He's **a nasty piece of work**. [unpleasant]

Note also:

Her **heart's in the right place**. [is a good and kind person even though they do not always seem so]

He's such **an awkward customer**. [difficult person to deal with]

She's **a pain in the neck**. Nobody likes her. [nuisance, difficult]

He **gets on everyone's nerves**. [irritates everybody]

B

Idioms based on 'head'

You can learn idioms by associating them with a key word or words. Two of the idioms in A, for example, are based on *gold* and two on *heart*. Here is a set of idioms describing people based on the word *head*.

to have { **your head screwed on** [be sensible, informal]
a head for heights [not suffer from vertigo]
a head like a sieve [bad memory]
a good head for figures [be good at maths]
your head in the clouds [unaware of reality]

to be head and shoulders above someone [much better than]

to bury your head in the sand [refuse to think about a difficult situation in the hope you won't have to deal with it]

to keep your head [stay calm in a difficult situation]



C

How people relate to the social norm

She's a bit of **an odd-ball**. [peculiar, strange]

He's really **over the top**. [very exaggerated in behaviour]

He's (gone) **round the bend**, if you ask me. [absolutely crazy/mad]

My politics are very **middle- of- the- road**. [very normal; no radical ideas; neither left- nor right-wing]

D

Who's who in the class? Idioms for people in the classroom

Sam's **teacher's pet**. [teacher's favourite] Laura's **top of the class**.

Harry is **a real know-all**. [thinks he knows everything]

Ali's a bit of **a big-head**. [has a high opinion of him/herself] Anna's **a lazy-bones**.

The last three idioms are used of people outside the **classroom situation** too.

Exercises

9.1 Try to complete these idioms from memory if possible.

- 1 She does a lot of voluntary work; she has a heart ... *of gold.*
- 2 Don't expect any sympathy from the boss; she's as hard ...
- 3 I'm sure Ahmed will help you; he's as good ...
- 4 Although Florian sometimes seems a bit bad-tempered his heart is ...
- 5 I don't think you'll like him; he's a nasty ...
- 6 I try to avoid having much to do with Liam. He's rather an ...

9.2 What do we call ...

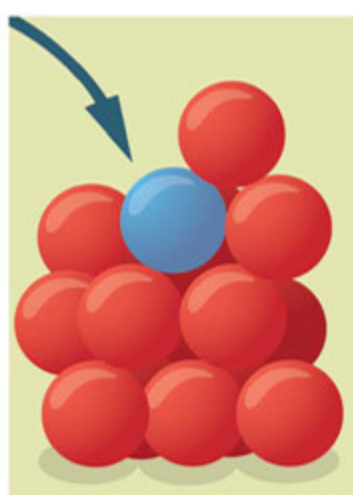
- 1 an irritating person who knows everything? *a know-all*
- 2 the person who is the teacher's favourite?
- 3 someone who thinks they are the best and says so?
- 4 the one who gets the best marks?
- 5 a person who is very lazy?

9.3 Complete the sentences using an idiom from B.

- 1 I'd better write it in my notebook. I have ... *a head like a sieve.*
- 2 Ask Martha to check those sums. She has ...
- 3 Don't ask me to go up that tower. I'm afraid I don't ...
- 4 She's very sensible and knows what she's doing. She ...
- 5 He's quite out of touch with reality. He really ...
- 6 The problem won't go away so there's no point ...
- 7 Max is top of the class, ... everyone else.
- 8 Even when others around him are panicking Raul always ...

9.4 Which part of the body might a difficult person (a) get on (b) be a pain in?

9.5 Which of the idioms opposite do you think these pictures represent?



1 *an odd-ball*



2



3



4

9.6

Over to you

Choose five idioms from this unit that you could use to describe people that you know.